

Salute to ST ROCH's Epic Voyage

Chronicle-Herald Voice of the People | OCT. 11, 2014

<http://thechronicleherald.ca/letters/1242952-voice-of-the-people-oct-11-2014>

At a time of increased national interest in Arctic sovereignty and development, today marks the 72nd anniversary of the epic voyage of the RCMP Patrol Vessel St. Roch through the Northwest Passage (NWP) during the Second World War.

When the St. Roch slipped quietly into wartime Halifax Harbour on Oct. 11, 1942, few Canadians were aware of what the 104-foot schooner and her eight-member crew under command of Sgt. (later Supt.) Henry Larsen had accomplished.

St. Roch had completed the first west to east transit of the fabled Northwest Passage. The ship departed Vancouver in 1940 and had spent two winters frozen in ice before the persevering Larsen and his crew finally reached Halifax.

In 1944, the ship — after a major refit in Dartmouth — would make the east-to-west transit of the Passage in a record 86 days, and six years later returned to Halifax via the Panama Canal to become the first ship to circumnavigate North America. The vessel was retired in 1954.

To recognize the ship's historic voyages and years of service in the Arctic and northern territories, the Royal United Services Institute-N.S. undertook the development of a suitable commemoration. In 2007, with the support of the RCMP, other organizations, companies and individual donors, the RCMP Patrol Vessel St. Roch commemorative stone was unveiled at Alderney Landing, Dartmouth — an important addition to the historic waterfront.

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