

Ship Notes

*Stories about
the Great Lakes from the
Journal of Inland Seas*

Fred Landon

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By
Fred Landon

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The Mariner's Church

The Mariner's Church of Detroit is a landmark on lower Woodward Avenue in that city. Many a passerby must have wondered what purpose it served in the past and what it serves today. Its story from 1848 to the present, nearly a century, is told in a small pamphlet recently issued, the contributors to which are Dr. Milo M. Quaife, secretary of the Burton Historical Collection in the Detroit Public Library, and Reverend David R. Covell, rector of the Mariner's Church and Superintendent of the Detroit Episcopal City Mission. Appended is a poem by Anne Campbell "The Mariner's Church" which was read June 28, 1944, at the Festival and Musicale to celebrate completion of extensive repairs and reconstruction of the church and attendant buildings.

Return of the Turret Cape

This year sees the return to the lakes of a vessel which first came there half a century or more ago but which for eight years past has been on salt water. This is the old *Turret Cape*, later renamed the *Sunchief* and now, on its return to fresh water, given the name *Walter Inkster*.

The *Inkster* is the last of the seven turret boats which were built in the early nineties by William Doxford & Sons of Sunderland, England, and brought to Canada soon after on contract to carry coal from Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Montreal. When this contract expired they were taken over by the Canadian Lake and Ocean Navigation Company, affiliated with the Mackenzie-Mann interests, who at that time were projecting the old Canadian Northern Railway.

After many years in the lakes trade the *Turret Cape* had apparently reached the end of her days and was sold to the Robin Hood Flour Mills Ltd. as a tow barge. Her engines were removed and it was not expected that she would ever be under her own power again. All this was changed by the coming of World War II.

In March, 1941, the old barge, then lying at the dock at Port Colborne, Ontario, was bought by Saguenay Terminals, Ltd., of Montreal. There she was reconditioned and Sulzer oil engines installed. This work was completed in October, 1941, and the vessel (renamed *Sunchief*) then left Montreal to engage in trade southbound to an American Atlantic port. She later moved into the Caribbean Sea, being engaged in bulk cargo carrying with occasional trips north to Atlantic ports.

The growing need for bauxite from British Guiana during the war had, by 1943, indicated the desirability of correcting certain reaches of the Demerara River by dredging and other aids to navigation. Due to lack of sufficient available equipment a decision was reached to convert the *Sunchief* to a suction drag dredge and this was done during the early months of 1944.

The vessel then joined other dredging craft and did considerable work in the Demerara River between the bauxite mine locations and the open sea, including some dredging work on the ocean bar off Georgetown. Upon completion of that project the *Sunchief* was reconverted to a cargo carrier

and resumed her job of shuttling bauxite from Demerara to Trinidad in which latter place a stock pile was maintained to top off vessels which were unable to load to full draft in the limited depth of water at the mine location on the Demerara River. The British Guiana bauxite is brought to Port Alfred on Ha-Ha Bay in the Saguenay River, Quebec, from where it is hauled by a short 20-mile railway to Arvida where the Aluminum Company of Canada operates the world's largest aluminum smelter.

Saguenay Terminals Ltd. is a subsidiary of the Aluminum Company and has recently decided to use larger ships. For this reason the *Sunchief* was sold to Sarnia Steamships Ltd. of Port Colborne and thus re-enters the Canadian lakes registry. Its new name honors Captain Walter Inkster, widely known compass adjuster, of Collingwood, Ontario.

During the war years the *Sunchief* was privileged to render assistance on several occasions to distressed ships and shipwrecked sailors. For this her ex-master, Captain L. H. Dicks, was awarded the decoration of the Order of the British Empire.

The Old Huronic

After forty-eight years of service on the lakes the steamer *Huronic* may follow the *Hamonic* and *Noronic* to the scrap heap, although Canada Steamship Lines officials seem uncertain about her fate. With the burning of the *Noronic* an end came to a lake passenger service from Sarnia to Lake Superior that dated back to the eighties and which may never be resumed.

There will be many, however, to whom the end of the *Huronic* would seem more like the end of an era, even though she has not for many years carried passengers, being used merely as a package freighter. The occasion may excuse a bit of personal reminiscence since I was on the *Huronic* on her first voyage in the spring of 1902, remained with her all that season until she docked at Sarnia on December 14th, and worked on her while a student in other years.

The *Huronic*, the first of the three modern passenger steamers to go on the Sarnia-Port Arthur-Duluth run, was launched at Collingwood in 1901 and left that port on her first trip on May 24th, 1902. She had on board a considerable number of special guests who left her at Sarnia or Windsor after which freight was loaded and the first trip up the lakes was begun on May 27th. Those were busy days for both lake and rail transportation for the West was booming and package freight came crowding into Point Edward faster than the vessels could take it out, while from the head of the lakes grain and flour furnished return cargoes. In all the *Huronic* made fifteen round trips during 1902, a season that was marked by much fog and in the closing weeks by rough weather which on November 21st sent the *Bannockburn* to the bottom of Lake Superior.

Members of the *Huronic* navigating crew were probably the last to see the *Bannockburn*, the mystery of whose fate has never been solved. The *Huronic* left the Soo on the morning of the 21st, headed up, and at night encountered the worst storm of the season, her own engines sustaining some damage. Towards evening a vessel was passed which the watch recognized as the *Bannockburn*. When she failed to make port a search was made on Lake Superior but without result.

