

TROUBLE IN THE RAPIDS

The following is an excerpt from the "Brockville Weekly Recorder" of Thursday, 12th September, 1889.

## - THAT STEAMBOAT COLLISION -

"The following is taken from the 'Rochester Herald' of the 4th inst. It appears under the heading 'Steamboat Collision': --

"'One of the most serious collisions to take place on the St. Lawrence in many years occurred on Saturday between the steamers ALGERIAN and SOVEREIGN. The two boats were jammed with passengers.

"'The ALGERIAN left the Thousand Islands on Saturday morning with many well known New Yorkers on her decks. All the rapids were safely passed except those at Lachine. As the ALGERIAN steamed along by that town, the SOVEREIGN on her trip down from Ottawa hove in sight. She came along at full speed just behind the ALGERIAN. The boats shot in tandem order under the new Canadian Pacific bridge, and slowed down a bit preparatory to entering the Lachine Rapids. The ALGERIAN was midway in the torrent when the passengers noticed that the SOVEREIGN was approaching dangerously near to her stern. There was every indication that the SOVEREIGN wanted to pass the ALGERIAN.

"'As the last of the rapids were reached, the SOVEREIGN was abreast of the ALGERIAN and the two boats were about three feet apart. There was intense excitement among the passengers of both boats. The captains of the two boats then got into a tangle with their signals, and while one was ringing and whistling to go ahead, the other was doing the same thing. The passengers expected the crash any moment. The two boats were now in the last rush of the last of the rapids, and the passengers could reach over the rails and almost clasp each others' hands. Three ladies on the forward deck of the ALGERIAN fainted.

"'The captain of the SOVEREIGN finally determined to force his boat out of the precarious situation. He rang to go ahead full speed, and at the same time the bells of the ALGERIAN gave the same order. The two boats came together with a crash the next instant. They lurched far over. The passengers heard the crunching and crashing of the boats as they ground into each other, and began to look around for life preservers. The ALGERIAN's engines were slowed down and the SOVEREIGN, grinding her way along her side, was soon out of the way.

"'It is said that the collision was caused by the rivalry between the captains of the two boats. The racing fever of the ocean flyers has extended to the captains on the St. Lawrence.'"

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**Ed. Note:** It was Ron Beaupre who discovered this little gem concerning insanity in the operation of steamboats. He thought our members might find it of interest after reading about the rapids adventures of the whalebacks in the November issue. It would appear that the incident occurred on Saturday, August 31, 1889. We do not know what may have been the legal outcome of the senseless occurrence. It should be noted that ALGERIAN was our Ship of the Month No. 158 in the "Scanner" issue of November, 1987.

By the way, our feature on the whalebacks in the rapids has generated much reader response and we are pleased to advise that we should be able to produce a follow-up feature almost as lengthy as the original story. We hope to have it ready for the January issue, so please keep your eyes on these pages and wait for more fascinating information concerning CHARLES W. WETMORE and her far-wandering companions.

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