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8 SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE SUNDAY, MAY 11, 1902.

THE HOODOOED SCHOONER THAT FOUND HER COFFIN

THE REPORTER PHOTOGRAPHED ON THE DAY SHE WAS WRECKED

THE REPORTER LIES WITHIN THE RIBS OF THE KING PHILIP WRECKED 21 YEARS BEFORE

DAVID JONES

Gordon Ross

and tons of thousands of people have gone down the Ocean boulevard to look upon the dismantled schooner where she lay for weeks in the seething surf, a pitiable but picturesque sight.

These two strange, silent stories of the sea are more than a curious coincidence. They are two of a total of seven somewhat similar shipwrecks that have occurred along that Cliff House beach in the last quarter of a century. A curiously similar fate has overtaken seven vessels, caused the total loss of six of them, resulted in the destruction of more than $250,000 worth of property, brought about the injury of five seamen and sent to their death no less than thirty others. Such is the hitherto unheeded record of the open ocean where its waves wash the long, smooth, level beach south of the famous Seal rocks. Nor is this all of the similarity in the experiences of the craft that have been stranded on the ocean beach. Five of the seven wrecked vessels sailed from their last port Friday regardless of the superstitions of the sailors, and one of the two that did not sail Friday was hauled off the beach and dried from destruction. So, all but one of the hopeless wrecks of the Cliff House beach were victims of unlucky Friday, the sailor's hoodoo. Four of them were wrecked Friday, and the thirty lost lives are all credited to a Friday sailing and a Friday disaster.

Friday is ominous in the record of marine disasters just outside the Golden Gate. The count is heavy against that ill-omened day. It was Friday that the great steamship Rio de Janeiro foolishly nosed along through a thick fog in the early morning of Washington's birthday, 1901, while approaching the Golden Gate, and sank to an unknown resting place with $1,200,000 worth of property and 128 human lives. All the other days of the week combined cannot show an aggregate of losses and fatalities and disasters outside the Golden Gate equivalent to a tenth of the terrible history of Friday. All these misfortunes have occurred between August and April, indicating, perhaps, that the full tides and the rough weather of winter have had something to do with the repetition of wrecks and fatalities, for the summer months have no disaster to their credit in the history of navigation within sight of the historic Cliff House and the Seal rocks that are known as objects of interest to the traveling public of all the world.

The King Philip had a notable experience with a mutinous crew several years before she buried herself there in the San Francisco sands. She was in Honolulu harbor when her sailors rebelled, set fire to the ship, and abandoned her. With great difficulty the flames were subdued, but not until considerable damage had been done to the vessel and her contents. The Friday she went to her doom she was towed out of San Francisco harbor in company with the ship Western Shore and the Bolivian bark Don Nicolas, and all three vessels were cast loose near the bar and left to sail freely out to sea. The breeze slackened and the sail craft began to drift southward with the ocean swell. They could not help themselves, and the Western Shore ran up a signal of distress. All three vessels dropped their anchors, but they failed to hold. A mile northwest of the Cliff House the anchors of the Don Nicolas caught and stopped her helpless drifting toward the Seal rocks. The Western Shore and the King Philip continued to battle with the big billows and drift down and nearer the shore. A mile and a half below the Cliff House the Western Shore, still flying her flag upside down and half way up the mizzen mast, secured an anchor hold safely a mile from shore. But the unlucky King

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MYSTERY of the sea has developed on the ocean beach a mile and a half below the Cliff House, at the outer entrance to the bay of San Francisco. More than twenty-four years ago the big bark King Philip was carried ashore in a heavy storm, beached by the abnormally high tide, and left a desolate wreck, slowly sinking in the quicksands above the wash of the waves. Two months ago the three-masted schooner Reporter was similarly wrecked in a severe storm and grounded out in the combing breakers 300 feet from shore and directly opposite the spot where for nearly a quarter of a century the slightly protruding rows of posts to the sands marked, for those few who knew the record, the place where the King Philip had buried herself. For weeks the Reporter lay a desolate wreck out there in the combing and thrashing waves, her back broken, her masts wobbling and her deckload of lumber slowly detaching itself and drifting ashore. But in a night the helpless hulk bestirred herself, left her helpless position in the tumult of seething waters, came quietly in upon the bosom of some great friendly wave, and was left high aground above the surf. No one had seen how it was done or just when. Men came and looked at the dry-stranded thing and wondered at the row of jagged posts fixed deep in the sand all around her as if to keep her there forever.

By some marvelous coincidence of winter swells and unusual high tides this 150-foot schooner had not only come ashore exactly where the King Philip came two decades and a half earlier, but had been lifted up and placed gently inside the barrier formed by the ribs of the old bark, which was just enough larger to take the schooner within her forlorn hulk, with a little space at the bow and a little room left over at the stern. Men with machinery could not have engineered the adjustment more nicely or more accurately placed bow within bow and stern within stern, and yet the old ocean had done its work in a night, gently and quietly consigned to this coffin shorter of its victims, performed its funeral ceremony without witnesses, and gone on moaning its incessant dirge for the men and the ships it has smothered and torn asunder.

Nor is this all of the strange similarity of incidents associated with these wrecks that are incased one within the other till time shall remove the last trace of the seasoned timbers of which their hulls were made. The King Philip was a lumber vessel; so was the Reporter. The King Philip sailed between San Francisco and Puget sound, so did the Reporter. The King Philip left port for her last voyage one Friday; so did the Reporter. The King Philip was 23 years old when she was wrecked; the Reporter was 25. The King Philip sailed and was wrecked Friday, the unlucky, dreaded, hoodoo day; the Reporter sailed Friday and was wrecked the 13th of the month, combining the ill omens and superstitions of the men of the sea. The King Philip was caught helplessly in the ocean swells just outside the headland guides and was slowly and powerfully carried down the coast, struggling, but inevitably going to her doom amid tremendous seas and raging, tumultuous surf. The Reporter was unconsciously drawn by that same almost imperceptible down-coast current and carried along through enormous storm billows toward a fate the men on her could not anticipate or prevent, for the weather was too hazy and the night too dark for them to discern either signal beacons or the long, low line of sandy shore. The King Philip had been the only vessel ever known to go ashore on that two-mile stretch of driftway beach; the Reporter had been the last of seven great marine disasters on those harmless looking sands that mark the western edge of the city of San Francisco. The King Philip grounded after coming through rows of raging, mammoth billows that swept her decks and sent her crew into the rigging for safety; the Reporter grounded where she was at the mercy of mighty, terrible surf that plunged over her and broke high up into her rigging, wetting the crew that clung for two hours to lofty perches till the life-savers rescued the men from their chilly refuge and got them safely ashore through the drenching seas. The King Philip was the popular marine show during the spring of 1878, when thousands of people visited the ocean beach to see the stranded wreck; the Reporter has been the greatest beach attraction San Franciscans have had for many years.

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