On the next trip, the last of the season, the *Huronic* left Sarnia on December 4, ran up the east shore of Lake Huron because of bad weather but found Lake Superior quite calm and the weather mild. At Port Arthur,

however, the harbor was frozen over and tugs were busily attempting to keep it open. Coming down, the weather was clear at the start but changed into a heavy snowstorm on Lake Superior and from the Soo to Lake Huron the *Huronic* plowed her way through six or eight inches of ice. Lake Huron was rough the next night and when the vessel docked at Sarnia on the morning of the 14th she was so heavily coated with ice that it had to be chopped off before the gangways could be opened.

While at Port Arthur on that last trip the *Huronic* came close to the fate that ended her two sister ships. On the morning of December 9th, fire was discovered in stateroom 43 which spread into adjoining staterooms, two being completely gutted and a number of others damaged before the fire was brought under control. It was said at the time that five minutes delay in discovering the fire would probably have put the whole of the cabins into a blaze. This was the second fire of the season, a previous one in the pantry having been discovered and checked.

It may be of interest to recall the names of the officers of the vessel in its initial year. Captain W. J. Bassett was in command and Samuel Brisbin, of St. Catharines, was chief engineer. Captain Bassett stayed only one year on the *Huronic* and was succeeded by Captain Foote. Chief Brisbin had been on the *United Empire* for several years before 1902 and in later years he brought out both the *Hamon* and *Noronic*. A big likeable man with a repertoire of stories, he had a wide circle of friends. Percy Patterson was the purser and the steward was a famous old figure in lake shipping circles, Tom Inglis, of Detroit. He was a character concerning whom there were endless stories, a man high in Masonry and known far and wide on the lakes. The first mate was V. J. "Bill" McQuade, and the second mate was "Mike" Ironside, a man with some Indian blood and a most excellent sailor. Captain J. Montgomery, now in business in Port Colborne, was one of the watchmen in 1902. I had the pleasure of running into him a couple of years ago when we recalled old days on the *Huronic*.

My last trip on the *Huronic* was in November, 1904, when I answered a telegram from Sarnia asking me to go with the *Huronic* to Port Arthur, the purser being ill. I was never again on board the vessel until a few weeks ago when, being in Port Arthur, I found the old boat there and went all over her. Her upper cabin deck had been removed long ago but the lower cabins were being used to house the crew. The saloons had evidently not had a touch of paint since passenger service ended and the lovely oak paneling of the dining saloon was scratched and worn.

The glory had truly departed. I went up to the pilot house and down to the engine room and even looked into the cabin on the Texas deck where I had slept in days gone by. It was all familiar and I even met an acquaintance in the first mate, Joe Lodge, who had been second mate on the *Noronic* last year. We both wondered how soon the *Huronic* would go to her end. To Sarnia folk in particular, who for nearly half a century have known the old steamboat, her passing would bring a feeling of real loss.

The Manitoba

The wheel of the C.P.R. steamer *Manitoba*, which is at present being scrapped at the plant of the Steel Company of Canada in Hamilton, has been presented to the City of Owen Sound, where the vessel was built in 1889, and will be placed in the City Hall. The wheel is a fine piece of craftsmanship, being constructed of oak and walnut and bound heavily with brass. The presentation to the City was made by Mr. T. C. Wilkes, assistant purchasing agent of the Steel Company, at a function in Owen Sound, the gift being received by Chairman J. Fred Brown of the Harbor and Transportation Committee of the Board of Trade.

The Midland City

Still trading on the Georgian Bay, the steamer *Midland City* has a record of eighty years service, and with the exception of the *Beauharnois* (ex *Richelieu*), which was built in 1845, must be the oldest Canadian passenger boat on the lakes today. The *Beauharnois*, which carries both passengers and automobiles, plies between Valleyfield and Cote du Lac.

Originally an iron side-wheeler, frames and hull of the present *Midland City* were made in Scotland and after being shipped out to Kingston, Ontario, were put together by Thurston in 1871 for C. F. Gildersleeve, the work being done in the Davis shipyard. The boat was named *Maud* after Mr. Gildersleeve's daughter. About 1874 there was a change of ownership to Folger Brothers (St. Lawrence Navigation Company), the class being changed to river ferry. During the fall and winter of 1894-5 the vessel was rebuilt and lengthened in the Davis shipyard and came out with the new name *America* (100662). Her gross tonnage at this time was 521, net 266 and dimensions were 155'2" x 33'2" x 6'4" depth of hull.

The *America* was operated for many years with the *Empire State* as an excursion steamer, carrying passengers to St. Lawrence points. In 1916 ownership changed to Canada Steamship Lines and five years later to a Midland group headed by James Playfair and known as the Georgian Bay Tourist Company. They gave the vessel its present name.

In 1933 the vessel was modernized, the side-wheels, engine and boiler being removed and replaced by two twin-screw Fairbanks-Morse diesel engines. The original power had been an inclined tandem compound two cylinder engine 20"-36" x 36" stroke built by Gildersleeve at Kingston in 1870, steam being supplied by one fire-box boiler 7'6" x 13'. The planking on the outside of the hull, probably originally oak, has been replaced at intervals, and is now mostly British Columbia fir about three inches in thickness. This is through bolted to gull framing. The reason for this added protection is that it is easier to get a wooden bottom off a shoal than a steel bottom and the elasticity in the wood assures less damage if scraping the bottom.

