

---

# HOW THE FITZGERALD SANK TWICE

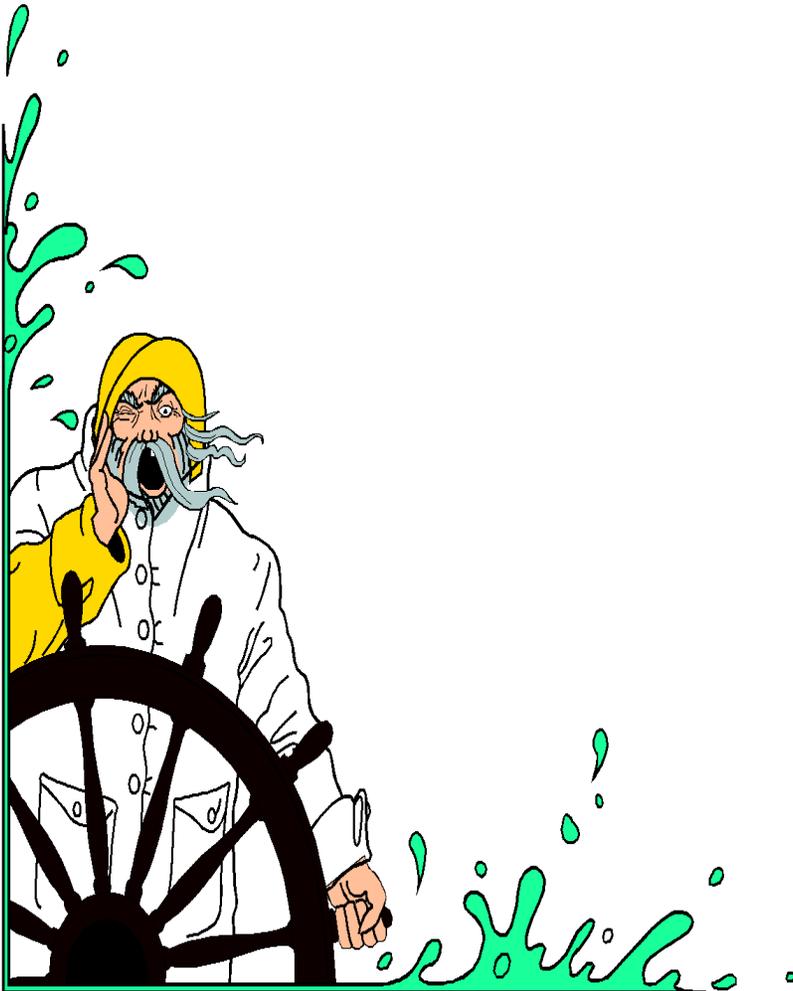
---

An excerpt

---

By: Bette Lou Higgins & Shelley Pearsall

---



# HOW THE *FITZGERALD* SANK TWICE

BY: Bette Lou Higgins & Shelley Pearsall

Copyright 2001, 2010

Eden Valley Enterprises

1250 East River St.

Elyria, Ohio 44035

© 2001, 2010

You probably never knew there were TWO *Fitzgeralds*, did you? No one did. See, that was the problem. If they had known about the first one, things might have been different. The first *Fitzgerald* survived thirteen years on the Great Lakes, the second one, seventeen years. One was made of wood, the other of steel. One was powered by wind. The other ran on oil-fired engines. But none of that mattered to the waters of the Great Lakes. Both boats were lost . . . just four days short of 92 years apart. One was lost on November 14, 1883. The other on November 10, 1975. Both went down near shoals. \* One was lost at Long Point, the other near Whitefish Point. Not a single member of the crew on either boat survived.

Any sailor will tell you, you never name a boat after one that was lost. They shouldn't have called the second one the *Edmund Fitzgerald*. That was bad luck. You don't build another *Titanic*, if you know what I mean.

