

HIAWATHA - AN IMPORTANT ANNIVERSARY

Many local shipping fans have been disappointed to see the decline of marine activity in Toronto Harbour in recent years. Most of the salt-water line services have abandoned the port, and not many lakers call here any more either. That does not mean that there is nothing of interest to see on the bay, however. Not only do we have the last sidewheel passenger steamer operating on the Great Lakes, that being the 1910 ferry TRILLIUM, but we also have what we believe to be the oldest operating passenger vessel on the Great Lakes.

What is this venerable ship? She is the Royal Canadian Yacht Club tender HIAWATHA, which this summer is celebrating her 100th anniversary! Despite her advanced age, the HIAWATHA is kept in immaculate condition by the famous yacht club, and along with her 83-year-old near-sister KWASIND, she is used regularly to ferry members and guests from the club's city dock at the foot of Parliament Street to the R.C.Y.C. premises located on three islands near Centre Island, in the Toronto Islands chain.

Back in the early 1890s, the R.C.Y.C. was using as its tender and passenger ferry the wooden-hulled former steam yacht ESPERANZA, but by the mid-decade, she was no longer capable of handling the large number of members making the crossing from the city side to the R.C.Y.C. clubhouse on the Island. As a result, the yacht club ordered from the Bertram Engine Works Ltd., Toronto, a new steel ferryboat, and this beautiful craft was launched on Tuesday, July 9th, 1895.

Christened HIAWATHA and given Canadian official number 100768, she was 65 feet in overall length, 56.0 feet between perpendiculars, 13.3 feet in the beam and 6.3 feet in depth. Her tonnage was 46 Gross and 31 Net. She was built with a straight stem, a very heavily undercut counter stern, and a pronounced yet graceful sheer to her hull. A single-decked boat, she was given a wooden cabin midships, with a small pilothouse set at its forward end. The forward deck was open and equipped with benches, while abaft the cabin there was a shade deck, also equipped with benches. She has retained this same general deck arrangement for her entire life.

HIAWATHA was powered by steam, although we have no details of her original engine or boiler. She burned "hard" anthracite coal and, as a consequence, never made much smoke to soil the fancy clothes of the members travelling in her.

HIAWATHA was completed shortly after her launching and entered service during the summer of 1895. Her first master was Capt. David Reynolds, whose former command, the ESPERANZA, was now retired from service. It is interesting to note that the total bill for the construction of HIAWATHA amounted to only \$7,000!

Eventually, even the new HIAWATHA proved too small to carry the number of members wanting to cross to the club's Island premises, and in 1912 she was joined by KWASIND, which was built by the Polson Iron Works Ltd., Toronto. The new ferry was generally similar to HIAWATHA in appearance, but was fifteen feet longer and cost \$13,000 more to build. The two ships have maintained the service together ever since, although the actual route of the bay crossing has changed several times.

During the winter of 1944-1945, the steam engine and boiler were removed from HIAWATHA and replaced by a gasoline engine. The KWASIND received the same treatment shortly thereafter. At the time that we featured HIAWATHA as our Ship of the Month No. 9 in 1970, we remarked that the re-engining of the boats was the only major work ever done on them, with the exception that HIAWATHA received a new pilothouse during the early 1960s. Since then, however, both HIAWATHA and KWASIND have been repowered again, and HIAWATHA now has a small Caterpillar diesel engine. As well, both boats have undergone complete replacement of their entire cabin structures, although much care has been taken to ensure that the new cabins match the original deck-