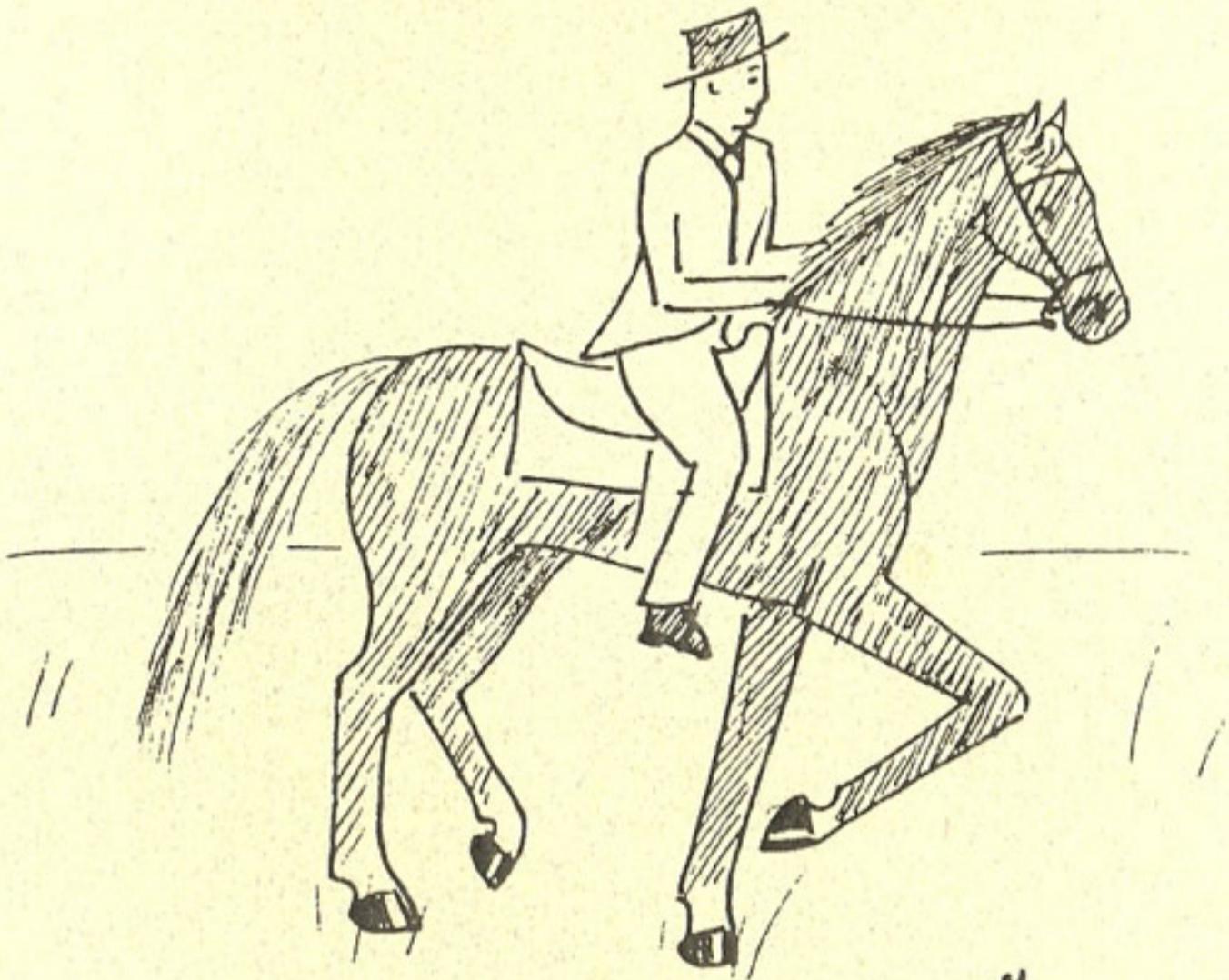


Joseph Cunard



D.M.

Joseph Cunard

Miramichi Literacy Council - Miramichi Literacy Writers series

This series of booklets are available to anyone who wishes to order them. A single copy is \$3.00, any 3 books would be \$8.00 and a complete set of 24 would be \$60.00. Shipping and handling are extra.

Judy Arnold
President
Miramichi Literacy Council Inc.
P.O. Box 534
Miramichi, NB
E1N 3A8
(506) 773-6734
judy960@hotmail.com

Written by Merle Milson

Illustrated by Dawn MacLean and Lynn Johnston

Written and produced by Miramichi Literacy Writers, a Project of the Literacy Corps Program, Employment and Immigration, Canada, sponsored by Miramichi Literacy Council, New Brunswick

Readability Level 4.5

Copyright, Miramichi Literacy Writers, 1985

ISBN-0-920709-05-2

Miramichi Literacy Council
P.O. Box 534
Miramichi, NB
E1N 3A6

Acknowledgements: We wish to acknowledge support funding from the Governments of Canada and the Province of New Brunswick, especially the Departments of Education and Continuing Education.



