THE WRECK OF THE JOHN HARVEY

Amby Thomas of Deep Cove

"Well, I was only six years old then. All I knew is what I was hearing. You'd be hearing about it, you know, how she went ashore and everything like that. I think it was a snowstorm, a southeast snowstorm, and they came inside of Guyon Island light; they put her ashore there. They left Gloucenger—bound for St. Pierre—that's an island off the coast of Newfoundland. Well, when you leave Gloucenger you come all the way down along the Nova Scotia coast, until you come to Cape Breton. Well, you're pretty well in on the land then, and the wind was southeast and that would be taking them in. She was only a sailing vessel, she had no power, and the wind was taking them in all the time. It was the tenth of January, 1912. So she came inside of Guyon Island and she struck a reef in there. She struck the reef and the sea was breaking over her. Well, there was only one thing to do: get off her and leave her. And this young fellow, John Foote, he said he'd go ashore, he'd swim ashore. It was pretty rough, you know, in a southeast breeze, so he tied a rope around his middle and he jumped in and swam ashore. He got in all right and tied the rope to a tree or something on the beach, and the other fellows came in hand over hand on the rope. That's how that's how they came off her, you know. The way the second fellow got in—they didn't think John Foote had made it so the second guy went in after him. You imagine going into the water on the tenth of January in a snowstorm and with clothes on and everything—you wouldn't last long after you'd come out of it. They froze on the beach. So the others couldn't take them. They had to walk on and leave them there. The people of Gabarus found the survivors the next day. They were all huddled together in a little fishing house, so they took them in and looked after them. The men on the beach were found the next day. The remains were taken into Gabarus where there were caskets put on them and they were sent to Louisbourg to go on board the Kyle. The Kyle couldn't come into Sydney—Sydney was frozen over. So Louisbourg was the only open port on the east coast then, clear of Halifax. They were shipped back to Newfoundland. They were carried to Louisbourg by horse and sleigh. I saw them going by the house, a casket on each sleigh."

CFB 9
You people who are safe on shore, how can you understand
The perils of the ocean when you are safe on land?
There's many a brave young sailor lad for adventure takes a roam
And follow the fortunes of the sea far from his native home.

In January, nineteen and twelve, Captain Curry did command
The schooner by the name John Harvey from Belloram, Newfoundland.
The wind, the gale from the southeast, blew the worst storm of the year
When the Harvey cleared from Gloucenger bound for the Isle St. Pierre.

The captain gave orders to his men, the vessel to dismast;
The boats were frozen on her deck while the sea swept fore and aft.
Says Captain Curry to his men, "My boys, it's of no use,
For I fear that we are doomed to die on the shores of Gabarus."

The young John Foote a rope he took, he tied it round his waist;
He said he'd swim to the nearest shore, that icy foamy fate.
How bitter and cold was that winter's night, and the sea rolled mountains high
And tossed and battered by the waves was that brave Belloram boy.

The wind did blow a hurricane, the night was bitter cold;
It chilled the heart of the sailor lad, a seaman young and bold.
All tossed and battered by the waves, at length the shore he reached,
And with his badly frozen hands made line fast on the beach.

The crew of the John Harvey, there were six of them all told,
They owed their lives to God above, and a sailor lad so bold.
Bob Kipping and this brave young Foote, from exhaustion overcome,
Lay down to die on the beach that night far from their native home.

Young Kipping and this brave young Foote, they laid them down to rest;
Each thought of his home in Newfoundland and the one he loved the best.
They knew that death was drawing near, and in the prime of youth
They give up the struggle for themselves on the shores of Gabarus.

The survivors reached some fishing shacks that stood upon the shore
Much hampered by the heavy boots and the oiksins that they wore.
They had no match to light a fire—how pitiful was their plight
And their struggle for existence on that cold and winter's night!
But help soon came from Gabarus and to them the tale was told
Of the wreck of the *John Harvey* and the sailor lad so bold.
God's blessing rest upon them, they did all that they could do
For to comfort the survivors of the *Harvey's* shipwrecked crew.

Captain Curry and his little crew, his sad disheartened band,
With the bodies of their comrades went back to Newfoundland.
As we followed the caskets to the train, the tears rolled from their eyes
As they thought of the friends in Newfoundland, of the brave Belloram boys.

Good people of Belloram, with you I sympathise;
Don't fret or mourn for those brave youths, for heaven was their prize;
And all you brave young sailor lads, think on this noble youth
Who died far from his native land on the shores of Gabarus.

*Originally composed by Lillian Crewe Walsh.*
*From the singing of Amby Thomas.*

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*Havelock County Fair*

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