

THE STORY OF A BLUENOSE BARQUE:

The *John A. Harvie*, 1876–1880

By *Ralph A. Harvie*

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JOHN Andrew Harvie built the barque that bore his name at his Avondale (now Newport Landing) shipyard in Nova Scotia in 1876. She was the fifteenth of nineteen vessels constructed by her builder between 1863 and 1881 (see table). Harvie himself was a descendant of a Scottish family which had left for the New World in the mid-eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century the Harvies, and John's in-laws, the Mosheres, had acquired a dominant position in the small settlement of Avondale. The *John A. Harvie* may be said to represent the handiwork of her builder at the peak of his powers. Just six years later, Harvie was dead, at the early age of forty-seven: his widow moved away from the Atlantic Ocean. Of his sons, one died young, while the others took to land-based careers.

The *John A. Harvie* was launched on 22 July 1876 and sailed just over a week later. Like other Harvie ships she had been completed before launching. (Figure 2 shows the *Parthena* ready for launching with the courses and the lower and upper topsails bent to the yards so that she would be ready to make sail as soon as she left the ways). This practice resulted from the location of Avondale which – like other towns on Nova Scotia's western coastline – is exposed to the enormous forty-foot tides of the Bay of Fundy, and the estuary of the Avon River becomes a sea of mud at low tide.

The *John A. Harvie* measured some 177 feet in length by 37 feet beam. The jib-boom projected about 59 feet in front of the stem of the hull, some 40 feet beyond the cap of the bowsprit. The length of the lower mainmast may have been about 75 feet, with a diameter of 28 inches. The ship was designed as a cargo carrier, but there is no record of the cargoes she carried except for the last passage when the cargo was North American maize bound for Dublin. It is likely that most of the eastbound cargoes were grain, which, when bagged, would be hoisted on deck and dropped into the hold by temporary rigged derricks. Bulk grain was not carried because of its liability to shift in a rough sea. According to the Register the capacity of the main hold was 942.90 tons, one ton corresponding to 100 cubic feet. A hatch on the lower poop deck gave access to another hold, and possibly the main hold as well. The capacity of the half-poop is given as 30.23 tons. Some cargo may have been stored here, though the space also served for storage of spare sails and other ship's stores.

SHIPS BUILT BY JOHN A. HARVIE

Name	Year launched	Sail Rig	Registered Tonnage	Principal Owner	Shares	Register No.
Eureka	1863	barque	575	John A. Harvie	12	46035
Summer	1863	ship	1019	Frederick Curry	28	46393
Juno	1865	ship	955	Thomas Curry	28	48477
Seaman	1866	barque	620	Frederick Curry	16	52084
Cairnichill	1867	barque	779	John A. Harvie	20	57176
Aramita	1870	barque	743	John A. Harvie	30	61472
Newport	1871	schooner	168	John A. Harvie & Jedediah E. Newcomb	16 each	61491
Lyra	1872	ship	1089	John A. Harvie	24	66486
Hattie H.	1872	barkentine	403	John A. Harvie	22	66495
Hants County	1873	barque	641	John A. Harvie	10	66506
Belle	1874	brigantine	479	John A. Harvie	46	66523
Antwerp	1874	barque	1031	Geo. & John Churchill	16	66529
Ingomar	1875	ship	1171	George Mounce	64	72161
John A. Harvie	1876	barque	1048	John A. Harvie	23	72181
Parthena	1877	ship	1381	George Mounce	64	75456
Regent	1878	ship	1330	George Mounce	64	75469
Anglesea	1879	barque	978	John & James Mann	18 each	78991
Alice M. Claridge	1880	barque	1128	John A. Harvie	38	80805
J. E. Graham	1881	ship	1385	John A. Harvie	21	83204

