

PARKER EVANS

- by Ronald F. Beaupre -
with the Editor

Many of the steamers that have served on our Great Lakes have enjoyed long careers, without anything of an untoward nature happening to them. On the other hand, some ships seem to have attracted trouble throughout their lifetime on our waters. In the absence of clear evidence of something tangible being wrong with certain ships, such unfortunate careers may be difficult to explain. However, there are many old superstitions that still are held in the minds of many of our lake sailors, and one of them is that changing the name of a ship will bring bad luck to her. Our story this month is an example of how such a superstition may have some foundation in the reality of a steamer's unfortunate history. The vessel we feature sailed the lakes for many years and under four names, but she was best known as the PARKER EVANS.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, a great number of new, steel-hulled vessels were built in the many shipyards which then flourished in the ports around the Great Lakes, and many of those ships were of dimensions previously considered impossible in the era of wooden ships. Early in 1908, Hull 40 was taking shape rapidly at the yard of the Great Lakes Engineering Works at Ecorse, Michigan. This large, steel steamer was being built for the Mutual Steamship Company, which was one of a number of shipowning firms managed by George Ashley Tomlinson and his associates.

G. A. Tomlinson was a native of Lapeer, Michigan, and he was an almost legendary figure who rose from a vessel broker at Duluth, Minnesota, to become one of the leading industrialists of the United States of America. He married Laura Davidson, daughter of James Davidson, the famous shipbuilder and vessel owner of Bay City, Michigan. It was James Davidson who first suggested to Tomlinson that he should become a vessel agent. By 1902, the Tomlinson fleet of vessels was flourishing and Tomlinson also had established the Tomlinson Company, which was a grain brokerage firm which G. A. Tomlinson was to operate until 1917. The fleet of Great Lakes ships was to remain active until the Tomlinson Fleet Corporation ceased operations in 1971.

G. A. Tomlinson died in California on January 24, 1942, two days short of his 76th birthday, and at the time of his passing, he not only was president of the Tomlinson lake fleet, but also was chairman of the Pere Marquette Railroad. He had been in failing health for several years, but the press remarked that he had risen from being a \$6-a-week police news reporter to president of the Allegheny Corporation, the holding company of the Van Sweringen railroad interests. He was succeeded as president of the Tomlinson Fleet by his brother-in-law, James E. Davidson, who passed on in 1947 and was, in turn, succeeded by Capt. Warren Jones. The final president of the Tomlinson Fleet Corporation was James E. Davidson's son, Edward C. Davidson.

Hull 40 of the Great Lakes Engineering Works was launched on Saturday, March 21st, 1908, and within an hour of the time her hull hit the water, she had been brought alongside her builder's sheerlegs to receive her boilers. The steamer was christened HARRY A. BERWIND to honour one of G. A. Tomlinson's associates and financial supporters, who was well known for "fuel transportation" (read "coal") on the lakes. The BERWIND was sister ship to the yard's Hull 41, WILLIAM LIVINGSTONE (36), (b) S. B. WAY (III)(48), (c) CRISPIN OGLEBAY (I), which also was built to the order of the Mutual Steamship Company in 1908.

The HARRY A. BERWIND was registered at Duluth under U.S. official number 205072. She was 556 feet, 9 inches in overall length and 532.0 feet between perpendiculars. Her beam was 58.3 feet and her depth was 32.0 feet. Her tonnage was calculated as 6634 Gross and 4927 Net. The ship was equipped with two single-ended, coal-fired, Scotch marine boilers which were manufactured in 1908 by the Marine Boiler Works, of Toledo, Ohio. Each of the boilers was