

GALE STAPLES

In our issue of November, 1995, we featured as our Ship of the Month No. 224 the wooden steamer GALE STAPLES. This vessel, 277.2 feet in length and originally 1846.59 Gross Tons and 1468.81 Net, was built in 1888 by Morley and Hill at Marine City, Michigan, as (a) WILLIAM B. MORLEY. She was built by the shipyard on speculation, and soon found her way into the Corrigan fleet of Cleveland, which renamed her (b) CALEDONIA. Over the winter of 1907-1908, CALEDONIA's original triple expansion engine was removed and placed in the Corrigan-owned steel barge POLYNESIA (II)(24), (b) A. D. MacBETH.

CALEDONIA eventually received a second-hand, fore-and-aft compound engine to replace the engine that had been removed, and she passed through a number of owners, including the Caledonia Steamship Company (John J. Boland, manager), and the Great Lakes Engineering Works, and in 1916 she was acquired by the Massey Steamship Company. She then was renamed (b) GALE STAPLES, was brought into Canadian registry, and seems to have had connections with J. R. Smith, of Davidson & Smith, of Fort William, and also, perhaps, with the Bassett Steamship Company, of Toronto. On October 1st, 1918, she stranded on the shore of Lake Superior, near Au Sable Point Light, west of Grand Marais, Michigan, and she soon became a total loss.

Could the story of GALE STAPLES that took five pages to tell in the November issue, now be reduced to two paragraphs? Well, what we have given in the two paragraphs above is just a thumbnail sketch of the steamer's history, presented to refresh the memory of our readers.

As members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society will be quite aware, we do not always choose ships to be featured in these pages because we know everything about them. In some cases, we have unanswered questions about one or more aspects of a ship's construction, operating history or demise, and we know that our readers, as a group, have access to a considerable wealth of information. Hence, they often are able to ferret out historical detail to which your Editor previously has not had access.

We had hoped that this would be the case with GALE STAPLES, for as readers will recall, we had a great number of questions regarding her history. In true form, our readers have come through for us, and with so much additional information that we decided that we should not try to cram it all into a short follow-up note, but rather do it justice and make it into a "second instalment" of the GALE STAPLES story, to be read in conjunction with the November feature. We are much indebted to those readers who have supplied this additional detail, and we shall mention them by name as we go through "the rest of the story", or at the end of this piece.

It was reported in the August 21, 1888, issue of "The Marquette Daily Mining Journal" that the steamer W. B. MORLEY (sic) had been launched successfully at Marine City, Michigan, on Saturday, August 18th, and would be taken to Detroit for the installation of her machinery. It is unfortunate that the paper got the name of the ship wrong. Her name, as she was enrolled (No. 34) at Port Huron, Michigan, on September 21, 1888, was WILLIAM B. MORLEY, and she is not to be confused with another steamer built by the same shipyard at Marine City in 1892, which was named W. B. MORLEY. Even their U.S. official numbers were rather similar, WILLIAM B. MORLEY being assigned number 81191, while the W. B. MORLEY was 81391.

In any event, William B. Morley himself owned a 4/16 share of WILLIAM B. MORLEY. Shares of 1/16 each were owned by Horatio T. Morley, of Marine City, and by Joseph P. Cottrell, also of Marine City. Shares of 2/16 were owned by John J. Hill, of Marine City, by Charles L. Morley, of Cleveland, Ohio, by Martin H. Morley, of Sodus, New York, and by Georgiana Morley and Mary R. Morley, both of Rochester, New York. It seems that Morley, or perhaps Morley and Hill together, ran the WILLIAM B. MORLEY during the autumn of 1888, for