Joseph Cunard

JOSEPH CUNARD

CHAPTER I

The first years in the history of any town are exciting ones. One great man of strong will and energy can make or change the history of a growing place. Joseph Cunard was such a leader. For thirty years, from 1820 to 1850, he played a very important part in the growth and history of the town of Chatham.

The Cunard family first came from Germany to Philadelphia, U.S.A., about 1650. One hundred years passed. Robert Cunard moved to Saint John, New Brunswick, at that time. His son, Abraham, moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1783 to keep the family business growing. Abraham Cunard had several sons. Joseph was one of them.

Joseph Cunard was born at Halifax in 1799. He moved to the Miramichi in 1821 at the age of 22. His older brother, Samuel, had sent him here. The Miramichi was a good place to start a new shipbuilding company. In 1833, Cunard married Mary Peters of Bushville. She was the daughter of the Honourable Thomas Peters. The Peter's home is now the Miramichi Golf Club. Joseph and Mary Cunard had four sons and one daughter.

CHAPTER II

Cunard could best be described as a man who often could and did stand out in a crowd. He always tried to do things in a bigger and better way than anyone else. People found him an exciting person with a flashy way about him. He was a large man physically. He was six feet tall and weighed over two hundred pounds. He was often seen riding about Chatham on a huge black horse. He rode from his house to his stores or mills giving orders to his employees.



Home Like Joseph Cunard's

His home was large and beautiful. It had a big, well-kept garden and a lovely lawn. The grounds around his home were always kept very clean. Every Sunday he and his family drove to St. Paul's Church in a grand coach with the help of coachmen and footmen. Another example of Cunard's interesting way of living was shown in 1836. In that year, he opened his new mill. He gave a huge party for over three hundred people.

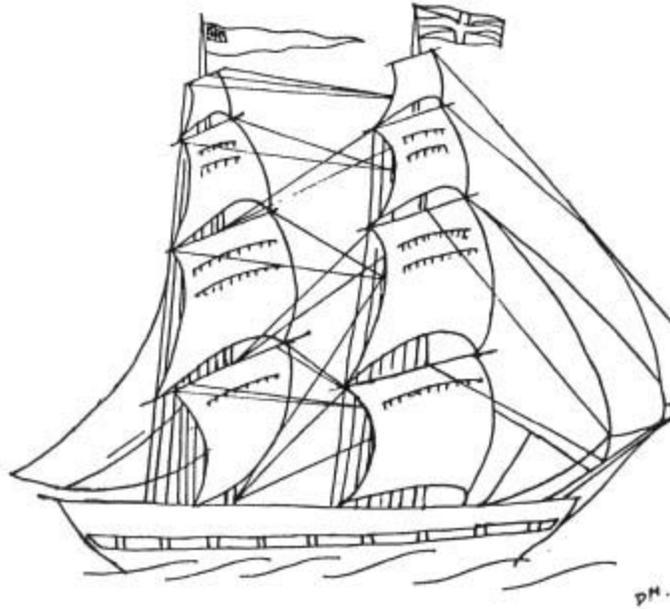
Cunard often travelled to England on business. When he returned, the townspeople would welcome him back with parades, picnics, and the ringing of church bells. They did this because Cunard was well-liked. He enjoyed these special shows because they made him feel important. Since most people worked in his mills and stores, they didn't want to disappoint him.



W.S. Loggie Store
built by Joseph Cunard

Although he was a flashy person, Joseph Cunard believed in hard work. In just a few years, he had built several millyards, shipyards, and stores. These were opened in Chatham, Bathurst, Shippegan, and Richibucto. Some of the best ships ever built in Canada came from his shipyards. At that time, only wooden ships were built.

He needed a lot of wood to build his ships. For this reason, he needed many mills. Some of these were built downriver. There were lots of trees there ready to be cut. In 1836, he opened the Chatham Steam Mill. It was able to cut forty thousand feet of wood. By 1839, Cunard owned two shipyards in Chatham. About forty-three ships were built at these two yards. One of these ships was the “Nelocity.” It was the first steamboat that was built on the Miramichi. Cunard was also building ships at his yards in Bathurst and Richibucto. In all, he employed some five hundred men and his shipyards were turning out one ship every two weeks.



Barque Joseph Cunard

At this same time, Joseph’s brother, Samuel, was founding the famous Cunard Steamship Line in Halifax. Strangely enough, it was the arrival of steam that would soon destroy Joseph Cunard’s business.

CHAPTER III

Cunard was more than a businessman. He was also the Justice of the Peace in Chatham and served on the Board of Health. Cunard was elected to the Legislative Assembly in Fredericton in 1828. He served for many years before becoming a member of the Legislative Council.

Cunard could be very kind. For this reason he had many friends. However, in business he had many enemies. He took great pleasure in destroying anyone in his way when it came to business. For example, he was able to drive the Shirreff Family of Chatham from Middle Island.

Cunard needed Middle Island as a place to store fish being sent to Halifax. A. D. Shirreff wanted to kill Cunard. The last words of this dying man were, "I'll get him yet!"

