

Kildare Recalls More Placid Age

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She puffs grandly across the bay, unsleek, unsophisticated and unabashed, a little like a rather dreadful old lady among inferiors — a dowager queen gone rakish. She is just barely a child of the century; there will never be others like her; even what holds her together is old-fashioned — love.

She is the Kildare, the oldest and one of the two last steam-driven boats on the bay. She was built in 1900 — away back 60 of the longest years in history ago.

SHE STILL commands respect as she silently cuts an antique course through the bay's waters, for at this rate the billowing sailboats and raspy-throated outboards around her may be peacefully consigned to the scrapheap long before her — like precocious children burning themselves out in the face of ancient wisdom.

The Kildare's owners are the Travale brothers, Fred of 15 Barton Street East and Sam of Delhi, who keep "patching" her partly because of her in-

imate connection with the family's past.

The Travales' grandfather, Fred Partridge, built a five-ton steamer called the Floreta in 1900 — at Brown's Wharf, just about where the Yacht Club stands now.

AT THE SAME time Mr. Partridge's friend, George Lafarelle, ordered a sister ship. He came from County Kildare, so the new steamer was called the Kildare.

The Kildare and Floreta were 36 feet long, made of good white oak hewed in this area, and powered by three-cylinder steam engines made in Portsmouth, England.

The Travales — Sam is 41 and Fred is 39 — have af-

fectionate memories of these boats from boyhood days.

"The whole family used to go on cruises on these boats 35 years ago," Fred says.

Then in the winter of 1933

the Floreta burned in the harbor marine yard, apparently when tramps started a fire in her.

And in 1944, after Mr. Lafarelle died, his sister offered the Kildare to the Travales.

"**SHE KNEW** we were interested in the Kildare and would keep her up," Fred explains. The brothers bought her for \$400.

"She isn't cheap to keep going, though. If something wears out, we have to get a new part machined.

"But the engine has never been overhauled. Those old steam engines turn over so slowly they never wear out — the Kildare's runs at only 250 rpm when she travels at eight miles an hour."

An oil burner fires the boiler these days but, Fred says, "That argument isn't over yet."

Coal — fed in under the boiler with a miniature shovel — was "part of the fun of it", Fred claims. A 200-pound bag would last the day.

This year Sam won — temporarily — the argument to convert to oil, two gallons of which will push the Kildare for an hour.

THE KILDARE must have a thousand forgotten stories in her, and have heard a thousand more. Fred likes to take out harbor oldtimers like Billy Hudson, Ambrose Ambeaux and Joe Shoppe for a day's run in the old boat with its narrow fantail, stark little cabin, oil lamps and wheelhouse-to-engine-room signals like big steamers.

She has been hostess to as many as 25 passengers at once.

As for the Travale family, "they're a little leery of it now," Fred admits, although the keel has been strengthened and the Kildare has easily survived storms on Lake Ontario.

Sam and Fred are both avid steam fans and belong to the Steam Launch Operators of the World — or, as it is significantly called, SLOW.

AND THE KILDARE, still ploughing scornfully through local waters after many a summer, is certainly slow — to give in to that rascal, time.



Drawn up on the slip for the winter is the Kildare, senior steam vessel of the last two operating on the Bay. First mate Jim Crawford is on the bow and skipper Fred Travale is in the wheelhouse.

Miss H. Lafarelle lived on the North Shore at Aldershot, with brother George.

There are no spare parts depots for craft like the Kildare and keeping her running can be expensive at times but is a labor of love according to Capt. Fred Travale, co-owner with his brother, Sam.

They attended St. Mathew's Church Church and were members of Aldershot Bowling Club.

