

KALOO LAH

by Ronald F. Beaupre with The Editor

Recent research into the history of the steamers that served, during the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, on the route from Goderich to Southampton, along the east shore of Lake Huron, has caused us to take particular note of the little steamer KALOO LAH. Some mention of this early vessel has been made in various publications in the past, but never has any comprehensive history been published. Accordingly, it seems appropriate that we take this opportunity to share with our readers the information that has come to light concerning this interesting steamer.

The first mention of the construction of the ship that would be named KALOO LAH appeared in the "Buffalo Daily Courier" on Saturday, January 24, 1852. "The new boat building by Fox and Bruce, for the old LEXINGTON's engine, looms up finely. She is a neat model, and will prove a valuable addition to our Lake Marine."

Then on March 30, 1852, this same paper carried the following article. "SHIPBUILDING. - 'The Commercial' of last evening states that it has been furnished with the following memoranda of vessels and their dimensions, now building and being finished by the Messrs. Jones at their ship yard in this city, by their obliging book-keeper, Mr. Wm. K. Cutler... 'For A. D. Patchin and G. L. Chapman: Steamer KALOO LAH, 190 ft. keel; 25 ft. beam; 10 ft. hold.'

"'The KALOO LAH is receiving the LEXINGTON's engine. She has been built expressly to run from this port to (Port) Stanley, C.W. (Canada West -Ed.), touching at Dunkirk, and will be under the command of Captain George L. Chapman, formerly owner and master of the steamer OREGON.'"

The unusual name KALOO LAH was taken from a novel by William S. Mayo, which was published in 1849 and which was very popular at the time. The heroine of the story was the Duchess of Kaloolah and, in fact, the ship was referred to as THE DUCHESS OF KALOO LAH in some shipping reports of the day.

KALOO LAH was enrolled at Buffalo, New York, on 27 April, 1852, but she never was given a U.S. official number. On the enrollment document, KALOO LAH was described as having one deck and one mast, a configuration typical of the steamers of that period, which had no enclosed cabin on the upper deck. She had a tall fidded mast, a single smokestack, and a "birdcage" pilothouse with a small texas cabin on the upper deck. Large paddleboxes housed her radial sidewheels.

The sole registered owner of KALOO LAH was Aaron D. Patchin, of Buffalo. Also from the enrollment certificate, we learn that her length actually was 188 feet, her beam 25 feet, and her hull depth was 9 feet, 9 inches. She was calculated to be of 443 and 84/95ths tons. Her wooden hull was strengthened by heavy arched hogging braces which rose high above the decks. The engine was twenty years old, originally having been built for the steamer UNCLE SAM in 1832 at the Jones, Dorr & Co. foundry at Detroit. Erik Heyl's Early American Steamers (Volume III, page 205) states that the engine was a direct-acting type, and that the paddlewheels were 26 feet in diameter.

The June 21, 1832, edition of the "Detroit Democratic Free Press & Michigan Intelligencer" carried the following information: "Last week the UNCLE SAM was launched at Grosse Isle, and is now lying in our port near Messrs. Jones, Dorr & Co.'s foundry, where her machinery was made. The model of the UNCLE SAM is not surpassed by that of any boat on our waters - she was built by Capt. Treat - her keel is 94 feet, deck 116 feet, and 23 feet beam, with an engine of 60 horse power."

On October 11, 1832, this same paper carried a story that would indicate that some trouble had occurred with the original casting of the machinery. It stated: "A few days ago, a cylinder for the steam boat UNCLE SAM was cast at the foundry of Messrs. Dorr & Williams. It weighs about four thousand