

KAMLOOPS was amongst the huge fleet of 100 ships caught in what became the worst ice blockade in the history of the Great Lakes. Food and fuel were running short aboard the trapped boats, and so in addition to their ice-breaking duties, the tugs were kept busy delivering groceries and coal. The powerful railroad carferry SAINTE MARIE, renowned for her icebreaking abilities, was brought up from the Straits of Mackinac to assist in the river.

However, the weather had worsened as the temperature dipped to well below zero (on the Fahrenheit scale) and it began to snow heavily. By December 5th, the situation was becoming extremely serious, with the slush ice turning solid, ships running low on bunkers, and more boats arriving downbound to add to the misery.

At the head of the blockade of downbound traffic was the World War One "Laker" type stemwinder steamer COULEE, which was turned crossways in the Neebish Rock Cut. She finally was released on December 7th, but the Wilson Transit Company steamer GENERAL GARRETSON, the very next ship in the line, then became wedged in the narrow cut, and the tugs had to work on freeing her quickly.

The "Detroit Free Press" of December 10th listed 26 vessels that had been released from the blockade, but KAMLOOPS was not among them, as she was the 13th boat back in the next group. We are not sure exactly when KAMLOOPS was freed, but it would appear that she was trapped for at least nine days in the ice jam before being released and proceeding downbound. Many of the ships were not so lucky and their owners had to arrange for them to stay at Sault Ste. Marie for the winter. KAMLOOPS was laid up for the winter at Goderich, a most unusual place for her. We suspect that she wintered there because it was too late in the season for her to take her grain cargo down to a St. Lawrence River elevator where she might normally spend the winter.

On October 11th, 1926, Canada Steamship Lines Ltd. had officially transferred the ownership of KAMLOOPS from Steamships Limited to the parent company. Later that same month, KAMLOOPS was one of a number of vessels in the big C.S.L. fleet that were used to secure a large mortgage from the Montreal Trust Company.

The spring and summer of 1927 were largely uneventful for KAMLOOPS as she went about her usual business, looking much more handsome with her newly-painted red hull and white fore-castle. Late in November of 1927, KAMLOOPS loaded what was to be her last cargo at Montreal. A portion of the cargo was comprised of some heavy paper-making machines which had been imported from England, and which were to be delivered to the Thunder Bay Paper Company at Fort William.

As she made her way up the St. Lawrence River and the lower lakes, KAMLOOPS collected additional general cargo until she was down to her draft marks for winter navigation. Somewhere, probably at Hamilton, she loaded a deck cargo of pipe. She cleared Hamilton on Wednesday, November 30th, and Port Colborne at 9:30 a.m. on December 1st. After stops at Windsor and Sarnia, KAMLOOPS arrived at the Soo on Sunday, the 4th of December. She was locked up through the canal in company with the Paterson bulk carrier QUEDOC (I).

The weather forecast at the time warned of an approaching winter storm and Capt. Brian, wary that his heavy deck cargo might collect dangerous amounts of ice, had already decided that he would wait for better weather in the shelter of Whitefish Point. A letter he mailed to his wife from the Soo confirmed that this was his intention.

KAMLOOPS was in company with several other ships as she "rode the hook" under the shelter of Whitefish Point. A report on the weather situation appeared in the "Montreal Gazette" on December 6th. "Shipping Moving Again: Shipping is again moving on Lake Superior after a storm of great intensity, which swept the lake yesterday afternoon, bringing with it a high wind, snow, a heavy sea and a much lower temperature. Spectre-like ships, reminiscent of the blockage days of last year, moved slowly through the locks yes-