The Midland group which bought the vessel in 1926 were quite certain that business awaited them. One of their number, N. K. Wagg, had operated a steam laundry at Midland for some years and prior to the purchase of the

America had operated a small boat to collect laundry from the summer hotels and cottages. Summer visitors were always wanting to travel on the laundry boat so that prospects for a scheduled service were promising. In April, 1921, Mr. Wagg and associates purchased the *City of Dover*, built at Port Dover in 1896 for W. F. Kolbe. Its dimensions were 74'8" x 20'4" x 7', gross tonnage 80.79, net 54.94. Registry was transferred at once from Port Dover to Midland and in January, 1922, ownership passed to the Honey Harbor Navigation Company, which operated two scows and a waterbus. The Honey Harbor Company was owned and operated by the Georgian Bay Tourist Company of Midland.

Prior to the opening of the season of 1949 Mr. Thomas McCullough, who had been associated with Mr. Wagg in the laundry and navigation business, became owner of the chief assets of the Bay Tourist Company and its subsidiary. As a result of a difference with his employees over labor union matters he offered his holdings for sale in April, 1949 and they were purchased by a Penetanguishene group for \$50,000, half the amount being paid in cash and the balance covered by a mortgage. This new company was known as Georgian Bay Tourist and Steamships Limited.

The new company struck good fortune in this initial year. It was the tercentenary of the abandonment of the Jesuit headquarters at old Fort Ste. Marie and pilgrims to the number of nearly 200,000 came to the famous Martyrs' Shrine near Midland. There was greater business than had ever before been experienced.

Such success naturally invited competition and in 1950 John L. Cowan, former shore captain for Canada Steamship Lines, joined with several Midland citizens to form a new company. They brought in a little motor vessel, the *West Wind*, which had operated for many years between Parry Sound and Point au Baril and they also invited the owner-captain to bring the *Coastal Queen*, a 112-foot converted Fairmile, down from Port Arthur where it had been running excursion trips out to Isle Royale with rather indifferent success.

The Midland Company's venture was not entirely a success. The summer trade in 1950 was not like that of 1949 and neither company made much money. The Midland Company's vessels were too small; they rolled uncomfortably and could carry neither freight nor automobiles. In the end the Midland Company was dissolved and the two small vessels which they had been operating went back to their former routes.

New safety regulations which were imposed upon all Canadian passenger vessels following the destruction by fire of the steamer *Noronic* while at dock in Toronto brought consternation to small lines such as this Georgian Bay line. Alarm was also felt by owners of hotels and cottages such as those in the Muskoka area whose property would have much less value without steamship connections. The owners of the *Midland City* and *City of Dover* decided against installing bulkheads, as the new regulations required, but instead installed a high pressure sprinkler system. They were left in doubt as to whether this would be accepted and not until mid-June did they receive permission from the Federal Department to carry their quota of passengers. The Canadian Pacific Railway, with its larger vessels traversing the lakes, was compelled to fulfill all requirements before the *Keewatin* and *Assiniboia* were licensed.

Captain Wilfrid Martin has been in charge of the *Midland City* for many years past and is familiar with every turn and twist of the Inside Passage to Parry Sound.

The writer of this article desires to extend thanks to Captain F. F. Hamilton of Kelleys Island, Ohio, and to Mr. W. R. Williams, Penetanguishene, Ontario, for assistance in compiling the information.

Port Stanley to Cleveland Excursion of 1849

Boat Passenger Service between Port Stanley and Cleveland ceased quite a few years ago and though there have been frequent attempts to revive this route it seems to be in line with the general disappearance of passenger service on the Great Lakes. Visitors to Windsor last year could see on the waterfront of Detroit the whole fleet of the Detroit and Cleveland Line, vessels worth millions of dollars tied up and completely idle. Near them could be seen the older *Put-in-Bay*, which a few years ago provided a most enjoyable trip to Sandusky in western Lake Erie, also idle. Since the burning of the *Noronic* there is no longer a passenger service from Sarnia to the Upper Lakes and none anywhere from a lower lake port to Duluth at the western end of Lake Superior. All that now remains is the service between Port McNicoll and Fort William provided by the two remaining CPR steamers.

It will probably surprise many readers to know that more than one hundred years ago people residing in Western Ontario could go from Port Stanley to Cleveland by a passenger service then in operation. In the diary of Charlotte Harris one may read under date of June 22, 1849, this description of such an excursion:

“June 23, 1849, we left at half past 4 in the morning for Port Stanley, and at 8 we went on board the boat for Cleveland. There were 300 people on board, a band from Buffalo which played all day, and the crowd danced. We had a thunderstorm and saw a waterspout. It was half past four when we arrived at Cleveland. We went in all the shops. We had tea at 7 and went on board again at 8. The band played all night and the crowd danced again. The gentlemen could not get berth so took the sofas out of the ladies’ cabins and we gave them blankets and pillows. We got up at 2 o’clock in the morning as the boat arrives at Port Stanley at 4. It was 9 o’clock when we reached home. The gentlemen went to the barracks to dress and came down to breakfast again at 11.”

That was long before the days of good roads and automobiles. This group of young people (the gentlemen being officers in the garrison) drove over the crude roads of the day to the lake port and drove back again at

daybreak on the following morning, 30 miles each way, yet were up and doing again by 11 o'clock in the morning.

