

SEVONA

- by Robert J. MacDonald -  
with the Editor

Many of the vessels which have been included as "Ship of the Month" features in "Scanner" served the larger, well-known Great Lakes fleets. This feature, however, concerns one which belonged to a small fleet from 1890 until 1895, although chartered out to other operators for most of this period, and then sailed from 1896 until 1905 for other owners of whom many of today's marine historians may never have heard mention. This particular ship was lost 91 years ago this past autumn, so it is high time that we told her story.

The first steel-hulled lake freighter was the SPOKANE, which came off the ways of the Globe Shipbuilding Company at Cleveland in 1886, and was built to the order of the Wilson Transit Company, of Cleveland. Another famed builder, Frank W. Wheeler, at his West Bay City shipyard, launched his first steel hull, the sidewheel passenger steamer CITY OF CHICAGO (15), (b) CITY OF ST. JOSEPH, on March 18, 1890. She was the Wheeler yard's Hull 68.

Wheeler's second steel hull, the yard's Hull 69, hit the water of the Saginaw River at West Bay City, Michigan, on Saturday, June 7th, 1890. This seven-hatch package freighter, equipped with tween deck and side ports, was built for the Hollister Transportation Company, of Gratwick, New York. Christened by Miss May Wheeler, the ship was named EMILY P. WEED in honour of the mother-in-law of her managing owner, George C. Hollister. The Hollister Transportation Company also had the wooden steamer JOHN C. PRINGLE (13), (a) W. H. GRATWICK (86), (c) HUGH R. HAVEY (17), (d) PEIRCE McLOUTH (28), (e) D. R. MORLEY, built in 1880, and the consort schooner-barges SWEETHEART (1867), SUNSHINE (1854) and BENJAMIN HARRISON (1889).

EMILY P. WEED measured 300.0 feet in length, 41.0 feet in the beam, and 24.6 feet in depth (although unlike all other available sources, her enrollment certificate showed a depth of 21.0 feet). Her tonnage was 2362.51 Gross and 1899.65 Net. Enrolled at Suspension Bridge, New York, she was given U.S. official number 136129.

The WEED had a triple expansion engine with cylinders of 20, 33 and 54 inches diameter, and a stroke of 42 inches, which produced Indicated Horsepower of 1,100 at 75 revolutions per minute. The engine was built for the ship in 1890 by Samuel F. Hodge & Company, of Detroit. She was fitted with three single-ended, coal-fired Scotch boilers, each 11'6" in diameter and 12'0" in length, which were manufactured in 1890 by Wickes Bros., of Saginaw, Michigan. There were six furnaces in total, with 132 square feet of grate surface and 4,449 square feet of heating surface. Her working steam pressure was 150 p.s.i.

EMILY P. WEED had what today would be considered to be a most unusual deck arrangement. The first hatch was located between the forecastle and the bridge structure; the second, third and fourth hatches were set between the texas and the "doghouse", while the fifth and sixth were between the doghouse and a large, wooden coal bunker-box. The seventh hatch was placed between the coal box and the boilerhouse, while it would appear that the bunker hatch was positioned between the boilerhouse and the after deckhouse. The ship had four masts; the fore was stepped immediately abaft the texas, the second just ahead of the doghouse. The mainmast rose up out of the coal box, while the mizzen was stepped at the forward end of the after cabin.

There were catwalks between the turtle-backed forecastle head and the bridge deck, and between the roof of the boilerhouse and the aft cabin. An open pipe rail ran around the forecastle head but the entire spar deck was surrounded by a closed steel bulwark.