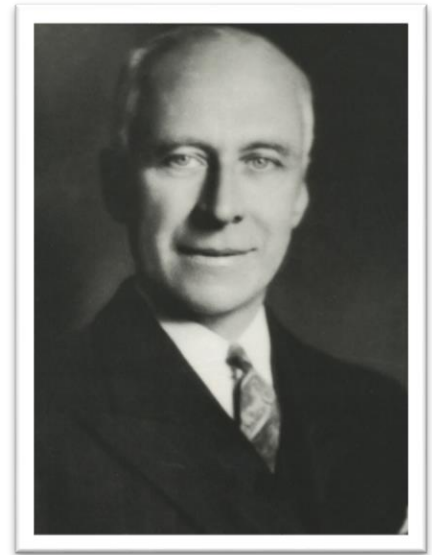


★ SCHOONER ZODIAC ★

The Schooner *Zodiac* – The Canadian Chapter

By Deane Nesbitt Jr. (Grandson of Arthur J. Nesbitt)

From 1929 until 1931, the schooner *Zodiac* was owned by Arthur J. Nesbitt (photo at right), of Montreal. He renamed the schooner *Airdeane*, after his two sons, Aird and Deane. Nesbitt docked the vessel in Nova Scotia and it cruised the coasts of Labrador and the Canadian Maritimes. In a newspaper article on the *Airdeane* it's noted that it cruised the West Indies, as well.



At that time, the schooner still had its portholes and the configuration inside was still as it was when it was built – five staterooms, heads, a large main saloon, and crew's quarters forward. The schooner had electric refrigeration, electric deck machinery and a heating unit. The captain and a member of the crew are shown below.

This was probably the only time when the schooner had a piano on board – not just a regular piano, but a grand piano. Nesbitt played both piano and organ and in the house he built in Montreal, he installed both. As this was in the days before electronics, a room in the basement housed all the mechanics to reproduce the sounds of the instruments, together with a large air blower for the pipes.



Born in the Canadian Maritimes, Nesbitt sold dry goods throughout that area by horse and cart at the age of 17. His friend, Peter Thomson, sold Heinz pickles in the same way. In 1912, they co-founded what became the largest investment bank in Canada. Nesbitt

Thomson, now BMO Nesbitt Burns, celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2012. At its largest, the company had offices in North and South America and Europe, including 20 offices in the US. In 1968, the firm bought a seat on the New York Stock Exchange, the first non-US firm to be accepted in over 30 years.

After the stock market crash in 1929, Nesbitt and Thomson each went into personal debt, which they carried most of their lives, to ensure that not a single employee of the firm would lose his or her job because of the Great Depression. Consequently, no employee did.

In 1931, Arthur J. Nesbitt donated the *Airdeane* to the Grenfell Mission, which provided medical and educational services to Labrador and Northern Newfoundland. The vessel appears to have been purchased the same year by the San Francisco Bar Pilot Association and renamed the *California*. As both the Grenfell Mission and the San Francisco Bar Pilot Association lost records, the brief history of the schooner between ownership by the Grenfell Mission and the San Francisco Bar Pilot Association is not known.



