

On April 26, 1876, the steamer was re-registered at Toronto as (b) SOUTHERN BELLE. On returning to active service that spring, she was chartered to the Canada Southern Railway (from whence came her new name), and she was placed on a regular route between Toronto and Hamilton, still with a way stop at the town of Oakville. We believe that she ran the same route during 1877.

In 1878, she operated to Toronto from the Ocean House at Burlington, with a connection into Hamilton via the Hamilton - North Western Railroad. During the 1879 season, she made twice-daily trips from Mackay's Wharf at Hamilton to Mowat's Wharf at Toronto. In 1880, she was in service by Victoria Day, May 24th, when she carried 800 passengers on a special excursion. The records for 1883 reveal that she began service on June 11th, making two trips each day on the same Hamilton - Toronto route.

David S. Keith had been manager of SOUTHERN BELLE since 1877, but in 1884 George Keith took over management of the steamer for the railroad. On July 24th of that year, she carried 400 persons on a special excursion from Hamilton to Lorne Park (a cottage and recreational development area east of Oakville), the outing being sponsored jointly by the Ontario Rolling Mills and by the American Nail Works. The steamer's 1885 season began with her entry into active service on May 23rd.

In 1886, ownership of SOUTHERN BELLE was assumed by the Toronto and Hamilton Navigation Company Ltd., which was capitalized at \$60,000. David S. Keith, George Keith, Alex Keith and W. A. Merritt, all of Toronto, and I. P. Gray, of Chicago, were the directors of the new company. It would appear that SOUTHERN BELLE was reboilered during 1886, but we have no details of either the new or the previous boilers. Perhaps because of the reboiling, SOUTHERN BELLE did not begin her 1886 operating season until June 12th, when she sailed from her regular berth at Mackay's Wharf, Hamilton.

Despite the reboiling, SOUTHERN BELLE was nearing the end of her career. She was known as a very fast steamer, as was fitting of a vessel that had served as a Civil War blockade runner, and this speed probably had kept her from harm during the conflict. It is known that, during the late 1870s, she had established a record time when she made the crossing from Toronto to Lewiston, New York, in just one hour and 57 minutes. Unfortunately, however, she was far surpassed in comfort and amenities for passengers by the screw steamers MACASSA and MODJESKA, which were built for the Toronto to Hamilton route in 1888 and 1889, respectively.

Accordingly, SOUTHERN BELLE was retired from service during 1889, and was laid up at Toronto. She remained idle there until 1891, when she was sold to Frankel Bros., well-known scrap metal dealers who carried on business at Toronto for many years, and who participated in the scrapping (or in scrap sales or resales) of numerous ships as well as many of Toronto's streetcars when they became obsolete. SOUTHERN BELLE was partially stripped down at Toronto, and then the hull was towed down Lake Ontario to Mill Point, near Picton, Ontario, on the Bay of Quinte, where her last remains were dismantled during 1892.

It was a common occurrence in those days that the owners of abandoned or dismantled vessels were not too particular about surrendering their documents, and sometimes the clerks in the registry offices did not get around to entering officially, on a timely basis, such information as did reach them. Accordingly the government vessel registers can be grossly misleading as to the status of certain ships in any particular year. SOUTHERN BELLE was a case in point, for if one were to believe the Dominion List of Shipping, she was still in existence fifteen years after her demise. Her name still appeared in the List until 1907!

SOUTHERN BELLE served her various owners well, and was one of the most significant of the early metal-hulled steamers on Lake Ontario. It is only fitting that we recall her career in the year of the 100th anniversary of her scrapping.