One of Cunard's biggest enemies was Alexander Rankin. The Rankin Company of Douglastown had been on the Miramichi before Cunard arrived. Both Rankin and Cunard were in the same business. Soon they were fighting over who owned the land and the trees along the river. This fighting carried over into Miramichi political life as well. The election of 1843 saw Cunard support John Williston and Rankin backing John Street. Crowds of five hundred to one thousand men fought in the streets. Soldiers were brought in to restore order.

Joseph Cunard's business began to fall off by 1839. It was in this year that he and his brother won a contract. The contract was with the British Government to send mail across the Atlantic Ocean. They got the contract because they planned to use steamships. These ships could travel much faster than wooden ones. When Cunard returned to Chatham, the townsmen thought he had done a great thing for Miramichi business. They soon knew that steamships would end the building of wooden ships on the river. The good times were quickly coming to an end.

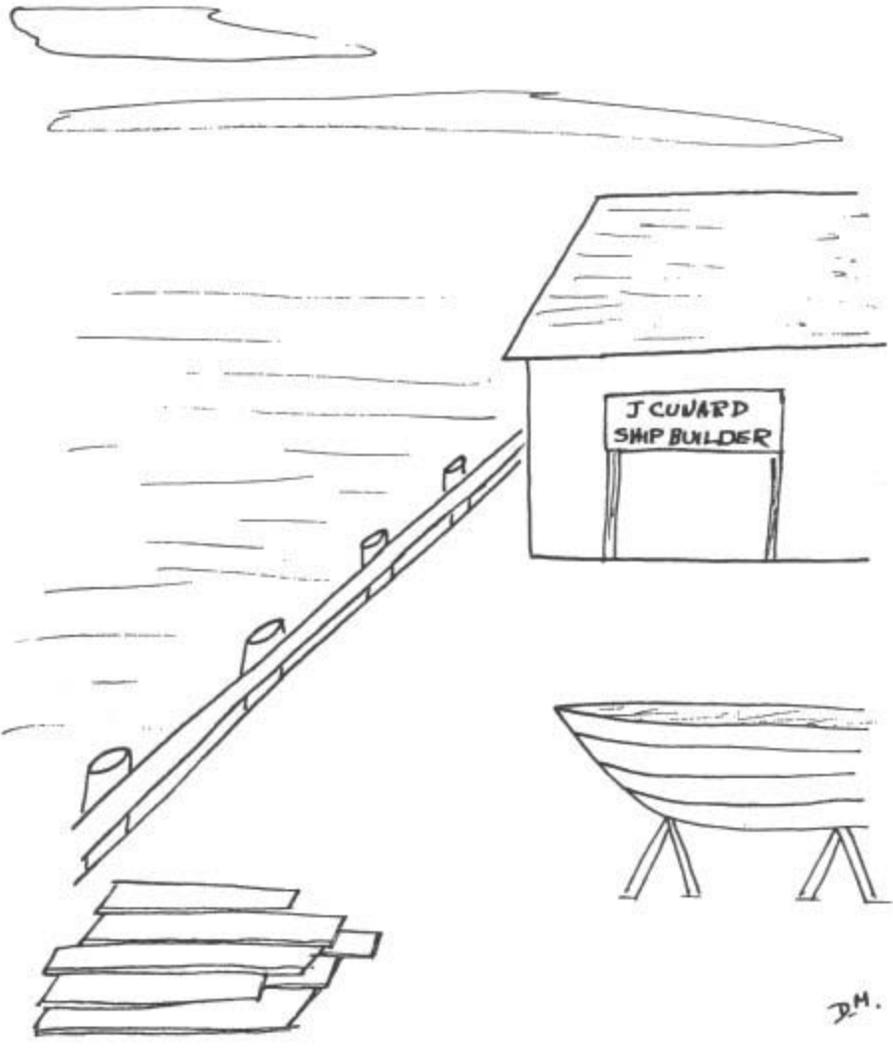
CHAPTER IV

A world depression in 1842 badly hurt Cunard's Company. He had allowed his business to grow too quickly. The fighting between him and Rankin also hurt his company. In 1847, he was forced to close his business. He had no money left.

This was a great disappointment to the people of Chatham. They had looked up to Cunard as if he were a god. Between five hundred to one thousand men were out of work. They were angry. They quickly turned against him. Crowds in the streets shouted, "Shoot Cunard!" But nothing ever came of it. Many people left Chatham by ship to find work in Quebec and the United States.

In 1850, Cunard left Chatham for the last time. He moved to England. He died there in 1865. His family was able to pay his bills, but it took many years to do it.

The downfall of Cunard's business hurt the Miramichi for years after. In many ways, however, Joseph Cunard had greatly helped Chatham to grow. His bold, exciting way of living made this time on the Miramichi a very exciting one.



WORD LIST

steam

yard

Acknowledgement:

The information for this book came from the following sources: “Community Leaders of the Miramichi”, by Carmel and John MacDonald, “By Favourable Winds”, by James A. Fraser, and “Colossus of the Miramichi”, by Louise Manny.