

Book Reviews

The Wexford: Elusive Shipwreck of the Great Storm, 1913 By Paul Carroll

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Goss also focuses on one of Toronto's landmarks, the Prince Edward Viaduct over the Don Valley. The geometrical patterns of steel girders and effective use of perspective show the strong aesthetic values often found in engineering photographs.

The last chapter contains pictures made following the reorganization of the Works Department, when responsibility for photography fell to the Fire Department. In 1982 this function was assigned to the City Clerk's Department. The new attention given to civic events and visits by prominent individuals demanded images for press releases, posters, and public communications. Freelancers once again filled the need for documenting existing conditions and progress reports. Peter MacCallum's photographs of the dismantling of the Gardiner Expressway's eastern section in 2002 demonstrate both his artistry and the urban renewal theme running through the book.

Toronto's Visual Legacy succeeds on several levels. The photographs are printed with considerable clarity and detail, and the design allows readers to view panoramic images across two pages for maximum effect.

The book will appeal to a broad spectrum of readers who are attracted to photographs as an effective medium for connecting with a community's past. It gives a good sense of the pace and scale of change, and the role of people and projects in shaping the modern city. *Toronto's Visual Legacy* turns the tables on our standard approach to history. Photographs are not mere window-dressing; they drive a narrative of change. Readers must study the images and draw their own conclusions, mindful of the factors that caused photographers to focus their lenses on work sites, baseball games, and schools. In celebrating the city through historic images, the authors and their colleagues at the City of Toronto have created a work that should encourage others to make much more extensive use of photography to contribute to our understanding of Ontario's past and present.

Michael Moir
York University Libraries

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The Wexford: Elusive Shipwreck of the Great Storm, 1913

By Paul Carroll. Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2010. 328 pages. \$30.00 softcover. ISBN 978-1-55488-736-1 <www.dundurn.com>

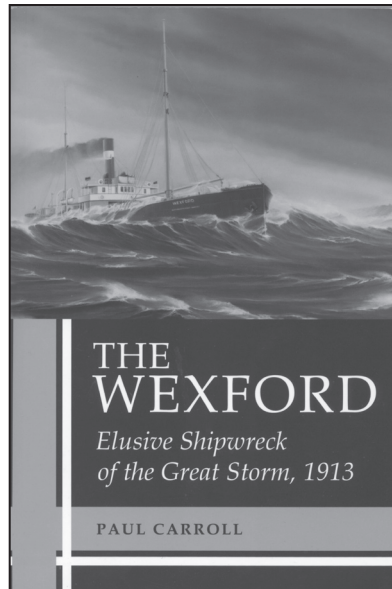
Wexford was a steel hulled, 2,100-ton freighter that disappeared beneath the waves of Lake Huron in the Great Storm of November 1913. The tempest began November 7th on Lake Superior, but within 24 hours had apparently weakened, and many ships left their safe locations in the Sault Locks, St. Marys River and St. Clair River to try and make it to port. *Wexford* was docked in Sault Ste. Marie until the morning of November 8th and left with other ships down through the locks later that day, anchoring in Hay Lake in the after-

noon. Early November 9th *Wexford* headed out into Lake Huron with its load of 96,000 bushels of grain, destined for Goderich. Unfortunately it was not long before the weather again deteriorated, leading to blizzard conditions including hurricane force winds, snow squalls and rapidly falling temperatures over the entire Great Lakes basin: a "White Hurricane." The weather calmed significantly again on November 10th and by the 11th people along the shores of the Great Lakes began dealing with the aftermath. *Wexford* had vanished. With the aid

of logbooks from other ships that saw *Wexford* on the 9th, transcripts from various inquests, newspaper accounts of survivors and beachcombers, reports of the Lake Carriers' Association, and even diaries found on the bodies of victims, Carroll tells the *Wexford* story during those harrowing few days in 1913.

In the first of three broad sections Carroll introduces the *Wexford* and crew. The history of this ship is well researched, as are events leading up to and after the storm, and Carroll reviews common navigational practice among sailors and ship-owners at the time. An entire chapter lays out a sequence of events of the final trip. There is some uncertainty, both among those present at the time and among later historians, over exactly how many people were on board when the ship went down. Carroll makes a substantial effort at identification, and his attempt to determine what happened to those bodies that were recovered provides a tribute or memorial to each of them. *Wexford* sailed out of Collingwood and most of the crew lived there; many of the sailors were Canadian but others were from the United Kingdom. These chapters include dramatic and moving descriptions.

The next section deals with the storm itself and its aftermath, focusing on the Lake Huron shoreline between Point Clark and Grand Bend where *Wexford* sank. These chapters include a number of first-hand accounts as they address such subjects as weather forecasting, communication practices, sailors' experiences, local response,



and descriptions of the flotsam and bodies that washed up after the storm. Carroll concludes this section of the book by examining the political and regulatory fallout from this disaster. Recommendations were brought before the House of Commons in due course, but Carroll does not go into detail about changes that may have been initiated.

In the final broad section Carroll relates the story of the wreckage since 1913. The search

for a shipwreck can be a long, intense and frustrating endeavour, and in many cases a particular ship is found by accident; this was the case with *Wexford*. For years divers attempted to find the remains and some of these people have claimed, falsely, to have done so. Carroll describes a number of these early episodes, and then goes on to relate in detail the circumstances surrounding the actual discovery of the wreck and the tools used in the first dives to confirm its identity and survey what was there. We read of the degradation of the wreck and about factors that led to establishing the shipwreck as an archaeological heritage site. Readers learn of damage caused in the sinking itself, and how currents, waves, lake-bottom composition and diving expeditions have affected the wreck subsequently. Over the years divers have removed many artifacts, a trophy-minded practice that Carroll clearly condemns. It leads him into a discussion of the ethics of diving, and he calls for protection of Ontario's underwater cultural heritage. He favours the low-impact diving approach of maritime heritage groups

