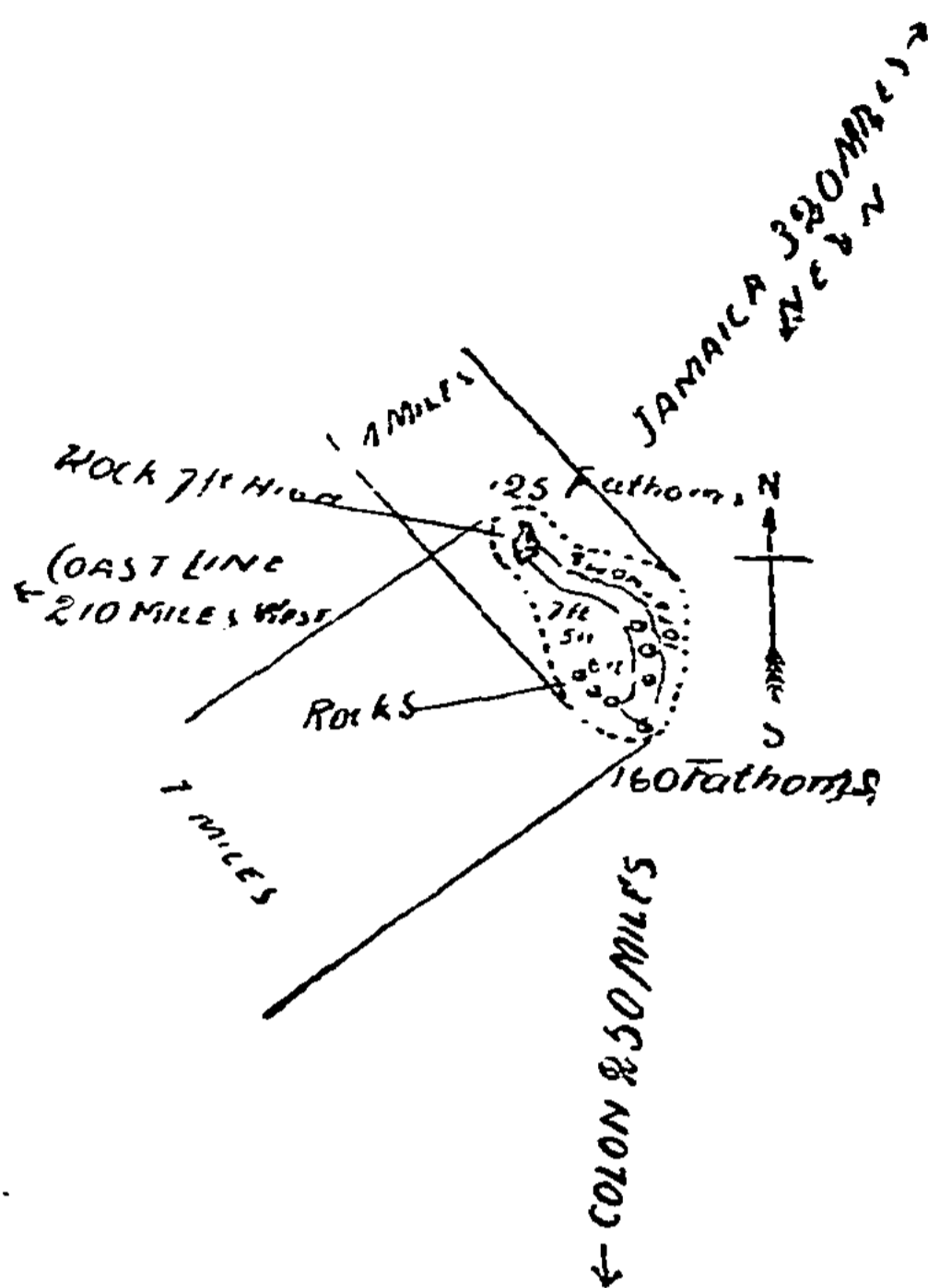


A LOCALITY MARINERS DETEST.

Roncador Reef Famous for Wrecks— Warner Miller Came to Grief There.

Roncador Bank, usually called Roncador Reef, where the Kearsarge was wrecked, has been the scene of many similar disasters. The Pacific mail steamship Golden Rule was stranded there in 1865. There were 900 persons on board. Boats were dispatched to Colon for assistance, but it was a month before the castaways were rescued. Many of them died from the effects of the exposure.

The Norwegian bark Ydon a few years later went ashore on the bank, and eight of her crew were drowned. The next vessel to meet disaster on the treacherous shoal was a steamship bound from Savannah for



Roncador Bank.

Bluefields. The crew made its way to the mainland in the ship's boats.

The most notable Roncador disaster in recent years occurred on March 26, 1891, when the steamship Aguan, having on board Warner Miller and a large number of persons interested in the Nicaragua Canal, was stranded on the reef. The steamship ran her full length upon the reef before she could be checked. No lives were lost. The party was rescued by the steamship Presidente Carazo, which conveyed the shipwrecked people to Greytown.

Roncador Bank is one of a number of cays which dot that stretch of water lying between Cuba and the Nicaraguan and Mexican coasts. The bank is seven miles in length, but not more than a mile in width. What makes it so dangerous to mariners is the fact that its highest point is only seven feet above the sea level, and on a calm night when there is no surf a vessel could slide her keel upon the shoal before the look-outs could give warning of danger.

Although it is in the track of vessels plying between Jamaica and Greytown, there is no lighthouse to warn vessels away from its dangerous sands. Rear Admiral Ammen and others interested in the Nicaraguan Canal have strongly recommended the establishment of a lighthouse there, but, so far, no steps have been taken to erect one.

Navigators who are familiar with the locality say that it is one of the most dangerous. It is made so from the nature of the currents which swirl about in that sea, and are as erratic in force as they are in direction.

Commander Horace Elmer, who formerly commanded the Kearsarge and who has many times piloted the old corvette about those waters, said yesterday to a reporter for The New-York Times that he had never found the force or direction of the currents the same on any two occasions. According to this officer, their force varies from one-half to three knots per hour and sets in as many directions as there are points to the compass. Owing to the nature of these currents, Commander Elmer thinks that a vessel journeying through that locality in thick weather should skirt the shoals at a considerable distance and set a course that would place at least sixty miles between herself and that dangerous string of reefs.

As is shown in the accompanying cut, Roncador Bank lies 210 miles to the eastward of the Nicaraguan coast and 250 miles north of Colon. Its only vegetation is a lot of low scrubby bushes. The narrow ridge of sand stretches seven miles in a northwest and southeasterly direction. During high winds the surf breaks over its entire length.

The lead, which mariners rely upon so much in thick weather, is of no assistance in navigating about Roncador Bank. A vessel approaching the bank from any direction may keep her leads constantly going and yet impale herself on one of the jutting rocks or drive her forefoot into the sand before the leadsmen can give warning, so abrupt is the shoal. Within a few hundred yards of its northern extremity there is a depth of 750 feet. Around its southern shores the water sinks into an abyss of 160 fathoms depth.