

Readers of "Scanner" will recall that our Ship of the Month No. 168 in the November issue was the steamer SASKADOC, (a) WILLIAM E. REIS (16), (b) URANUS (II)(26). We very much enjoyed preparing that article, and we received much good comment about it from the members.

As we noted, however, we lacked details of a collision which we had been led to believe occurred in 1901 or thereabouts, in which WILLIAM E. REIS sank in the St. Clair River. We specifically requested our readers' assistance in tracing the details of the incident, and we are pleased to report that two members, Robert J. MacDonald, of Erie, Pennsylvania, and R. T. McCullough, of Corunna, Ontario, rallied to the occasion. From the material which they have provided (and for which we are most grateful), we now are able to tell the story of the collision and its aftermath, and even to report the correct date of the accident. (We were off by six years!)

It was about 8 o'clock in the evening of Friday, November 1st, 1907, when WILLIAM E. REIS was downbound in the St. Clair River near Algonac, carrying a full load of iron ore. Upbound in the same section of the river was the steamer MONROE C. SMITH (U.S.93382), 380.0 x 50.0 x 28.0, 4281 Gross, 3016 Net. The SMITH had been built in 1903 at Lorain, Ohio, as Hull 323 of the American Shipbuilding Company. She was owned by the United States Transportation Company, which had been formed in 1902 and which, in 1911, would be merged into the newly-formed Great Lakes Steamship Company Inc. The U.S.T. Co. fleet was popularly known as "The Typewriter Fleet", because many of its ships bore names honouring members of the Smith family, who founded and operated the Smith Premier Typewriter Company, and later the L. C. Smith & Brothers Typewriter Company.

Just as WILLIAM E. REIS was but one of a large number of near-sisterships in the Mitchell fleet, so MONROE C. SMITH was one of a number of similar vessels operated by the U.S.T.Co. Almost exact sisterships in that fleet were WILLIAM NOTTINGHAM (Hull 201, Buffalo Dry Dock Company, 1902), GEORGE B. LEONARD (Hull 57, Chicago Shipbuilding Company, 1903), and B. LYMAN SMITH and WILBERT L. SMITH (Hulls 324 and 325, respectively, out of the AmShip yard at Lorain in 1903). As well, a number of generally similar ships, but with slightly different dimensions, were part of the United States Transportation fleet. The five steamers of the NOTTINGHAM class each had a capacity of about 6,000 tons of cargo per trip.

In any event, when WILLIAM E. REIS and MONROE C. SMITH met on the St. Clair River on that evening back in 1907, they did not pass in safety but, instead, they came together in an almost head-on collision. The bow of the SMITH cut into the port side of the REIS just abaft the forecastle, opening up a hole which measured ten feet by fourteen feet and extended downward to within two feet of the steamer's bottom. MONROE C. SMITH, as might be imagined, sustained serious bow damage and, as her forward tanks were flooding, she was beached intentionally on Russell Island. She later was refloated, and the necessary repairs soon were put in hand.

The REIS, however, settled very quickly, and within minutes she was resting on the bottom of the river, just out of the channel and in 26 feet of water, with her deck barely above the water. The floor of the St. Clair River in that particular area is very soft, and within five days of the accident, the hull of the REIS had settled down eleven feet into the sandy bottom, so that most of her deck and her after cabins were now under water.

The successful bidder for the contract to raise WILLIAM E. REIS was Captain Harris W. Baker, who went to the scene with a 25-man crew and the diminutive and venerable, rabbit-style, wrecking steamer T. W. SNOOK. According to "The Marine Review" of November 14, 1907, "Wrecker H. W. Baker reports that the openings in the after part of the sunken steamer REIS... have been stopped up and that he is now ready to put a big patch over the break in the port side forward. A deck plate amidships is cracked, but the trouble is not serious. It is expected that the vessel will be pumped out by the end of the present week." In fact, one report indicated that the REIS was not refloat-