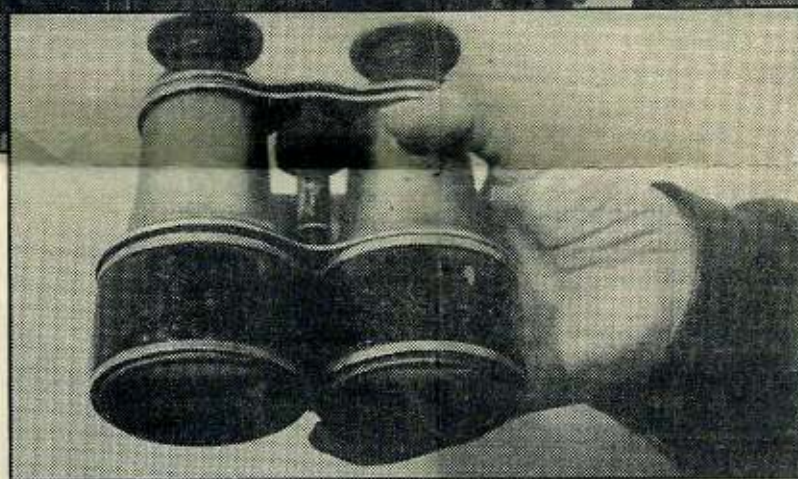


Binocular donation recalls heroism of Capt. George Macaulay and crew of Golden Fleece

A long-lost pair of binoculars, presented by the Federal Government to the captain of a Southampton fishing boat that rescued four Port Elgin sailors almost 110 years ago, has been donated to the Bruce County Museum's new Marine Gallery.

George Becker, Anne Schwandt and George Macaulay made the presentation to Bruce County Museum curator Barb Ribey last week. The binoculars were discovered among the estate of the late Isabel Boundy of Southampton.

The Boundy home at 32 Grosvenor St. N. was once the



George Becker, Bruce County Museum curator Barb Ribey, Anne Schwandt and George Macaulay view the binoculars donated to the marine gallery of the Museum. (Photos by Randy Derry)

home of Isabel Boundy's grandfather, Capt. George Macaulay, owner of the sailing boat Golden Fleece, which was used in the rescue. (George Becker and Anne Schwandt are the great-grandson and great-granddaughter, and George Macaulay, the grandson, of Capt. Macaulay.) Three other men, Kenneth McDonald, Alex Graham and Kenneth McLeod also received binoculars for their part as crew of the Golden Fleece. (This Kenneth McLeod was not the local fisherman Kenneth McLeod who died just a few years ago).

The story of the rescue was told in the Port Elgin Times of Sept. 3, 1885. The headline said: "Rescued at the Point of Death by a Gallant Crew who Put our From Southampton."

Capt. Sandy McLean and three others had left in the sailing yacht Annabell for a trip to Pleasant Harbour, near the tip of the Peninsula. When they were barely off Southampton, the weather changed and a "rough and treacherous sea" began to break.

The men decided to come about and head for Southampton, but when they reached Indian Reef, which is said to be about two and one-half miles north of Southampton and about half a mile from shore, they were overcome by the waves.

The Times reports says they "were struck by a heavy sea which filled the sail, snapped the mast and landed the boat on its side."

The four men were left clinging to the side of the boat and rigging, with the heavy seas breaking over them as they drifted toward shore.

The Times continued:

"Fortunately, however, they were seen from Southampton, and although a wild sea was running at the time, a boat, the Golden Fleece, was speedily manned a crew of as gallant fellows as ever put out to save perishing men, composed of Capt. Geo. Macaulay, owner of the boat, Kenneth McDonald, Alex Graham and another whose name we have been unable to learn, and under great difficulty and at the peril of their own lives succeeded in reaching the wrecked vessel and taking of the, by this time, almost lifeless occupants.

The Annabell was left a prey to

the raging sea, and the run back to Southampton was made in good time. When picked up the men were nearly perished and clung to the boat with a death grip, which their rescuers found difficult to break, Happy Billy Douglass, as he is known here, being the only one able to help himself. When taken back to Southampton they were cared for with the utmost kindness at the residences of Finlay McLennan, Norman McAulay and Johns' Hotel, and in the evening all but Capt. Sandy McLean were able to return home to Port. He has since fully recovered and all are now apparently none the worse for their hard experience, although Mr. Baker received a severe cut over one of his eyes.

Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon Capt. MacAulay and the party who went out with him. Their bravery has been seldom equalled, and their conduct in rescuing the men, who, but for them, would undoubtedly have been lost, is deserving of very substantial recognition by the government, under whose notice the circumstances should be brought. The loss of the Annabell will be severely felt by Capt. Sandy, as the profits in his little boat were his whole dependence."

The following year, Capt. George Macaulay and each of the rescuers with him in his Golden Fleece were presented with field glasses for their 'gallant exertions', as the letter from Alexander McNeil, the local member of parliament wrote.

It is more than likely that the Golden Fleece was the early style of fishing boat built in Southampton and along the Bruce Coast, known as the Huron boat. It would have been between 30 and 40 feet long, with two masts and a substantial yardage of sail.

The men on the Annabell were Capt. Sandy McLean, Billy Douglass and Herbert Heller, both of Port Elgin and John Baker of Berlin.

The Annabell was recovered, for it is mentioned in the Times of Aug. 16, 1887:

"...being well supplied with provisions, rods and fish hooks, with other refreshments for man and weapons of war against fish, made a

pleasant run to Chantry Island, where, after inspecting the light house, fog horn and government works at that place, a few hours were pleasantly spent in picnicking, fishing etc.

The Annabell is regarded as the finest yacht now on our waters and under the management of Capt. Sandy McLean cannot be beat for either speed, safety or pleasure. The run was made from Port Elgin docks to the landing at the Island in less than half an hour, and although the wind was not so favorable the return trip was made with comparative speed.

Mr. Cargill (the member of Parliament)...presented Capt. Sandy with a beautiful hunting case silver watch, purchased at Moffat's, as a token of esteem and remembrance of the occasion."

- thanks to John Weichel of Southampton for the historical research and story