

THE GLASS HACK AT THE BRIDGE

In our Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Issue, of May, 1993, we presented as our Ship of the Month No. 204, the story of the life and tragic loss of the Canada Steamship Lines canal-sized package freight steamer KAMLOOPS. That feature provoked much positive comment and we thank all those who responded. We still hope to find more photographs of KAMLOOPS some day, and in particular we would like to see a shipyard photo of her construction or her launch on the River Tees.

Of greater interest to us at this moment, however, is our mention of the fact that the same foul weather which brought about the demise of KAMLOOPS on Lake Superior in early December of 1927, also caused damage as far south as Detroit, Michigan. We might remind our readers of our quotation from the December 8, 1927, edition of the "Montreal Gazette", which read as follows: "The TASHMOO, valued by her owners at \$500,000 crashed into the bows of the Detroit-Windsor ferry PROMISE, tearing the latter away from her moorings. Both steamers, with no one aboard, were driven upstream by the gale and the TASHMOO pounded helplessly against the Belle Isle Bridge. The PROMISE was driven against the Grand Trunk Railroad shipping dock and crashed into a coal boat. Both were damaged."

There is no end to the surprises which are brought to us by our postman. Not long after the appearance in "Scanner" of our KAMLOOPS feature, there came a letter from longtime T.M.H.S. member, Rev. Raymond M. Donahue, of Algonac, Michigan, who wondered whether we would like a print of the TASHMOO in the throes of her encounter with the Belle Isle Bridge. Realizing that this could be something truly extraordinary, we responded in the affirmative, and Fr. Ray soon sent our way a print of the view in question. It so impressed us that we devote one entire side of our photopage to it in this issue!

At the time of the KAMLOOPS storm, the mighty TASHMOO, one of the Great Lakes' most famous day excursion boats, was in her usual lay-up quarters on the downtown Detroit waterfront. The storm swept her upstream, against the strong downriver current, and put her up broadside against the Belle Isle Bridge, a place she would never have ventured under normal circumstances. A close look at the photo will show the river's current boiling out from under TASHMOO's starboard bow, but the wind holding the steamer against the current and the bridge. The wind direction is confirmed by the upriver trail of steam, apparently originating from one of the tugs standing by the stricken TASHMOO but out of camera range. A very small portion of the fantail of another tug can be seen protruding just beyond the starboard side midships of TASHMOO.

We may learn more about TASHMOO's brush with disaster from the pages of "The Detroit News", which covered the truly unusual events of the early morning of Thursday, December 8th, 1927. During the night, a 60 m.p.h. gale had developed, the temperature dropped 40 degrees to 8° Fahrenheit, and snow began. In the pre-dawn hours, the newspaper sent a reporter and a photographer to the waterfront to see what damage the storm might have caused there. The team arrived at the Griswold Street wharf of the White Star Line just in time to find the dock watchman in a state of shock. Only a few minutes earlier, TASHMOO had suddenly parted all her winter mooring lines and had swung away upstream with nobody on board!

The watchman reported that he had heard a crash shortly after the unexpected departure of TASHMOO, and the "News" team, proceeding upriver to the foot of Woodward Avenue, found that the sound that the watchman had heard had been that of TASHMOO striking the crossriver ferry steamer PROMISE, whose crew had been preparing her for the commencement of her day's ferry service. As PROMISE was suddenly torn away from her pier, her engineer and three other crewmen managed to leap ashore, preferring solid ground to whatever fate might have in store for their ferryboat.