

## GALE STAPLES

We try to feature various types of vessels from issue to issue of "Scanner" in order not to get ourselves into a rut, and also so that we can cover as many of the different aspects of the lake shipping scene as possible. Having featured a little wooden passenger boat in the October issue, a canaller at Mid-Summer, and steel-hulled upper lakers in April and May, we thought that we should present the history of a wooden freighter from the Nineteenth Century in our current issue. One of our members had asked for a history of this particular steamer many years ago, but we never could do it until now.

Back in the 1880s, the ports of St. Clair County along the Michigan shore of the St. Clair River were busy shipbuilding centres. Not only were there skilled workmen available, but the Michigan woods yielded plentiful supplies of oak, pine and other woods used in the construction of ships. Steel shipbuilding was still in its infancy, and only a very few shipyards were equipped at that time for the construction of metal hulls.

One of the shipbuilding centres on the St. Clair River was the town of Marine City, probably best known today for an aggregates dock and a ferry to Canada. But in 1888, the shipyard of Morley and Hill was operating at Marine City and, during that year, the shipbuilder turned out the big wooden steamer WILLIAM B. MORLEY, which was 277.2 feet in length between perpendiculars, 42.0 feet in the beam and 13.9 feet in depth. Her tonnage was calculated as 1846.59 Gross and 1468.81 Net. She was enrolled at Cleveland under U.S. official number 81191.

The MORLEY was powered by a triple expansion engine which was built for her in 1888 by the Dry Dock Engine Works, of Detroit. It was the company's engine number 150 and produced 895 Nominal Horsepower, or 1150 Indicated Horsepower turning at 82 revolutions per minute. The engine had cylinders of 19, 30 and 52 inches diameter, and a stroke of 40 inches. The ship was equipped with two coal-fired Scotch boilers, numbered 69 and 70 by the Dry Dock Engine Works, which were built of 15/16 inch plate and measured 10'0" by 11'0" and produced steam at 155 p.s.i. The four furnaces had a grate surface of 72 square feet and there were 2,876 square feet of heating surface.

The freighter was a handsome ship indeed, as was typical of the larger wooden ships of her time. She had a straight stem and a counter stern, and her hull displayed an outrageously sweeping sheer which was, of course, necessary because wooden hulls that big underwent a great deal of stress and had to be limber so that they could adapt to the conditions of running heavily loaded or light ship. The degree of sheer shown by the hull in any photograph depended upon the loading condition of the ship at the time.

At first glance, photos of the ship may give the impression that she had a full topgallant forecastle, but this was not really the case. In fact, she had only a half forecastle. The illusion was created by the fact that there was a heavy, closed wooden bulwark the full length of the forecastle head, with a substantial spray deflector above, and also by the fact that a rub-rail set just below the level of the spar deck made it seem that there was a closed bulwark all down the sides of the ship's deck, whereas in reality there was a wire rail not readily visible in all photographs.

A large, squarish pilothouse, with three big windows in its front, sat directly on the forecastle head, and the usual open navigation bridge was located on the monkey's island, protected by a big wooden rail, a canvas weathercloth, and an awning overhead. The texas cabin, containing the master's bedroom and office, was placed abaft the pilothouse. On the open forward deck were two large ventilator cowls which drew fresh air into the deck crew's quarters in the forecastle. The two large stocked anchors were carried on the forecastle head, worked from a davit, and a large mushroom anchor was suspended from a hawsehole in the port bow.