How many passenger boats were on this route in the more than a century since the forties it would be difficult to say. One that is remembered is the *City of St. Ignace* which ran from the Canadian port to Cleveland during the season of 1925 but which finally disappeared in the scrap piles of the Steel Company at Hamilton four years ago. Its master in 1925 was Captain F. E. Hamilton, now residing at Kelleys Island, Ohio. He has provided the following information concerning this vessel.

The *City of St. Ignace* was originally the *City of Cleveland* and was built in 1886 at Wyandotte by the Detroit Drydock Company for the Detroit and Cleveland Steam Navigation Company, of Detroit. She ran between Detroit and Cleveland as a night boat and was the last of the iron side-wheelers built for the D. & C. The *City of Detroit*, built in 1888, was the first of the steel vessels, a sister ship but 14 feet longer and having a compound engine. She was later renamed *Goodtime*.

The *City of Cleveland* was renamed the *City of St. Ignace* in 1907 and ran on the Lake Huron Division as an express steamer with the *City of Alpena* and the *City of Mackinac*, touching at Port Huron, Harbor Beach, Goderich, Alpena, Cheboygan, Mackinaw City and Mackinac Island.

She was sold in May, 1925, to the Western Reserve Navigation Company of Cleveland and in 1927 to the Cleveland Canada Navigation Company. She ran between Cleveland and Port Stanley in 1925 and made Rondeau a port of call once a week. In 1925 and 1926 she made September cruises to Mackinac, the Soo and Owen Sound.

Sold again in April, 1929, to the Nicholson Transit Company, of Detroit, she was renamed *Keystone* and ran between Erie, Pennsylvania, and Port Dover, Ontario. She burned on June 23, 1932, while lying in a slip at Ecorse. The fire department sank her in the slip but she was later raised. The boiler and machinery were removed and there was a proposal to turn her into a steel carrier. This did not go through and the hull lay in the Nicholson slip at Ecorse until it was towed away to Hamilton in 1948 to be broken up. She had four Scotch boilers, 12½' x 12' and her engines, beam condensing and built by Fletcher and Harrison at Hoboken were 66" x 144".

The record of this vessel differs but little from that of scores of similar passenger vessels which have had their day on the Great Lakes. They pass from company to company, from route to route, with different masters and different crews, sometimes being turned into freighters or barges and

eventually they burn at their docks or go to the scrap heap. The one part of the vessel that does not always die is the motive power, the boilers and engines. These are carefully removed and if still in good condition probably go into some other boat, sometimes into one just built. It is claimed that the boiler and engines of the C.P.R. steamer *Algoma*, one of the original three of the lakes fleet and which was wrecked on Isle Royale, in Lake Superior in November, 1885, went into the new *Manitoba* when it was built in Owen Sound in 1889. The *Algoma*'s boiler and engines were but a year or two old when she was lost as the wreck came during her first season, indeed in the first six months of her service in Canada. She had been built in Scotland in 1884, and with her two sister ships, the *Alberta* and *Athabaska*, had only come into service in May of 1885.

Londoners and others who enjoyed the lake trip to Cleveland in days gone by have pleasant memories of the ride across the lake, but it is extremely doubtful if such a service, limited as it would be to a few months of the year, could be made to pay. The Port Stanley-Cleveland route for passengers has evidently become a matter of history.

The End of Coastal Steamer Service on Georgian Bay

The year 1954 will go down in history as the end of an era on Georgian Bay. For the first time in more than a century there was no coastal steamer service about the bay, connecting its ports large and small. The Penetang-Parry Sound connection was maintained to the end of the 1953 season but the old steamer *Midland City*, second oldest passenger boat in Canadian service, was out of commission this year and lies tied to its dock, and with most of its furnishings sold by auction some months ago.

Back in the forties of the last century a little boat known as the *Gore* traded about among the scattered communities around the bay and even to St. Joseph Island and the Sault. It had been built at Niagara in 1840 to run between Lewiston and Hamilton but in 1845 came to the bay. It is said to have been the first steamer to pass through the Welland Canal and was on the bay before there was any rail connection with the South. This came in the early fifties when the Ontario, Simcoe and Lake Huron Railway was built north from Toronto. By 1853 rails had been laid as far as Barrie and further extension to Collingwood was inevitable.

F. W. Cumberland, one of the promoters of the railway, visited Collingwood in 1852 and various improvements followed so that there were docks, freight sheds and other facilities when the first train came into Collingwood on January 1, 1855. Steps had already been taken to secure steamship connection with Chicago and by 1855 five paddle steamers were making the connections. These were the *Lady Elgin*, *Queen City*, *Niagara* and *Keystone State*, providing a tri-weekly service to Chicago, while a smaller vessel, the *Louisiana*, ran to Green Bay, Wisconsin. The fifties was a period in which great numbers of immigrants, many of them Scandinavians, were moving into the American West and the Georgian Bay route offered easy access to such states as Minnesota and Wisconsin. The route via the Canadian lake port was widely advertised as "The Great Northern Route" and thousands journeyed over it during the fifties. With great quantities of household goods and farm implements to be transported the Collingwood docks must have presented an animated appearance in this period.

