

BYRON TRERICE

Having featured a relatively modern vessel as our Ship of the Month in the last (May) issue, we decided that in the current issue we would go back in time and present for our readers as much information as possible concerning a little steamer of which many of you never will have heard! The suggestion to feature this particular vessel came from a member who grew up in the area in which she had operated many years earlier, and another member from that same area managed to obtain for us a lot of material, both written and photographic, to round out our story.

The ship to which we refer is the little wooden-hulled, propellor-driven steamer BYRON TRERICE, which was built in 1882 at Dresden, Ontario, by William R. Peck for Alexander Trerice, also of Dresden. She was 102.3 feet in length, with a modest beam of 26.0 feet and a depth of 8.2 feet, and her tonnage was calculated as 268 Gross and 168 Net. She was powered by a non-condensing steam engine, whose single vertical cylinder had a diameter of 20 inches, and whose stroke was 40 inches. The engine was built by Charles W. Weese, of Dresden, and was rated at 75 horsepower. We have no details concerning the steamer's boiler, which almost certainly was fired (at least originally) with wood. Enrolled under Canadian official number 83028, BYRON TRERICE was registered at the port of Dresden for her entire life, short as it was to prove to be.

The steamer was named in honour of Byron, son of Alexander ("Squire") Trerice. The elder Trerice, of Scottish descent, was a native of the Township of Bosanquet, in southwestern Ontario, where he grew up in a log cabin. He learned the lumbering and carpentry trades at an early age. In 1852, at the age of 18, Alexander Trerice relocated to the town of Dresden, and by 1861 he was in the business of building carriages, in partnership with James Hart. By 1864, he was in the lumbering business, still at Dresden, and in partnership with John and David Wright. Trerice later became the sole proprietor of this business.

Alexander Trerice also had an interest in local politics, and he served as the first reeve of Dresden, and later as the town's first mayor. In addition, the "Squire", as he was known, served as warden of Kent County for several terms.

The BYRON TRERICE made her first trip, which took her from Dresden to Wallaceburg, in July of 1882. An article by W. E. Phillips, which appeared in "The Free Press", of London, Ontario, on September 19, 1942, indicated that during that first season of service, the TRERICE was commanded by Captain Asa Ribble, with Thomas Runciman as first mate and Henry Kirby as second mate. Kenneth McLeod was the chief engineer and John Lee was second engineer. Fred Fletcher was fireman (surely there must have been more than one -Ed.), while Frank Winters and Noah Waffle were wheelmen. The purser was F. M. Feets (?), while the stewards were identified as a Mr. and Mrs. Bud.

Mention of the BYRON TRERICE in the public press over the years tends to be confusing in respect of the design and operation of the steamer, in that most such reports describe the vessel as being in the overnight passenger service. However, the TRERICE actually was built as a combination tug and stave freighter, and she carried many cargoes of Alexander Trerice's hardwood barrel-staves from Dresden to Wallaceburg and other southwestern Ontario locations, as well as to ports in Michigan. There is reproduced herewith an excellent photo of BYRON TRERICE, which we believe was taken in 1887 at the Wallaceburg shipyard on the Sydenham River, and this photo clearly shows no evidence at all of any passenger accommodations.

In fact, as the photo indicates, the TRERICE was a rather homely little freighter. Her hull, which had a fair amount of sheer, was painted a dark colour, while the high wooden rail which ran around the main deck was painted