

ONCE MORE FOR J. H. PLUMMER

Back in our January issue, we featured as Ship of the Month No. 201 the steamer J. H. PLUMMER (20), (b) VAN EYCK (23), (c) J. H. PLUMMER (24), (d) AMUR (II)(46), (e) FAR EASTERN CARRIER (46), (f) TUNG AN, which was built in 1903 on the River Tyne, and served on the lakes until 1917, when she was requisitioned for wartime service on salt water. She returned to the lakes briefly in 1923, and then from 1924 until 1946, she operated on the west coast of North America. She then went to the Orient, where she operated until lost by stranding on the China coast in 1949.

We presented a lengthy follow-up to our feature in the March issue, at which time we also presented a photograph of the steamer as AMUR, when she was operating for the Coastwise Steamship and Barge Company Ltd., of Vancouver, British Columbia. One of the things that was puzzling us about that photo was that we were unable to make out exactly what colours AMUR was wearing when the photo was taken. We said nothing about where the photo was taken, because we did not know, although we did recognize that, at the far left side of Ralph Roberts' photo, there appeared to be some large structure, probably a bridge, under construction.

Accordingly, we were very happy when, just a few days ago, in with all the junkmail which the postman brought us, there was a letter from T.M.H.S. member John Henderson, of Victoria, British Columbia. It was a three-page effort, just the type we love to receive because it was packed with information of all sorts. Most of it concerned AMUR and her fleet-mates, and because it was so interesting, we are pleased to present excerpts from it here, although we have edited them a bit and they may not appear in exactly the same order as they did in the letter.

"I remember the old AMUR (II), ex J. H. PLUMMER, well. When she left for the Orient, she had been bought by a Captain Oakie. They used to call him "Oakie-Dokie". He was a U.S. citizen, and must have changed AMUR's registry, probably to Panama, which was a favourite in those days. I would think that she left our shores under the name (e) FAR EASTERN CARRIER. It was Oakie's intention to take her to Shanghai and sell her, which is what he did. They picked up a cargo in Seattle and Portland, so far as I know, and sailed over to Shanghai, where Oakie flogged the cargo and then sold the ship as well. I was well acquainted with the fellow who went in her as chief engineer on that trip; he was, in fact, James Griffiths' nephew (the Griffiths family were the principals of Coastwise Steamship and Barge Company). He told me that Oakie was well satisfied with the transaction and was looking around for another old ship at the right price so that he could repeat the procedure, but this did not happen to the best of my knowledge.

"The photo facing Page 8 in the March "Scanner" would, I think, date back to 1937 or 1938. Note the First Narrows / Lions Gate Bridge (at Vancouver -Ed.) under construction at the left. It was not completed until King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited the area in 1939, and was formally opened by them at that time.

"If one studies it, the 'jumbo' boom on the mainmast shows in this photo as well (as in the 1943 photo mentioned by Bill Schell -Ed.). The heavy masts and long derrick booms were fitted to most freighters that worked the Puget Sound, B.C. coast and Southeast Alaskan areas to allow them to work cargo in spite of tidal changes which could run up to 25 feet, or even more on occasion.

"The Coastwise Steamship and Barge Company Ltd.'s funnel colours were black, with a broad white band, two red bands on the white band, and a red circle between the two red bands. About the time of the entry of Japan into World War Two, someone in the U.S. apparently took exception to the red circle on the ships' funnels, and so the red circle was painted over, at least on those of the company's ships that flew the U.S. flag. The funnels never were restored to their pre-war colours, however a red letter 'G' was later added where the red circle used to be.