

CUMBERLAND

by Capt. Gerry Ouderkirk

Ed. Note: We began the story of the famous, upper-lake, sidewheel passenger steamer CUMBERLAND in the Mid-Summer issue. We started the story with an account of her launch at Port Robinson on August 9th, 1871. Seven pages later, our space in the Mid-Summer issue exhausted, we left off the narrative, and had carried the CUMBERLAND's history only up to November of 1872! We now resume this feature article.

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CUMBERLAND left Tobermory on November 24th, 1872, and after a difficult trip so late in the season and not making it through the Soo until November 30, finally arrived safely at the Lakehead. However, on the downbound portion of this trip, CUMBERLAND encountered a terrific gale on Lake Superior. The schooner MIDDLESEX went aground on Round Island with all hands saved, but the less fortunate schooners W. O. BROWN and D. R. OWEN, downbound from Duluth, were lost with all hands. Also lost were the crews of the barges JUPITER and SATURN, ore-laden, which broke loose from the steamer JOHN A. DIX and drifted ashore at Whitefish Point. CUMBERLAND got herself frozen into an ice-jam at Bear Lake (described as being "north of the Soo"), with fifty passengers on board, and there she remained for the winter.

The "Owen Sound Advertiser", of January 2nd, 1873, carried the following story: "Capt. Orr, the chief engineer, and six of the crew of the steamer CUMBERLAND arrived about 3 o'clock on the morning of the 26th (Dec.), after a twenty days tramp on foot. The party came down along the north shore of the Georgian Bay, and experienced terrible weather during their long tramp, during which all of the party were more or less frozen. They endured great privations, being for twelve days at one time without tasting bread. They had two dogs with them, and at one time they were so near to starving that it became necessary for them to kill and eat one of the dogs. Some days after this, the cravings of hunger again became so unbearable that they were about to despatch the remaining dog, when they came in sight of a mill, which they shortly afterwards reached and where they received the kindest of treatment. The engineer twice broke through the ice, once being almost carried under by the current, when it was with the greatest difficulty that he was rescued. The party spoke in the highest terms of the kind treatment they received from the proprietors of the different mills and posts along the route.

"The first mate was left in charge of the steamer, and the steward, stewardess and two waiters also were left on board. The captain and party left eighteen of the crew eight miles from Bruce Mines on their way down."

On March 15th, 1873, Capt. Murray McGregor, Mr. J. E. Ellis, Mr. Bell and the Assistant Engineer departed Toronto for the CUMBERLAND, going by way of Sarnia, crossing Northern Michigan to Mackinac, then crossing the ice at the Straits into northern Wisconsin (sic.), and from there they went on snow shoes to Bear lake, arriving at the steamer on the 30th after much hardship. Their journey was hampered by a severe storm on March 26th, which left three feet of snow on the ground. While crossing the Straits of Mackinac, their horses broke through the ice and had to be rescued. They must have been a glorious sight for Mr. Stroud, the steamer's steward, for he had remained aboard all winter. When the new officers arrived, CUMBERLAND was surrounded by ice three feet thick.

CUMBERLAND arrived at Collingwood on May 6th from Bear Lake and the Soo. She reported that the (Soo) canal was open, and a party from Whiskey Island reported that Lake Superior was still full of ice. CUMBERLAND left the Soo on Monday, April 30th, and tried to get into Bruce Mines, but turned back by way of DeTour because the channel was ice-plugged. She couldn't put in any-