

ONTADOC (I)

Every once in a while we are contacted by newer T.M.H.S. members who would like to purchase copies of back issues of "Scanner" and we do the best we can to supply those which we do have in stock. Many of the issues from the first few years of the Society's existence are, however, completely out of print and have been for many years. Some members have asked us to photocopy the Ship of the Month features from some of those early issues for them but, to be quite honest, we have been rather reluctant to do so simply because the quality of those early articles was not up to our current standards and, in fact, some of them contained errors that we would just as soon not see perpetuated. We have learned a lot in a quarter of a century!

We already have redone one of those early features (CAPE TRINITY), and a recent review of some of those articles indicates that we can make much better stories out of almost all of our early efforts.

Back in Number 2 of Volume II, the issue of November, 1969, we ran as Ship of the Month No. 3 (although it was not sequentially numbered at the time), a feature on the venerable Paterson steamer ONTADOC (I), which then was still in service, albeit coming close to the end of her active life. That feature was, however, woefully brief and hardly adequate.

The ONTADOC was a personal favourite of your Editor and many other shipping enthusiasts, who photographed her on every possible occasion in her last few years of service. It seems only fitting that, instead of letting our original very short history of her stand "as is", we should now redo the article, 217 features and almost 26 years later. This seems all the more appropriate in that 1995 marks the 25th anniversary of ONTADOC's retirement, an event that was particularly notable in that ONTADOC was the last steamer of traditional design owned by the Paterson fleet, for which she had operated for 45 years.

The story of the ONTADOC started back in 1903, when she was constructed as Hull 62 of the Chicago Shipbuilding Company, which then was being operated as a subsidiary of the American Ship Building Company. The vessel was built at the company's yard which was located on the east side of the Calumet River at 101st Street in South Chicago. She was launched on Saturday, August 22nd, 1903, and she was completed and commissioned during the month of October.

Hull 62 was built to the order of the Gilchrist Transportation Company, of Cleveland, and she was christened R. L. IRELAND in honour of Robert Livingston Ireland, who had been with the Globe Iron Works, of Cleveland, for a number of years, but who became vice-president of the American Ship Building Company when it was formed in 1899. He retained this position until the autumn of 1903, when he left to devote more of his efforts to his duties with the M. A. Hanna Company. Two lake steamers were named for him, but their names were a bit different. The R. L. IRELAND of 1903 should not be confused with the ROBERT L. IRELAND, which was built in 1914 for the Kinney Steamship Company, of Cleveland.

R. L. IRELAND was given U.S. official number 200254 and, according to the List of Merchant Vessels of the United States, she was enrolled at Cleveland, Ohio. As was the case with most of the Gilchrist steamers, however, the home port of the steamer which was painted on the IRELAND's stern was Fairport, Ohio. Fairport also appears as her registry port in publications such as the Great Lakes Register (Bureau Veritas) and the Record of the American Bureau of Shipping. We never have heard an official explanation of this unusual situation.

The IRELAND was 416.0 feet in length between perpendiculars, 50.3 feet in the beam and 24.0 feet in depth, with tonnage of 4470 Gross and 3143 Net. She had an all-steel tank top, and her hull was built on the channel system,