

Mystery of Brigantine Mary Celeste Still Lingers on Books of Atlantic Insurance

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UPI Financial Editor

New York (UPI) — Eighty-six years ago, the proud brigantine Mary Celeste unfurled her canvases and set out for Genoa, Italy, with a cargo of 1,701 barrels of alcohol.

Before sailing, her cargo had been duly insured by five American companies, including Atlantic Mutual Insurance Company of New York.

Atlantic then was located at 45 Wall st. right near the docks. Its sole business then was marine insurance and it probably never wrote a more famous piece of insurance than it did on the Mary Celeste's cargo.

But it has written many a bigger piece of insurance since and today it is right where it was back there at 45 Wall st. — its third new building on the site.

Those days of long ago were hazardous ones for ships and sailors. In the case of the Mary Celeste, the ship came back but the entire crew and passengers were lost forever and they've been a mystery to this day.

Found Sailing Unmanned

A somewhat similar brigantine the Dei Gratia found the Mary Celeste sailing slowly with half her sails set and the wheel spinning gaily as the vagrant winds blew her hither and yon.

A rump crew of the Dei Gratia took her to port and received only a fraction of the salvage they had anticipated. A new crew and skipper took her back after discharging her cargo. Atlantic lost nothing on the insurance since the cargo was delivered intact.

But the mystery lingers on and many a wintry night in the Mary Celeste room at the northwest of the Atlantic's buildings, 'tis said the ghosts of Capt. Benjamin S. Briggs and his crew of seven paw over the mementos of their last cruise. In the dead of the night one can hear the weird notes of the captain as he orders "abandon ship."

Atlantic Insurance Company is the only survivor of the more than 40 mutual insurance companies that carried on a marine insurance business during the booming shipping days of the 1840s when America's clipper ships were the queens of the seas.

Although Atlantic, with its subsidiary, the Centennial Insurance Co., now writes almost all kinds of insurance, except life, its roots in marine insurance go back 117 years.

Series of 'Disaster Books'

The company has amassed a series of 341 volumes of its records — "Disaster Books," they are called, which record all available details of marine disasters throughout the world back to 1850.

They include stories like

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that of the ghost ship, Mary Celeste. Also there are logs of old clipper ship captains, records of the gold rush days of 1849, and the comments on the mortality of the day are among the records.

Gold shipments of the 1850s had a long way to travel by steamer from San Francisco to Panama, by mule train across the isthmus and then by steamer to New York.

Myriad records piled up at Atlantic and the wonder grew how the company could house all of them. There were jokes on their extent and authenticity. Someone suggested the company might even have a record of the ark, so he sent in a request for the data and got the following reply:

Last Reported Stranded

"Built BC 2448 — gopher wood — pitched within and without — length 300 cubits — width, 50 cubits — height, 30 cubits — three decks — cattle carrier — owner, Noah and sons — last reported stranded Mount Ararat."

Miles F. Young, president, said the Atlantic companies are using a new method of introducing new policies in the fire and casualty insurance business.

"In the past," he noted, "companies have figured out what combinations of coverages they thought would sell, then they have introduced them as new policies and tried to get their agents to market them."

Today the company solicits the views of its agents and adjusts its new policy procedure to their ideas. Next year Atlantic plans a series of informal seminars for agents to sit down with company executives to discuss common needs and problems of the company.

Times Have Changed

Things aren't as simple as they were back in the 1800s. And costs are quite different too. Take the case of the company lunchroom. Back in 1906 the week's provisions for that room cost only \$46.70, including corned beef at 14 cents a pound; bacon at 16 cent; T-bone steak at 22 cents a pound; pork chops at 15 cents; veal at 10 cents and leg beef at a mere seven cents.

And the rules aren't as strict any more either. There is no rule to say one can't light or smoke cigars or pipes in the office. And at quitting time, one can go home without shutting off the gas at his desk.

Today the help works 35 hours a week. Back in the old days the rule said one must be at his desk at eight and a half a.m. and remain until at least 6 p.m. or until the work in his respective department was completed no matter how long it took.

Mining Council to Help With Course

The Northwestern Mining Council Thursday night voted to help organize an adult instruction course in prospecting and practical mining with Norman Peterson of the Grants Pass office of geology and mineral industries as the instructor.

The Council also voted to sponsor a 4-H trophy for the

top rock and mineral exhibit at the next fair in Medford. Council members also supported governors of the 11 western states in their position on the issue of a free gold world market.

Following the business meeting, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Clifford showed colored slides of western scenes.



