

KINCARDINE

by Ronald F. Beaupre

In the spring of 1871, the sound of shipbuilders' hammers and adzes rang across Port Dalhousie harbour as three ships were under construction. The Muir Brothers were preparing to launch their large schooner ALBATROSS at their yard on the west side of the large bay that formed Port Dalhousie's inner harbour, and which came to be known as Muir's Pond. Meanwhile, on the east side of that bay, shipbuilders Stebbens Andrews and his son, William, were working on completing the barque BISMARCK and the steamer KINCARDINE.

The 1871 census stated: "Their (Andrews') shipyard and drydock have \$12,000 in fixed capital investment, \$2,000 in floating capital, average of 42 men employed, including two boys, an aggregate of \$16,000 paid out in yearly wages, aggregate value of raw materials on hand of \$10,000 and the aggregate value of the two vessels then being built of \$30,000".

The BISMARCK was launched in mid-April, but only with great difficulty, as reported by the "Kingston Daily News" on April 14, 1871. "A dastardly outrage was committed at the shipyard of Mr. Andrews, Port Dalhousie, a few days ago. Mr. Andrews announced that he would launch a new vessel, and a large crowd collected to witness the sight. The people had to go away disappointed, for the vessel would not budge an inch. After great labour and the application of jack screws, she was placed in the water. It was then discovered that some miscreant had driven a large iron spike through the ways, and until that was broken the vessel could not be moved." Perhaps the ship-building competition was making its presence felt...

The propellor KINCARDINE was launched either very late in May or on June 1st, 1871. The "St. Catharines Evening Journal" of June 3rd stated that "the new (steam) barge KINCARDINE will make her trial trip this afternoon or evening at Port Dalhousie".

Surveyor James Clark, of Port Dalhousie, measured the new ship and provided the following details for the register: length 107 feet; breadth 20 feet; depth 8 feet, 9 inches; tons 142; decks 1; masts 1; length and tonnage of engineroom 17 feet, 9 inches, 34 tons. The ship was assigned registry number 71147, but unfortunately no record of the details of her engine or boilers was made.

The residents of Goderich were looking forward to the arrival of the new ship as it was intended that KINCARDINE would operate out of that port. Two of the vessel's owners, F. A. Robertson, forwarder, and W. Worden, grain merchant, were Goderich businessmen, each holding thirteen shares. The other partners were Ross Robertson, forwarder, and Robert Baird, grain merchant. Both were Kincardine businessmen and each held thirteen shares. Captain John McPherson, of Lucknow, had invested in twelve shares, and most likely was KINCARDINE's first commander.

We can only speculate as respects the new ship's appearance, as there has yet to be discovered any photograph showing KINCARDINE at this stage of her career. Nevertheless, we have reason to suspect that she may have been a "rabbit", in other words, a steamer with all of her cabins located aft above the engine and boiler rooms.

It appears likely that the owners would have taken delivery of KINCARDINE by mid-June of 1871, at which time they would have placed her in service out of the port of Goderich, carrying cargoes of general freight and grain.

KINCARDINE departed Goderich, northbound, on Sunday, October 15, 1871, and on that particular trip sailed into the teeth of a fierce "northwester". The storm caught many ships on a lee shore, and KINCARDINE's master turned her back to run before the storm after getting up the shore as far as Port Elgin. She managed to reach port safely, whereas the schooner ONTARIO, which had been launched at Goderich on Canada's first Dominion Day (July 1, 1867), was driven hard onto the beach just south of the piers. ONTARIO was rescued