During the development of the western trade through Chicago local trade about the bay grew year by year, the new railway bringing in many settlers. By 1855 the steamer *Mazeppa* was making regular trips between Owen

Sound and Collingwood. In that same year Captain W. H. Smith, of Owen Sound, brought in the 90-foot paddle steamer *Oxford* and replaced it a year later with the *Canadian* which operated until 1860. Then came the *Clifton*, a larger vessel built at Detroit in 1846. The *Duchess of Kaloolah*, built at Buffalo, operated out of Collingwood after 1855 under the new name *Collingwood*. She was chartered by the Government of Canada in 1857 to carry the members of the Henry Youle Hind exploring expedition as far as Fort William and was the first registered Canadian vessel to pass through the canal at the Sault.

Three other Government expeditions to Western Canada were later carried on Georgian Bay vessels as far as the Lakehead. The first was in 1858 when the screw steamer *Rescue*, built at Buffalo in 1855, sailed from Collingwood with passengers, freight and mails, the first Canadian mails to go to the West by this lake route. In 1867 the *Waubuno*, later lost on the bay, carried a Government expedition that was to open up a land route from the Lakehead to the Red River (later called the Dawson road). Three years later, when the first uprising came under Louis Riel, Colonel Wolseley's force was carried to Prince Arthur's Landing (Port Arthur) by the *Francis Smith*, the *Chicora* and the *Algoma*. These three vessels need identification.

The *Francis Smith* was built by Captain W. H. Smith at Owen Sound. From 1867 to 1874 she ran between Collingwood and Owen Sound, calling also at Meaford. After 1874 she was on the Sault run and in the eighties ran to Lake Superior. She was a first-class boat. At a later date her name was changed to *Baltic* and there is a model in the museum at Collingwood. The *Algoma* was brought to the bay in 1864 to engage in the Lake Superior trade, followed a year later by the *Waubuno*, already mentioned. The famous *Chicora*, once a Confederate blockade runner in Civil War times, came to Collingwood in 1868 and from 1869 to 1875 was used in the Lake Superior trade. She lasted until 1938, in later days being the barge *Warrenco*.

The year 1871 saw the coming to the bay of two first-class paddle steamers, the *Manitoba* and the *Cumberland*, to trade to Lake Superior. The *Manitoba* was 173 feet long and the *Cumberland* 204 feet. The *Manitoba*, later the *Carmona* and *Pittsburg*, burned at Sandwich in August, 1903. The *Cumberland* was wrecked on Isle Royal, July 24, 1877, during a heavy fog.

From time to time other boats were brought into service, operated by individuals or by small local companies. One of these that is well remembered was the *Ploughboy*. A new steamer, built at Marine City, Michigan, as *Gladys*, was renamed *Northern Belle* and was for many years a well-known steamer lasting until when she was burned at Byng Inlet. When

Cumberland was lost the propeller *City of Owen Sound* went on the Superior route. This vessel, built at the Simpson shipyard in Owen Sound in 1875 was described as “a long lanky vessel with inadequate machinery set as far aft as possible.” She was wrecked near the mouth of the Michipicoten River in the autumn of 1883, but was salvaged and continued in operation until the last trip of 1887 when she ran on Clapperton Island and sank in 100 feet of water. Salvaged once again she was rebuilt as the steam barge *Saturn* and carried on until September 17, 1901, when she was lost on Lake Huron.

The Owen Sound Steamship Company was organized in the early eighties and operated the *Magnet* and *Sparton*, sidewheel steamers, and the propeller *Africa*, all running to Lake Superior. These vessels operating in conjunction with the CPR offered a 10-day lake trip that was advertised as “cheaper than hotels.” The *Sparton* was wrecked on Caribou Island in Lake Superior in the fall of 1885 and later, after repairs at Detroit, ran with the *Magnet* along the St. Lawrence River for many years. The *Sparton* was later renamed the *Belleville* and was finally scrapped at Kingston in 1927.

A volume could be written on the boats that plied out of these bay ports in the 60's, 70's and 80's alone. Only a portion of them have been mentioned above. Something might be said, in conclusion, about the “30,000 Island Cruise” which ended last year. This daily cruise to Parry Sound had been carried on since the early 80's. It was first commenced by the Muskoka and Nipissing Navigation Company with the small steamer *Chicoutimi* which was replaced about 1880 by the *Manitou*. The old North Shore Navigation Company took over the route in 1892 and placed the side-wheeler *City of Toronto* on the route. When the Northern Navigation Company replaced the earlier company in 1899 the *Waubic* carried the trade. The N. N. Company withdrew from the Georgian Bay trade in 1921 and at that time the late James Playfair placed the *Midland City* on the route using Midland as the home port. The Midland owners sold out to a Penetang group three or four years ago and they had the old boat in service until a year ago. Now communication by water with the northern port is at an end and nowhere else on the great bay, which Champlain discovered in 1613, is there steamboat service.

November Shipping Disasters

The month of November sees busy days on the Great Lakes. From Duluth at the far western end of Lake Superior and from Chicago at the foot of Lake Michigan and all between those ports and the harbors on Lake Erie and Lake Ontario a grim race is on, with contestants by the hundreds. It is a contest with the elements, a struggle to make the maximum number trips in safety before the ice comes on the rivers and the lake steamers have to tie up for the winter. All too often in the past, and even occasionally in the present, the elements win out and then on some grim, rocky shore of Lake Superior or on the treacherous shoals of some other lake a good ship comes to grief and in lake port towns there are relatives who mourn.

