

Annie E. Smale

By Miles Atchison

The Annie E. Smale was a four masted schooner owned by Swayne & Hoyt. The Annie E. Smale was valued at \$40,000 and carried only gear insurance. The vessel sailed from Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, bound for San Francisco.

The cargo was 1408 tons of coal, which had been consigned to the Canadian Bank of Commerce. There were two passengers on board, the captain's wife and her little nephew, E. C. Gardiner. The officers and crew of the Annie E. Smale included her master, J. E. Anderson, and her first mate, H. Kroger. C. W. Erickson was her second mate, J. Goki the cook, and R. Van Gordon the steward. E. Cerb, J. Wanner, A. Ltensa, C. Heinz, P. Utillik and W. Richards were her seamen.

The Annie E. Smale had been 100 days out at sea when on Saturday, July 9, 1910, at 2:00 a.m., the vessel grounded on the rocks off Point Reyes. The voyage had apparently been "a very pleasant one," during the entire crossing from Australia. On nearing land, the winds had become comparatively light and a dense fog began to develop. Captain Anderson expressed "little nervousness as the fog began to close in." The foghorn marking Point Reyes was reported to have been heard only a short time after the captain realized that the vessel was near shore. Without sufficient power to maneuver, as there was no wind at the time, the captain gave orders to let go the anchors in an attempt to hold the ship from grounding. However, the anchors did not hold and the vessel drifted onto the rocks. The Annie E. Smale struck amidship. The severe force of the impact strained the vessel, which was almost broken in two. Aware of the peril, the captain immediately ordered the life boats lowered.

By 2:30 a.m., the passengers and crew had safely launched the lifeboats and left the vessel. Apparently, the second mate had "thought he could better save himself by climbing over the rocks and elected to stay aboard." (This would seem to indicate that the vessel was fairly close to shore.)

A momentary break in the fog enabled the Point Reyes lookout to see the wreck. The lookout immediately altered the regular blasts of the foghorn to a staccato call for help. At the same time, the lookout telephoned the Life Saving Station at Point Reyes for assistance. The Life Saving Station was some five miles away.

Captain S. H. Burtis of the steamer M. F. Plant heard the Point Reyes foghorn's call for help shortly after 5:00 a.m. Captain Burtis "stood by to render assistance" The M. F. Plant was sailing from Coos Bay to San Francisco with freight and passengers. Shortly before 6:00 a.m. the fog had lifted enough for Captain Burtis to see the wreck and the life boats with the survivors "close aboard inshore." The second officer of the M. F. Plant, Harry Thumm, took charge of a rescue boat which succeeded in transferring the occupants of the lifeboats to safety on board the M. F. Plant. After this task was accomplished, the rescue boat went to the wreck and brought off second mate Erickson. He was still on the poop-deck of the ship, which was rapidly breaking-up at that point, having been unable to reach the rocks and safety. By 6:30 a.m. all members of the disabled vessel had been picked up and were on their way to the Port of San Francisco. By nightfall, the Annie E. Smale was reported to be sinking. The owners of the vessel concluded that the ship and all of its cargo were a total loss.

Appendix

The volume Merchant Sailing Vessels of the United States for the year 1910 lists the Annie E. Smale as a schooner built at Marshfield, Oregon in 1903. Further, the volume lists the vessel as being of a 845 gross tons, 809 net tons, of a length of 200 feet, a breadth of 40.6 feet, and a depth of 16.4 feet. The volume also lists a crew of 10 persons. The Annie E. Smale's home port (where her permanent documents were issued) is listed as San Francisco, California. The vessel's signal letters are given as K.S.G.L. and the vessel's official number is designated as 107821.

This same volume for the year 1911, in the section "Loss of American Vessels Reported during Fiscal Year 1911," lists the Annie E. Smale. The list indicates 14 persons on-board with no lives lost. The nature of the vessel's loss is indicated as having been stranded on July 9, 1910, at Point Reyes, California.

The Lloyd's Register of Shipping was consulted. There was no listing of the Annie E. Smale.

Sources

San Francisco Chronicle, "Vessel is Total Wreck off Point Reyes." San Francisco, California, July 10, 1910, p. 27, 28.

Merchant Sailing Vessels of the United States. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 1910, p. 11, 1911, p. 410.