

After spending the winter of 1878-1879 in lay-up at Mackay's Wharf at Hamilton, CELTIC was chartered for the Dominion government's annual "lighthouse supply trip". She departed Montreal on Monday, June 30th, 1879, with supplies for all of the Canadian light stations on the Great Lakes. After clearing Port Colborne on July 9th, she proceeded to the light stations at Mohawk Island, Port Maitland, Port Dover and Long Point on Lake Erie.

Leaving Long Point on July 11th, she crossed Lake Erie to Cleveland to unload some cargo and take on bunkers. She cleared Pelee Island on July 13th and then blundered onto Chickenolee Reef, the outer shoal eastward of Fish Point, the southerly extremity of Pelee Island. A passenger reported that she bumped several times over the boulders and then fetched up with a crunch. After CELTIC had spent a day aground in extremely hot weather, a tug and lighter arrived from Windsor, and after 100 tons of cargo were removed from the steamer, CELTIC floated free. She was repaired in due course, and then was put back in regular service.

Her fit-out in the spring of 1880 at Hamilton was completed under the command of Capt. Vaughan. On May 24th, 1880, CELTIC arrived at Hamilton with a cargo of 400 kegs of nails from Montreal, consigned to Messrs. Wood and Leggat.

In 1881, the Mackay vessels were operated in the Merchants Line consortium. Capt. Green was master of CELTIC that year and she spent most of the season on the run between Montreal and Chicago. She was in that same service in 1882 under the command of Capt. George Malcolmson, beginning that season with a visit to Muir's Dry Dock above Lock One of the Welland Canal at Port Dalhousie. She cleared the shipyard on May 5th and, on May 20th, she loaded 3,100 kegs of blasting powder at Burlington. This nasty cargo came from the Hamilton Powder Company mills at Twelve Mile Creek in Nelson Township. CELTIC delivered her cargo without untoward incident, no doubt much to the relief of all concerned.

Continuing in the service of the Merchants Line in 1883, CELTIC operated from Montreal to Toronto and Hamilton. Again that year, she was chartered to the federal government for the annual lighthouse supply trip. This "cruise" around the lakes ended at Montreal on August 20th, with Capt. Cavers in command of the steamer. CELTIC then rejoined the regular service from Montreal to Lake Ontario.

Late in 1883, she made a trip to the upper lakes and during a severe gale she was forced on November 11th to seek shelter in Duluth harbour. By November 19th, she was downbound on Lake Huron but, despite the lateness of the season, she then was booked for another upper lake trip. This additional voyage took her to the Canadian Lakehead with supplies for the Canadian Pacific Railway's transcontinental rail construction project. At the completion of this trip, CELTIC laid up for the winter in her usual place of refuge at Hamilton.

On June 12th, 1884, CELTIC began loading a most unusual cargo at Hamilton. It consisted of the prefabricated sections of a large aqueduct which had been built by the Hamilton Bridge and Tool Company for the Quebec City Waterworks. The finished structure was to be 160 feet long, 12 feet deep and 15 feet wide, and was required to carry the city water supply over the St. Charles River. Stowing a cargo such as this in a vessel of CELTIC's type must indeed have been a challenge!

Then, on July 8th, 1884, CELTIC departed Montreal on her usual annual trip to supply all of the Canadian lighthouses between Montreal and Hamilton. An article which appeared in the "Hamilton Spectator" of Tuesday, July 15th, gives a good description of the leisurely manner in which a happy combination of business and pleasure was achieved during the course of one of CELTIC's lighthouse supply trips.