

## SASKADOC

A look over the list of vessels featured in recent issues of "Scanner" indicates that, although we have presented the stories of several different types of ships, we have not done many upper lake freighters. In an effort to rectify the situation, we feature this month a ship which enjoyed an active career of almost seventy years. As well, she was a most handsome steamer, a fact that was not surprising in that she belonged to the Mitchell fleet which was reputed to operate some of the best-looking freighters ever to sail the waters of the lakes.

Captain John Mitchell, of Cleveland, made his entry into the vessel management field when he formed Mitchell & Company in January of 1890. His partners in this enterprise were John F. Wedow of Marine City and John C. Fitzpatrick. This latter gentleman soon retired from the business and was replaced by Captain Mitchell's brother, Alfred. Joining the firm in 1897 was H. W. Mitchell.

The Mitchell Steamship Company was formed in 1892 (or perhaps 1891) and the first vessel built for this company was the wooden freighter W. F. SAUBER, a product of the Wheeler yard at West Bay City. In 1893, Mitchell participated in the formation of the Hopkins Steamship Company. James Corrigan was president, F. W. Wheeler was vice-president, Capt. Mitchell was manager, and Mark Hopkins was treasurer. That same year, they had built for the company (not surprisingly at Wheeler's yard) the steel bulk carrier CENTURION.

In 1894, in association with W. H. Gratwick, Capt. Mitchell formed the Gratwick Steamship Company, which had built by F. W. Wheeler & Co. the steel-hulled steamers WILLIAM H. GRATWICK (III) and JOHN J. McWILLIAMS. The Etna Steamship Company was put together in 1895 by Mitchell, his brother Alfred, Gratwick, and one Frederick Smith. It would be well to remember that, in those days, fleets often were composed of many owning companies, most of which were formed to solidify the financial backing of a particular enterprise, most often the construction of new vessels.

Throughout the 1890s, Capt. John Mitchell was involved in the management of a great many firms, some of which were not at all related to the lake shipping industry. In the late 1890s, however, he founded what was to become his major shipping firm, the Cleveland Steamship Company. This company was to order and then operate a large fleet of beautiful, steel-hulled, upper lake bulk freighters, many of which actually were built to designs prepared by Capt. Mitchell himself, a man of many talents. The Cleveland Steamship Company absorbed the Mitchell-operated Etna Steamship Company on February 25, 1910. Meanwhile, in 1905 or thereabouts, Capt. Mitchell founded the Buffalo Steamship Company, which was to own and operate four steel bulk carriers, including the largest steamer ever managed by Mitchell.

One of a group of thirteen near-sisterships built for the Cleveland Steamship Company around the turn of the century was a vessel which was built as Hull 80 of the Globe Iron Works at Cleveland. (This yard had become part of the American Shipbuilding Company in March of 1899.) The vessel was launched on Saturday, December 9, 1899, it then being the custom to launch most new lake ships on Saturdays. She was completed in the spring of 1900, in time to enter service during the first navigation season of the new century. She was enrolled at Cleveland as U.S.81688, and was christened WILLIAM E. REIS, in honour of one of Capt. Mitchell's backers.

As recorded in the shipyard documents and confirmed by government shipping registers, WILLIAM E. REIS was 416.0 feet in length, 50.0 feet in the beam, and 24.0 feet in depth of hull, her tonnage being calculated as 4748 Gross and 3154 Net. The steamer was powered by a triple-expansion engine with cylinders of 23, 33½ and 57 inches and a stroke of 42 inches, which developed 1440 i.h.p. on 150 pounds of steam. Her boilers were of the single-ended Scotch type, 12½ feet by 12 feet, and they must have been of staunch construction for they were to last the ship for her entire life, a most remar-