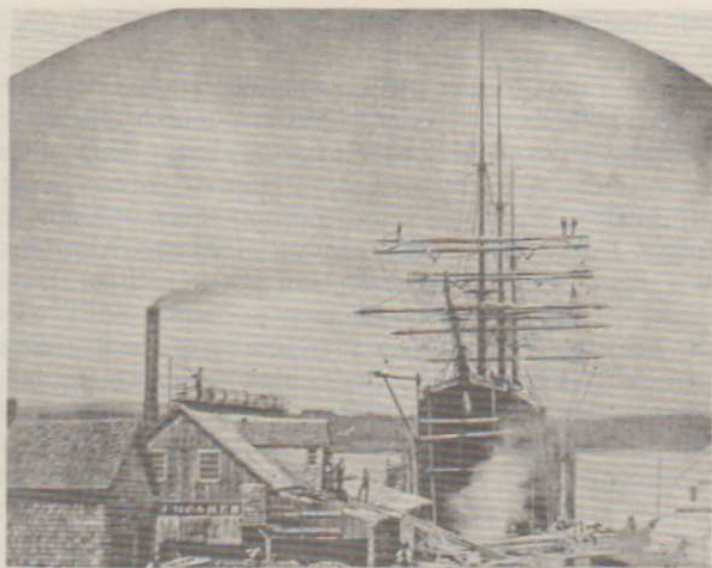


Fig 2. The *Parthena* on the ways at Avondale in 1877.

The capacity of the after-cabin was 5,671 cubic feet (56.71 tons). The after part of this cabin was for the exclusive use of the master, but sometimes it was shared by his family and by the master-builder, John A. Harvie, himself. The mates, cook and stewardess and cabin boy occupied rooms in the fore end of this cabin, while the first ship's carpenter must have shared these quarters, since he was a part-owner of the vessel and brother of the master. The forward deckhouse, 3,047 cubic feet (30.47 tons) included 1,208 cubic feet of space for the crew of the boatswain and ten seamen. Re-measurement in London in 1879 increased this to 1,302 cubic feet and, since this figure was not included in the Register tonnage, reduced it from 1,048 to 1,035. The forward house also contained the galley and the carpenter's shop.

The design of the sailing ship included some elements that were not merely functional. The decoration of the *John A. Harvie* may be reconstructed more or less completely from a painting by F. Weltering, executed in 1876 on the ship's first visit to Germany, and now hanging in the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Halifax, Nova Scotia (figure 1).

In this representation of the vessel, the body of the hull is finished in black, relieved only by white upperworks and the scraped and varnished natural wood finish of the masts, spars and guardrails. Two nameboards were fitted on the quarters. The name *John A. Harvie* was inscribed in gold letters on a blue background surrounded by a gold border. This was an unusual feature, and can probably be taken as a measure of the builder-owner's pride

in his vessel. Similar nameboards were mounted forward on the forecastle combing.

The prow above the cutwater was ornamented with fanciful relief carving set in gold leaf, with a vestigial figurehead at the high forward peak. The stern of the vessel is not visible in the painting, but it can be inferred that the transom counter was ornamented with a large arch of fanciful relief carving, with the name of the vessel and the port of registration, 'Windsor, N.S.', below it. The clean lines, the painting and the restrained ornamentation speak highly of the good taste of John Harvie and the quality of the construction of the vessel to which he gave his name.

Weltering's fine portrait also gives an indication of the flags flown by the *John A. Harvie*. The owner's house flag, a blue H on a white ground within a wide red border flew at the main truck. A red ensign flew from the spanker sail gaff, but this flag displays an interesting variation from the 'Red Duster' flown by British merchant vessels. The newly-formed Dominion of Canada did not disallow its subjects from flying 'modified' official flags, and in this case the red ground of the *John A. Harvie's* ensign contained a white roundel, within which was a wreath of maple leaves surrounding a shield on three sides. It is probable that the shield consisted of a quartering of the coats of arms of the Four Provinces of the Dominion (a version of which also flew over the Canadian Parliament buildings in Ottawa), and it is also probable that this shield was surmounted by a beaver *couchant*.

When the *John A. Harvie* was launched in mid-1876 Nova Scotia had become the leading shipbuilding and ship-owning province of Canada. In 1875 there were 2,787 'Bluenose' vessels on the Register of the Province, even though a great deal of the yards' output was sold to foreign – principally British and Norwegian – interests. As a large square-rigged vessel, built and owned in Nova Scotia and commanded by a Nova Scotian master, the *John A. Harvie* would be recognized throughout the world as a 'Bluenose' or 'Nova Scotiaman'.

