

HIAWATHA continued to run regularly on the Sarnia - Port Huron ferry crossing until, during the early 1920s, she was superceded by newer and larger ferries. Nevertheless, she still saw some limited service when traffic conditions warranted her operation. On Sunday, March 26th, 1922, HIAWATHA was moored at the Port Huron ferry dock in the Black River, close to her running mate, the ferry steamer OMAR D. CONGER. Without warning, the CONGER's boiler exploded as the ferry was being readied for service. The explosion was so powerful that there was much damage in the surrounding area of the city, and the CONGER herself was completely demolished. HIAWATHA received considerable damage to her stern but, unlike the CONGER, she was able to be repaired and put back in serviceable condition. By 1925, she was, however, laid up in reserve status, and she remained so until 1930.

During 1929, a new trunk road from Espanola, Ontario, on the mainland, to Little Current, on the North Channel shore of Manitoulin Island, was nearing completion. A ferry was needed to complete the connection at Little Current, and in May of 1930, the Ontario government awarded a contract for the ferry service to Norman Trotter, of Little Current. Trotter's ferry was to replace the rather haphazard service previously provided by private scow ferries. Despite the recommendations of local residents that a shorter and more favourable route be chosen, or even that a bridge be used for the new road, the government decided that the ferry was to run from a dock at the west end of Little Current, across to La Cloche (Great Cloche) Island, which itself was connected to the mainland by a bridge.

Looking around for a suitable boat for his new service, Trotter's attention was attracted by the idle HIAWATHA and, realizing that the venerable steamer still had a few years of service left in her, Trotter purchased her. Until HIAWATHA arrived at Little Current on Wednesday, June 18, 1930, Trotter provided service on his route using the tug HELEN S., which was owned by Captain Graham, and a deck barge.

Trotter wasted no time putting HIAWATHA in service. He charged a fare of 75 cents for automobiles under 25 h.p., with driver, while it cost \$1.00 for a more powerful vehicle with driver. Passengers paid 20 cents, while freight was carried for 5 cents per hundredweight. A single horse could travel for 25 cents but it cost 50 cents to take a team across. A charge of 10 cents per head was made for cattle, while pigs and sheep could cross for 5 cents per head. Two round trips were scheduled each hour, with service on a 24-hour basis in July and August, and from 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. for the rest of the season, short as it was.

One peculiar thing: before her arrival, it was reported that HIAWATHA would have capacity for 12 cars and 50 passengers. We are mystified, however, by the fact that a boat of HIAWATHA's size, which carried several hundred per trip in peak periods on the Sarnia crossing, would have such a small reported capacity in northern waters. The report undoubtedly was in error, but we never have seen any revised passenger capacity figure for HIAWATHA.

During the 1930 summer season, traffic on the new road from Espanola increased dramatically. The roads approaching the ferry docks, however, were very narrow and many delays were occasioned to traffic using the crossing. HIAWATHA was not the most popular of vessels as far as the locals were concerned, and many considered her to be unsuitable. Indeed, during September of 1930, one of her critics described her as "high decked and medieval"!

Not only was the ferry difficult to reach and unpopular as a ship, but the ferry route chosen by the Ontario government was considered to be most inappropriate and far too long - approximately one mile. The ferry route was subject to service interruption by heavy westerly gales, and the docks themselves were very shallow, and with a dangerous rocky bottom. Locals suggested that if a bridge were to be built from the mainland over to Goat Island, and the ferry run from there, the route would be shortened considerably and would be more protected, as the channel between Goat Island and the