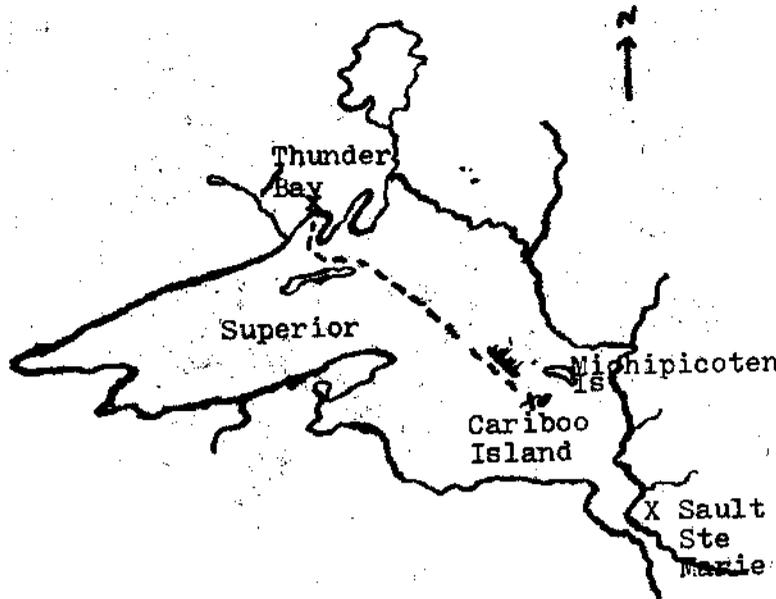


THE FLYING DUTCHMAN OF LAKE SUPERIOR

THE WRÉCK OF THE BANNOCKBURN



Donald E. Pugh

Lake Superior's white capped, tossing and churning waves have wrecked and sunk many large ships. One of the most mysterious disappearances, was that of the 1620 ton, 245 foot Bannockburn. British built in 1893, this ship of the Montreal Transportation Company, carried grain on the Great Lakes. Departing with a crew of 20, from Thunder Bay on November 21, 1902, the ship slowly chugged into what has been described as "one of the worst storms of the season". When the ship failed to appear at the Sault, a search went out. An article in the Fort William Times-Journal reported that the Bannockburn was located on the mainland, north of Michipicoten Island.

It was presumed that the ship, to ease the pounding, must have sought quieter water on the lee side of the north shore, and run aground. The Bannockburn, it was explained, remained unaccounted for, because of the lonely area of the accident and the lack of communications at that point.

Shortly thereafter, the Department of Customs received another telegram stating that the ship was actually beached on Michipicoten Island itself. Old timers realized however, that, if the Bannockburn was on the lee of the north shore, or on the Island, there was nothing to prevent a boat from the ship making a trip to Michipicoten Harbour, or to Québec Harbour. Even overland, Michipicoten Island could be covered in two days. Furthermore, the Great Lakes Towing Company's tug, Favourite, explored the island, and bleak northern coastline thoroughly. Nothing was seen. The Bannockburn's insurance company hired the tug, Boynton, to search between Caribou and Michipicoten Islands. The Boynton saw nothing. They reported: "It is supposed that the steamer stranded on Caribou Island". Twenty-two miles south of Michipicoten Island, this treacherous rock is surrounded by dangerous shoals on its west and north side. Since its lighthouse closed the 15th of November, according to government regulations, the ship could have been disembowelled and sunk there than a mile from the Island. Yet no trace of the ship could be found.

Other solutions to the disappearance were exploding boilers which destroyed the ship, or the machinery falling through the bottom. For a ship only 9 years old, these solutions seem improbable. Today the disappearance is as much a mystery as 72 years ago. For a long time, sailors have searched on misty nights, their eyes blinking in the storm, and at a distance, the warm, yellow glow of the Caribou Island light.