The sixty-four shares in the ownership of the *John A. Harvie* when she first sailed from Windsor in early August 1876 were divided as follows:

John A. Harvie, Master Builder 23
 George C. Harvie, Carpenter 2
 William H. Mosher, Master Builder 12
 William M. Lockhart, Master Mariner 9
 William Simpson, Blacksmith 4
 William Mounce, Carpenter 8
 Edward McCarthy, Clerk 1
 Charles J. Card, Master Mariner 2
 Eleazar D. Lockhart, Master Mariner 3

The master William M. Lockhart and the ship's carpenter and the master's brother, Eleazar D. Lockhart, therefore both owned shares in the vessel.

When the ship first sailed the master's elder brother, Elkanah, was on the vessel as first mate, but soon left. These men and the cabin boy, Fred Ells, hailed from Avondale and the nearby, larger town of Windsor. Although only seventeen Ells became an ordinary seaman within a year, an able-bodied seaman a few months later, and boatswain in charge of the deck crew and rigging in less than two years.

For the rest of the crew the master had to travel further afield, to Halifax, a distance of some forty-five miles. Between 26 July and 1 August 1876 a cook and stewardess, twelve able-bodied and two ordinary seamen were signed on. The cook and stewardess were Samuel Wood, aged forty-five, and his new wife, Susan, aged thirty-one. The seamen were of mixed nationality, comprising three Canadians, three Americans, two Scots, two Irishmen, a Swede and a Norwegian. Two of the Canadians were, like Susan Wood, illiterate, and the ages of the seamen ranged between twenty and forty-five.

The first 'Agreement and Account of Crew' for the *John A. Harvie* described her probable destination as being

From Windsor to ports and places in the United States, thence if required to the ports and places in the United Kingdom and Continent of Europe including the Mediterranean Sea, South America, British and Foreign West Indies, United States and Dominion of Canada, and back to port of final discharge in the United States and Dominion of Canada at the Master's option. Term of time not to exceed nine months.

Besides the master, the *John A. Harvie* was required by law to carry a mate, boatswain, cook, steward and ten seamen. In fact she generally carried two mates, and on her early passages she did not carry a boatswain, his duties being exercised by the mates. All the crew who signed on in Halifax were advanced a month's wages but two seamen, both Canadians, deserted even before the vessel left its home port.

The *John A. Harvie* sailed from Windsor on or about 3 August 1876, never to return to her home port. She reached Philadelphia some three weeks later, at which port the entire complement of seamen deserted, though it must be admitted it was quite usual for seamen engaged in the Atlantic trade at the time to do this. The first mate, E. C. Lockhart, also left the vessel at Philadelphia. It was not until 25 September 1876 that she was cleared for sailing, and even then the newly-recruited second mate and three of the new seamen deserted before sailing.

After an Atlantic crossing of about six weeks the *John A. Harvie* arrived at Brake, on the River Weser, in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg (Lower Saxony), on 6 or 7 November when all the seamen and Arthur McKee, the new second mate, were discharged by mutual consent. It was at Brake that the ship's portrait was commissioned.

On or about 14 December the *John A. Harvie* sailed once more for the United States, with a new, and with one exception, all-European crew. David Eldrige, who had become first mate in Philadelphia, remained with the

vessel, and a new second mate, W. H. Smith, evidently of Windsor, Nova Scotia, was signed on. On this second crossing of the Atlantic, on 7 January, H. Amelung, aged twenty-one, of Bremen, was lost overboard while furling the lower fore-topsail. The vessel arrived at Baltimore, Maryland, on 21 February, at which point all twelve seamen deserted.

During the next three years, certain of the crew originally raised in and about Avondale, took their discharge. Eleazar D. Lockhart who had become first mate on 10 September 1877 left the ship on 2 January 1879 at New York, though he retained his three-share interest in the vessel. The Woods had left the ship in New York on 16 December 1878, as did Fred Ells, by this time boatswain in charge of deck crew and rigging, on 8 September 1879. On 30 July 1879, when the vessel was twelve days out of Belfast, on passage to New York, John McGrath, aged eighteen, of Belfast, was washed over the rail and drowned.

