

**MEAFORD (I)**

In our November issue, we reported the recent finding of the wreck of the Montreal Transportation Company Ltd. schooner-barge MINNEDOSA in Lake Huron off Harbor Beach, Michigan. MINNEDOSA, along with MELROSE, was being towed by the handsome M.T.Co. steamer WESTMOUNT (I) when she met her demise on October 20th, 1905. Both MINNEDOSA and WESTMOUNT have been featured as Ships of the Month in "Scanner", albeit a number of years ago.

Our mention of the WESTMOUNT put us in mind of the fact that this ship and her almost identical sistership FAIRMOUNT (I), were two of the best-looking canal-sized steamers ever built. They were much admired by those who saw them in service, as well as by those today who can only admire their graceful lines as they look at them in photographs. We were also reminded, however, that WESTMOUNT and FAIRMOUNT had a third sistership, although many historians today may not realize this because the third sister was a casualty of World War One, and also because she was not exactly identical with the others in respect of her midship deckhouses. But they were all three "hull sisters", and it is high time that we told the story of this least-known member of the trio.

The early years of the Twentieth Century witnessed a very rapid expansion of many of the companies engaged in lake transportation, as the economy of North America was booming. During 1903, the venerable and well-known Montreal Transportation Company Ltd., of Montreal, ordered two canal-sized bulk carriers from the C. S. Swan & Hunter Shipyard at Wallsend-on-Tyne, England. The yard's Hull 288 was completed as FAIRMOUNT (C.112276), while Hull 289 was launched as WESTMOUNT (C.114445).

Apparently convinced that these two steamers were of superior and saleable design, the shipyard laid down a third hull, Yard No. 292, which was built on speculation and which was completed under the name NEWMOUNT. The fact that she was given this name would indicate that the shipbuilder hoped that the Montreal Transportation Company would purchase the steamer for its fleet. Such was not to be the case, however, although we do not know why the M.T.Co. did not acquire the ship. Perhaps the cost of building the other two had depleted the company's funds to the point that its managers deemed it unwise to expend further funds on new construction at that particular point in time.

In any event, NEWMOUNT was completed with a length (between perpendiculars) of 248.6 feet, a beam of 42.0 feet, and a depth of 20.0 feet. These dimensions were the maximum that could be accommodated by the smallest of the locks of the old Welland and St. Lawrence canals, and gave the steamer tonnage of 1889 Gross and 1201 Net. NEWMOUNT was powered by a triple expansion steam engine which had cylinders of 20½, 33 and 54 inches diameter and a stroke of 42 inches, which was built for her by J. Readhead & Sons, of South Shields, England. Steam was generated by one coal-fired Scotch boiler which measured 14 feet by 12 feet, and was manufactured by the Wallsend Shipway Company, of Newcastle.

As far as we know, the NEWMOUNT name had no particular significance, and simply was a fabrication of the builders, borrowing upon the "Mount" suffix often used by Montreal Transportation. Despite the refusal of the M.T.Co. to take the steamer, the shipyard was not daunted in its efforts to peddle the ship to a lake operator, and by 1905 NEWMOUNT, which meanwhile had been enrolled at Newcastle under British official number 118615, was owned by the Farrar Transportation Company Limited, of Collingwood, Ontario. She was operating on the Great Lakes, although still registered at Newcastle, and she was commanded by Captain F. A. Bassett. (Many of the British-built canallers, although owned in Canada, retained their British registry for many years after entering service on the lakes, so it is not unusual that Farrar's new steamer did likewise.)