November is the bad month on the Great Lakes. Of all months in the year it is the one most dreaded by lake sailors who can recall many a ship and its men that went out on a late trip—perhaps the expected last trip—and lost out to the wild storms and the treacherous seas that this month can bring. The worst storm that has ever been recorded on these inland waters was a November storm. The storm of November 9, 1913, just 41 years ago, took the lives of no less than 235 sailors, 200 of them on Lake Huron alone. That lake swallowed up eight ships, not one member of their crews surviving. Two barges foundered on Lake Michigan and a lightship on Lake Erie while six other vessels became total losses by either being driven ashore or being pounded by the heavy seas. Twenty modern carriers stranded in the wild gale that swept all the lakes and practically every vessel that had been out in the storm had later to visit the shipyards for repairs to deck houses.

Older sailors like to talk of some of the remembered wrecks of Novembers in days gone by, of the *Bannockburn* in 1902, of the *J. H. Jones* in 1905, of the wild storm on Lake Superior in that same year that wrecked the *Mataafa* on the Duluth breakwater, or of the *Monarch* on Isle Royale in 1906. There are hundreds of wrecks recorded but happily the number has been reduced in recent years as safety precautions of all kinds have multiplied and ships have been better built and better equipped.

The loss of the *Bannockburn* in 1902 is one of the mysteries of Lake Superior. The *Bannockburn*, built in English yards, was downbound when she ran into a wild storm on November 21 and was seen no more. Only an

oar picked up later gave a hint to her fate. Her captain on that last trip was George Woods, of Port Dalhousie, her chief engineer was George Booth, of Kingston, and her crew numbered 22.

What happened to the vessel? That will never be known. She was said to have been loaded with flaxseed—a bad cargo in rough weather because of its tendency to shift and cause the boat to list. That may have been what happened. The old Canadian steamer *Huronic* was on Lake Superior on the night of the 21st and limped into Port Arthur with her engines damaged by the stress of the storm.

The *Huronic* was probably the last vessel to sight the *Bannockburn* on that last trip. Members of the crew said that they saw her during the night of the 21st while crossing Lake Superior.

On practically the same day four years later the *J. H. Jones* was lost off Hope Bay (on Georgian Bay) with 29 lives wiped out. The *Jones* was a seaworthy craft but had a deck load of barrels of oil taken on at Owen Sound. She was last seen by the lighthousekeeper at Cape Croker, laboring heavily in a northwest gale that was stirring up tremendous seas. The twelve passengers and 17 of a crew were simply penned up as the waves smashed the vessel to pieces.

The steamer *Monarch*, built at Sarnia in 1889, ended her career on December 6, 1906, just a little later than November. It was her last trip and friends of the captain and crew came to the dock to see the vessel head for Sarnia. Within a few hours she had piled up on the northeast side of Isle Royale and was breaking in two. Fortunately the boat had run right up on a rocky ledge and it was possible to get a line ashore. All passengers and crew were saved save one crew member. They were taken off their bleak place of refuge by a tug from Fort William a few days later.

One of the most tragic of November wrecks was that of the CPR steamer *Algoma*, also on Isle Royale. The *Algoma*, built on the Clyde in 1883, was brought to the Great Lakes in 1884, a sister ship for the *Alberta* and *Athabaska*. She left Owen Sound on the evening of November 5, 1885, in her second year of service. The passenger list was light but she had a heavy deck cargo of iron for railroad construction. By midnight of the 6th the *Algoma* was within 50 miles of Fort William driving through a snowstorm and carrying sails to assist her engines, as was done at that time. At half past four on the morning of the 7th sail was taken in and the course was slightly changed. The alteration in course had been almost accomplished when the stern of the vessel struck rocks, smashing the rudder and leaving the vessel

unmanageable. At six o'clock the whole forward section broke off and several of the crew and passengers went to their death. The others huddled on a sloping deck over which icy waves were continually breaking and in constant fear that the portion of the vessel which remained would slip off into deep water.

The *Algoma* had struck not far from Rock Harbor light on the south side of the big island. On Sunday morning, after a fearful night of anxiety, the storm quieted and survivors were able to go ashore. There they were sighted by the passing sister ship *Alberta* and taken off in lifeboats. Thirty-seven were missing, including 28 of the crew. The engine crew was practically wiped out in this wreck, the chief engineer, five of the six firemen and all the oilers and greasers.

One could go on and tell the stories of a dozen disasters of this nature. The old *Monkshaven* was wrecked on Angus Island in Thunder Bay in the fall of 1908 and the hull, lying on the rocks, was for some years a point of interest for passengers on ships plying the bay. The government moved the lighthouse from Thunder Cape after the loss of the *Monkshaven* so that no other ships would run into like trouble there.

When November ends the lake season is over. Insurance usually expires on December 5 and owners like to have their vessels homeward bound before that date. The St. Marys River is usually frozen over in its more shallow portions by the end of November, though an open passage is maintained until the last boat has come off Lake Superior. Those last few days of hurried loading hold elevator and ore dock gangs to a 24-hour schedule until the last boat has cast off her lines and disappears with black smoke trailing behind. Navigation is off until returning spring weather weakens and melts the ice and once again channels are open.