It all started in 1870 when the first *Edmond Fitzgerald* was built in Port Huron, Michigan -- maybe 60, 70 miles north of Detroit. She was a two-masted schooner, built by a man named Edmond Fitzgerald -- EdmOnd, with an "O." He came from an Irish family of six brothers, all Great Lakes people. He settled in Port Huron in the 1830's and became one of its most well-known citizens. Started out in the lumber business, then he sailed the Great Lakes as a ship's master for awhile, and in the 1860's, when he was past his sailing years, he began building and repairing ships. Later on, he served as Port Huron's mayor for awhile. He built all kinds of ships -- the steamer *Henry Howard*, the schooners *Hattie Wells* and *Hattie Johnson*, the tug *Frank Moffet*. In 1869, he built the largest sail vessel ever constructed in Port Huron -- a 155 foot, three-masted schooner called the *Carlingford*. Took a force of 50 men to put her together, and they say she was a sight to behold when they launched her.

In 1870 he built a smaller lumber and grain carrying two-masted schooner, the *Edmond Fitzgerald*. In November, 1883 the captain of the *Fitzgerald* decided to try to make one last run for the season. Wanted

to make some extra money -- a little more pocket change. And that's when it happened to the *Edmond Fitzgerald*. It was the middle of November: November 14, 1883 to be exact. She was trying to get across Lake Erie with one last cargo of wheat. But a snowstorm caught her near Long Point, Ontario. Long Point is a place you never want to go to if you don't have to. It's a twenty-mile point of land that juts out into Lake Erie. Has tricky shoals all around it. "The Graveyard of Lake Erie," they call it. Even the best sailors have trouble navigating there. The *Edmond Fitzgerald* got herself caught in the middle of a snowstorm that day. With the wind and the snow blowing so hard you couldn't see your nose in front of your face, the heavy seas washing over the deck, she ran up on a sandbar near the Long Point cut lighthouse. And then she was done for. The waves broke her apart. Broke her apart piece by piece. After the masts went over, the crew launched the yawl boats to save their lives, but the boats overturned in the frigid waters and all seven crew members were lost. They could see the Long Point Lighthouse -- that's how close to land they were. They drowned in sight of the land. Imagine THAT! The lifesaving crew near the Long Point lighthouse watched them drown. The captain of the lifesaving

station had the keys to the boathouse in his pocket. He rushed to the beach to survey the wreck, and his crew couldn't get into the boathouse to get the lifesaving boats. They had to break through the boathouse doors. By the time they pulled the lifesaving boat to the beach, the crew of the *Edmond Fitzgerald* had already been lost. Later a "gentleman" paid \$250 to salvage the wheat from the *Edmond Fitzgerald* and then he sold the wheat for 30 cents a bag. People came from all over to buy bags of "shipwreck wheat." It was dishonorable -- what they did! Dishonorable. Boat goes down with seven men and someone's got to try and make money off of it.

Exactly seventy-five years later, in 1958, Edmond's great nephew, Edmund with a "u," had a boat named after him.

...The *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank in Lake Superior on November 10, 1975 -- A final Victim of The Gales of November.



1250 East River St.  
Elyria, Ohio 44035

---

This excerpt is from our book *How The Fitzgerald Sank Twice* which is just one of EVE's stories with a past. If you would like to read the full story of the two *Fitzgeralds* simply go to <http://www.edenvalleyenterprises.org/booksgl.html> to order your copy of the complete story.

Eden Valley Enterprises is dedicated to providing unique educational experiences. Our philosophy is that learning and doing are fun and our basic tool is theatre. While we specialize in living history programs, storytelling, and musical trips back in time, we are equally adept at other kinds of programs.

From *CANAL SONGS AND STORIES*, a fun and informative program that features music and stories from the Ohio-Erie Canal, to *DOCTOR PUTNAM'S MIRACLE MIXTURE*, a vivid, high-spirited living history program, Eden Valley gives your audiences drama that brims with energy, humor, and fantasy and features a magical cast of characters.

Eden Valley has a wide assortment of existing programs available for presentation and if these programs don't meet your needs, we'd be happy to put together one especially for you! If you would like to arrange a performance for your group or would like more information about any of Eden Valley services, programs and publications, contact us at <http://www.edenvalleyenterprises.org/contactgoogle.htm> or visit our website at [www.edenvalleyenterprises.org](http://www.edenvalleyenterprises.org).