

AN EXCURSION BOAT FOR NIAGARA AND THE WELLAND CANAL

Back in 1956, Russell-Hipwell Engines Ltd., of Owen Sound, Ontario, built the twin-screw, shallow-draft tug JOHNNY B. (C.188714) for Gunner Transportation Company, and affiliate of Gunner Mining Limited. The 90-foot tug, registered at Toronto, was built for far northern service, and was equipped with propellers mounted in tunnels, and also with four flanking rudders, all accessible from above without need for drydocking. In 1957, the tug was lengthened by six feet and she was transported in seven pieces to Hay River, Alberta, where she was reassembled for operation on Great Slave Lake to the mouth of the Mackenzie River, towing barges for the local uranium mines.

About 1966, JOHNNY B. was purchased by the McNamara Corporation Limited, Toronto, and again she was disassembled. This time, she was taken to Whitby on Lake Ontario. About 1974, she was acquired by Evans McKeil of McKeil Work Boats Ltd., Winona, which took her to Hamilton and rebuilt her with a new bow and pilothouse, together with several other changes. As a result of this reconstruction, her dimensions remained 96.0 x 22.1 x 5.9, but her tonnage was increased from 149 Gross and 47 Net to 165 Gross and 69 Net. JOHNNY B. was used as a tug and supply ship for drilling rigs on Lake Erie and she also was chartered to the Canadian Centre for Inland Waters for scientific research work on Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay.

On December 20, 1987, JOHNNY B. was acquired by the Fortune Navigation Company (681460 Ontario Limited), a company incorporated in 1986 by a group of eleven equal-share investors, most of whom are active in the field of Great Lakes shipping and reside in the Niagara Peninsula area. JOHNNY B. was taken to Port Weller where, in the interim, she has been entirely rebuilt for the excursion service. Her main deck has been lengthened to provide for a deckhouse measuring 72 feet by 21 feet, and a 12 foot by 12 foot pilothouse has been constructed on the open promenade deck above. With an overall length of 100 feet, she has a draft of four feet and has been classed as Inland II. She has two low-speed, six-cylinder, heavy-duty Cummins diesel engines, and two 25-kw. generators.

The vessel has been renamed (b) GARDEN CITY, a name most appropriate for service in the St. Catharines area, and which recalls the famous sidewheel steamer of the same name which operated from Toronto to Port Dalhousie for so many years. She has a passenger capacity of 300. One of her interesting features is a set of dining tables constructed from the former hatchcovers of the cannaller motorship D. C. EVEREST. She can seat 140 people for buffet dining. Three stairways, two exterior and one interior, lead to the upper deck, which can be partially covered with an awning.

What is so interesting about GARDEN CITY is that it is planned that she will operate trips of two hours duration from Port Dalhousie around to Port Weller and up into the Welland Canal as far as the reach between Locks One and Two. Commencing in May, she will make two trips per day in spring and fall, and three trips per day in the high season, with a proposed fare of \$12.00 for adults. As well, she will do group charters and special dinner-dance and moonlight excursions. Interested parties should contact the Fortune Navigation Company, P.O. Box 2452, Station 'B', St. Catharines, Ontario L2M 7M8, or phone (416) 646-2234 for information.

The same company also is the owner of the pilothouse and texas cabin of the package freight steamer FORT HENRY, which was scrapped at Hamilton. The cabins were moved last year to a site adjacent to Lock Three on the canal, near where the new museum complex is being constructed, and will be open to public viewing. Operating navigational aids will provide visitors with an idea of what the bridge area of a Great Lakes vessel is like, and various marine artifacts will also be on display.

We wish GARDEN CITY success in her unusual service.

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