Otter Island Light, Lake Superior

Otter Cove, on the north shore of Lake Superior, is one of the rarely used places of shelter on that bleak, barren coast. It lies about midway between Michipicoten Harbor and Heron Bay and has sufficient depth of water for all vessel needs. Its lighthouse, established in 1903 at the northwest extremity of Otter Island, is officially described as in latitude 48° 06' 46" and at longitude 86° 04' 06". The light shows a flash every eight seconds from a forty-foot white octagonal tower and a red iron lantern. In 1929 a power fog alarm was added to the station and is located near the edge of the cliff 400 feet west of the lighthouse. The entrance to the Cove between the island and the mainland is marked today by two black spars and one red spar.

In November, 1903, while I was serving as assistant purser on the steamer *Majestic* of the Northern Navigation Company line, we were forced by bad weather to take refuge in this place for two days. This was the year in which the light had been established, showing at that time a fixed white light. The *Majestic*, during the summer months, made weekly trips between Sarnia, Port Arthur and Duluth, but when the fall came the summer schedule was abandoned and the boat was several times employed that year in carrying men and supplies to Lake Superior lumber camps. The *Majestic* (Captain Andrew Campbell) was a seaworthy vessel but during those later months of 1903 was frequently forced to take refuge from autumn storms, several times in the lee of Michipicoten Island or in Quebec Harbor.

The *Majestic* left Sarnia on the evening of Sunday, November 8th, with over 600 barrels of oil on her deck and with miscellaneous package freight in her hold. There was already snow at Sarnia and the weather was wintry in character. The trip to the Sault was uneventful but storm signals were up when the boat went through the canal on the evening of the 9th. It was deemed wise to tie up for the night. When morning came there was a big sea running inside Whitefish Bay, with rain driven by a heavy northwest wind. The *Majestic* anchored behind Whitefish Point at 10 A.M. in company with several other vessels and stayed there all day. At dusk, however, when there seemed to be some lessening of the force of the wind, Captain Campbell decided to run to Michipicoten. The boat arrived in the lee of the island a little after midnight.

Wednesday, the 11th, was rainy and foggy. The *Majestic* stayed in shelter of the island until just before noon but on venturing out was forced to return by the heavy sea still running. There was some little improvement in the early afternoon and the boat again headed for the north shore. But the wind increased during the next few hours and with night coming on Captain Campbell decided to seek shelter in Otter Cove. A blinding snowstorm was raging as the vessel left the open lake and this continued all night, with the barometer going down to 28.2.

The *Majestic* remained in this shelter practically all of Thursday, the 12th. At noon an Indian and his little boy came from shore with a basket of freshly caught whitefish, a very welcome addition to the ship's stores. The Indians were given their dinner and the boy's fur cap was filled with nuts and raisins when he left to go ashore. Late in the afternoon there seemed to be a possibility of leaving the place and members of the crew took a lifeboat and placed lighted lanterns on the rocks along the passage out to the open water of the lake. The first attempt to leave was at dusk but the weather was still so bad outside that it was necessary to return. However, the force of the storm lessened in the next few hours and the *Majestic* moved out just before midnight, leaving the lanterns behind for some Indian to pick up. The wind was still high, there was a big sea running and by morning the boat was coated with ice from stem to stern, so much so that members of the crew had to take axes and chop some of it away.

Thunder Cape was passed at noon on Friday, the 13th, and the vessel docked at Port Arthur two hours later. This was long before the days of radio and the agents had had no word of the *Majestic* since she went through the canal on Monday evening, the 9th. The C.P.R. steamer *Alberta* arrived in Thunder Bay at about the same time as the *Majestic*. Captain McAllister reported that he had encountered a fierce gale and snowstorm raging on Lake Superior all Wednesday night and up to 5 o'clock on Thursday. The *Alberta* had taken shelter at Michipicoten Island, steaming up and down for seventeen hours. At that time the *Majestic* lay quietly and safely behind Otter Island.

Otter Cove came into some prominence in December, 1930, when John Moore, the assistant lighthouse keeper, fell from the stairway leading to the light and died from his injuries. Gilbert MacLachlan, the senior keeper, had been on duty all the night of November 30th, during a heavy storm and with the temperature 25 degrees below zero. On the morning of December 1st he sent Moore to the house, a third of a mile to the eastward, to bring him some food. When Moore had not returned after some hours MacLachlan decided

to search for him. At the foot of the stairs he noticed blood stains and these were also visible on the snow outside. He followed the stains and found the man's body lying outside the house, frozen stiff. MacLachlan took the body inside the house but was afraid to light a fire for fear that the corpse would decompose.

Returning to the lighthouse he began to sound a distress call on the foghorn and for three days the dismal wailing echoed out over the lake, but no response came. Indeed, he had not seen the smoke of a steamer for 23 days. But down the shore, at Puckawsaw, twelve miles distant, the call had been heard and a man by the name of Jack Mills set out to see what was wrong. He arrived on the morning of December 3rd and undertook to send a telegram asking for aid. Because of bad weather he was unable to put the message through and for nine days more MacLachlan had to carry on and maintain the vigil over his dead helper. He was practically without food, having only soda biscuits and water. Not until December 12th did the government lighthouse tender arrive to take him and the body of Moore to the Sault.

The Loss of the Bannockburn

The disappearance of the steamer *Bannockburn* on Lake Superior on the night of November 21, 1902, is one of the Lake's mysteries. Fifty-five years have passed and little more is known of her fate today than was known in the first week after she was lost.