FLOOD WATERS WRECK PIER—Men stand amid the shattered wreckage of a pier at Ste. Maxime, France, following bursting of the Malpasset dam. Ste. Maxime is about 20 miles from Frejus, the town inundated by raging waters from the broken dam.

Deputies Investigate Rogue River Burglary
Sheriff's deputies Friday investigated the burglary of Dr. E. V. Chance's office in Rogue River, it was reported.

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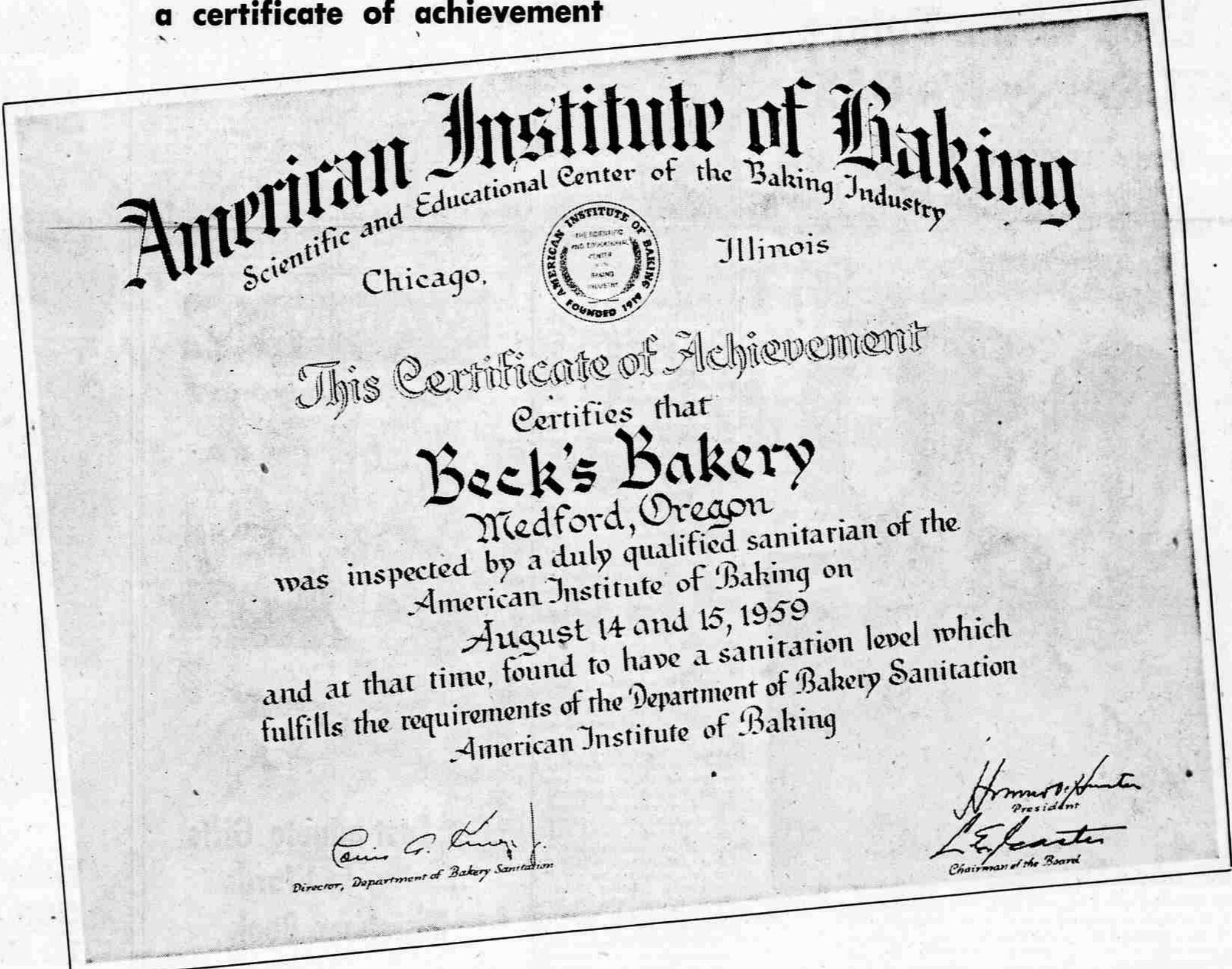


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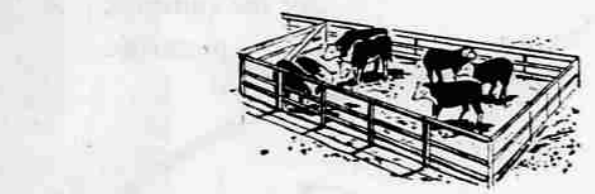
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