In January 1878 the *John A. Harvie* was copper-bottomed in a graving dock at Bremerhaven. Canadian built vessels generally had soft wood bottoms, and some, plying the cold waters of the North Atlantic, had a hardwood sheathing for protection against ice. Other ships trading along the east coast of North America were sheathed with copper, zinc, or, as was the case with the *John A. Harvie*, yellow metal (a copper-alloy), as protection against ship worm.

The last westward passage of the *John A. Harvie* began about 31 March 1880 at Antwerp and ended when she reached New York about 12 May, after seven weeks at sea. It comes as no surprise to learn that all the seamen promptly deserted. On 24 May Captain Lockhart turned over command of the ship to his elder brother, Elkanah C. Lockhart sometime first mate, and at the same time George Brison (another Windsor, N.S. man) signed on as first mate.

This change of personnel does not seem to have benefitted the vessel. After a six-week stay at New York, during which time a new crew of eleven seamen was taken on, the ship cleared for Lynn, Massachusetts, on 24 June. It took no less than six weeks to cover the six hundred miles from New York to Lynn, where the vessel remained from 7 to 30 August, and where a new cook and cabin boy were signed on. The return voyage again took six weeks, the *John A. Harvie* arriving at New York on or about 14 October.

The ship began her last passage on or about 30 October 1880, when she left New York for Dublin with a cargo of maize. The only man in the crew who had previously crossed the Atlantic in the vessel was James Sweeney, the boatswain, who had joined the ship at Antwerp before her last westward crossing. On this occasion, the *John A. Harvie* made a fast crossing of the North Atlantic, but she did not reach Dublin. On 25 November she ran on to rocks near Tacumshane on the south coast of Ireland, about fifteen miles short of a clear run up to St. Albert's Channel to Dublin.



The *John A. Harvie* by F. Weltering in the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic, Halifax, Nova Scotia

The fate of the *John A. Harvie* was recounted in some detail by the *Shipping and Mercantile Gazette*:

November 25 1880, 1:35 pm. A barque with foremast cut away. Apparently full of water and flying a foreign flag is ashore head to sea by her anchor off Tacumshane; heavy sea on; crew still on board; vessel beyond reach of rocket apparatus.

November 25, 8:25 p.m. Barque offshore off Tacumshane is probably the *John A. Harvie* from New York.

November 26, 7:15 p.m. The barque offshore off Tacumshane yet holds on, but likely to become a total wreck. Name on stern as made out by telescope reads *John A. Harvie* (Windsor, N.S.). Lifeboat gone to rescue.

On 29 November *Lloyd's List* reported the loss, and its rather fortunate outcome:

Wexford, November 27, 11:50 a.m. – JOHN A. HARVIE. Succeeded after trying night in landing crew of *John A. Harvie* by Lifeboat at 7.50 a.m. All saved, 15 men and two women.

In fact the crew list contains seventeen names, but it appears there were no fatalities in this incident. One of the 'two women' mentioned was probably Captain Lockhart's wife, Eliza. After two trying nights in the wreck the crew was paid off immediately on coming ashore, receiving any money that was due to them, which in nine cases amounted to nothing at all. Other sums paid out ranged from £15 14s 5d for the mate, George Brison, to £1 3s 6d for Arthur Pepper, the cabin boy. Pepper was seventeen years old, and this was the first time he had been to sea. The *John A. Harvie* on the other hand, had made twenty crossings of the North Atlantic. She failed to complete her twenty-first.

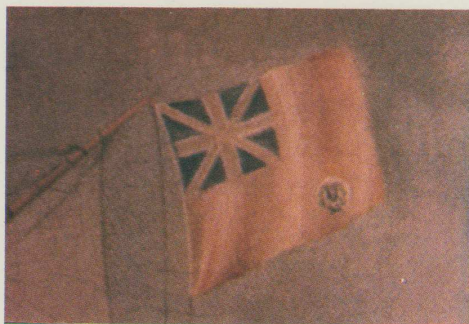


Fig. 3 Detail from figure 1. The Red Ensign is defaced by a badge which appears to be a wreath enclosing a shield surmounted by a beaver couchant. On the shield the quartered arms of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

The House Flag has a red border surrounding a white field, the initial being blue.