British-built in 1893, the *Bannockburn* was owned in 1902 by the Montreal Transportation Company and was engaged in carrying grain from the head of the Lakes to lower Lake ports. She was a propeller 245 feet in length, 1620 gross tons, and was regarded as entirely seaworthy. She sometimes had one or two barges in tow but on this, her last trip, was coming down alone. She had a cargo of 85,000 bushels of wheat when she left Port Arthur on the 21st and as the season was advanced it is probable that this was consigned to a Georgian Bay port. With favorable weather the vessel might make one more trip before the close of navigation.

Through the vessel passages reported in the press we can follow the movement of the *Bannockburn* on her last trip up the Lakes. She cleared from Midland, Ontario, on November 18th, passed through the Canadian ship canal at Sault Ste. Marie at 3:40 A.M. on the 19th and presumably would be at Port Arthur around 9 or 10 A.M. on the 20th.

The Fort William *Times-Journal* in its issue of November 20, reported in its Port Arthur news that the steamers *Bannockburn*, *Chili* and *Saturn* were that day loading grain at the Canadian Northern elevator at Port Arthur. However, the *Bannockburn* did not clear until the next day, at what hour is not recorded. Thereafter, all is a mystery.

At this late date in November, there would not be many vessels trading into Port Arthur or Fort William which would be likely to see the *Bannockburn* as she headed toward the Sault, but about a week later the press earned a dispatch quoting Captain James McMaugh, of the steamer *Algonquin*, as having seen the missing *Bannockburn* on the 21st while headed up the Lake. His statement was that at a point "about 50 miles southeast of Passage Island and northeast of Keweenaw Point," running against a strong head wind, he had sighted a vessel which he believed was the *Bannockburn*. She appeared to be running well with a favorable wind but when he looked for her a few minutes later she had disappeared. The weather was hazy at the time and he supposed that she had gone from sight

in the mist. He remarked to his first officer that the vessel had vanished very quickly.

The records of the Canadian ship canal show that the *Algonquin* passed up at 1 P.M. on the 20th which, with average running time, would place her in the position mentioned. If the *Bannockburn* left Port Arthur early on the morning of the 21st, she would be somewhere in the vicinity of the point where the *Algonquin* claimed to have seen her.

This is the only claim of having seen the missing vessel which was given publicity at the time, but there is another claim which did not appear in the press but of which the writer can give some details. The passenger steamer *Huronic*, of the Northern Navigation Company's fleet, was on Lake Superior on the night of the 21st. She had left Sarnia on the second last trip of the season at 6 A.M. on November 20th and arrived at the Canadian Sault at 2 A.M. on the 21st. She passed through the American locks at noon of that day and arrived at Port Arthur at 9 A.M. on Saturday, the 22nd. Two entries in the writer's personal diary are of interest in this connection:

November 21—At night we had the worst storm of the season.

November 22—During the storm of last night our engines sustained slight damage which they are repairing today.

On the morning of the 22nd, when the pilothouse men came off watch and were at breakfast, they remarked that they believed they had seen the *Bannockburn* during the night. They had at that time no knowledge of any mishap, nor had they heard any news of the *Bannockburn* when the *Huronic* left Port Arthur downbound at 7 P.M. on the 25th. They probably heard that the *Bannockburn* was missing when they arrived at the Sault and this would be confirmed on arrival at Sarnia on the 28th. The down trip had been delayed by bad weather on Lake Huron. The writer's diary has this entry on the 28th:

Heard today of the missing *Bannockburn*. This boat we passed on the night of the 21st.

The observations by Captain McMaugh of the *Algonquin* was made in daylight, though in misty weather, and he gives an approximate location. That, by the pilothouse crew of the *Huronic*, was at night. There is no record of the hour or the location on the Lake. It might be asked, how could the identity of a passing vessel be determined at night and in stormy weather? Lake sailors, however, at this time of the year would know quite well what

vessels were likely to be moving to or from the Lakehead. They would probably be able to recognize another vessel by the location of her deck lights and if near enough would probably have exchanged signals by their whistles. These would easily be recognized. They would also naturally be curious as to the identity of any passing vessel at that late a date in November. In any case, the men on the *Huronic* believed that they had seen the *Bannockburn*.

There was at the time and has been since, much speculation as to the fate which overtook the vessel. A rumor current at the time was that the boat was carrying flaxseed, a dangerous, shifting cargo. However, there is no evidence that the cargo was other than wheat. The possibility of having run upon Superior Shoal has also been mentioned, though this would require the vessel to be off course. Superior Shoal was, as yet, not marked on charts unless added by captains themselves. That a severe storm raged on Lake Superior on the night of the 21st is indicated by the *Huronic's* experience.

As soon as serious fears for the safety of the *Bannockburn* developed, tugs were sent out to search the waters and shores of Lake Superior. The *Toronto Mail and Empire* reported on the 28th that the tug *Boynton* had left the Sault the night before with instructions to go around Michipicoten Island, then on to the Caribou Island area, follow the north shore up to Isle Royale, return by the north shore to a point opposite Whitefish Point and come home by the south shore. No trace of the missing vessel was discovered, though later it was reported that the steamer *Rockefeller* had found some wreckage. The location was not stated at the time.

Captain George R. Wood, of Port Dalhousie, was in command of the lost vessel. George Booth, of Kingston, was chief engineer. The majority of the crew were from Kingston.

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A Table of Contents has been added for reader convenience.

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[The end of *Ship Notes* by Fred Landon]