

REDCLOUD'S TORONTO TOW

In the October issue, we featured the "Red Barge" REDCLOUD as our Ship of the Month No. 237. We showed a photograph of her being towed through the Toronto Western Gap on August 14, 1955, by the Toronto Dry Dock Company's steam tugs H. J. DIXON and J. C. STEWART, but were unable to explain why REDCLOUD was being towed into a port which she almost never visited. We could only speculate that she had suffered a mechanical breakdown out on Lake Ontario. The problem, however, now has been solved and we extend sincere thanks to Ron Beaupre, who found the answer in the scrapbooks of our late member, Ivan S. Brookes.

News reports clipped by Ivan indicate that REDCLOUD, commanded by Capt. William Morton, was downbound on Lake Ontario with a cargo of grain for Montreal. At about 5:30 p.m. on Saturday, August 13, 1955, in heavy seas and with winds blowing up to 50 m.p.h., REDCLOUD suffered a steering gear failure. Her crew was unable to repair the damage and shortly after 10:00 p.m., when REDCLOUD was off Thirty Mile Point near Rochester, she sent out a radio call for assistance. The U.S. Coast Guard tug OJIBWA was sent from Rochester and she stood by REDCLOUD, but was unable to take her in tow.

Meanwhile, the Hamilton Harbour Commission's 170-foot excursion steamer LADY HAMILTON, (a) CADILLAC (42), (b) ARROWHEAD (46), (c) CADILLAC (52), a former Detroit River ferry which had been built in 1928, was lying at Toronto, unable to return home to Hamilton because of the heavy weather. After receiving REDCLOUD's distress call, however, Capt. A. J. Hogue of LADY HAMILTON decided to go to the freighter's assistance, and the passenger boat left Toronto shortly after 11:00 p.m.

LADY HAMILTON searched for REDCLOUD for hours, because the freighter had been blown across the lake by the southeast gale. She finally located REDCLOUD at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 14, some 18 miles off Oshawa. The "Red Barge" had drifted 32 miles from the point where she had suffered her breakdown. Capt. Hogue reportedly did a magnificent job of bringing LADY HAMILTON alongside REDCLOUD, taking the helpless freighter's lines, and then heading up the lake to Toronto, where in Humber Bay he turned the tow over to the two Dixon tugs for entry into the harbour. REDCLOUD finally was docked in Toronto at 9:00 p.m. Sunday, some 27 hours after her ordeal had begun.

LADY HAMILTON was a rather ungainly-looking steamer, and we would love to see a photo of her towing REDCLOUD! Capt. Hogue, her master, had for many years been a skipper of the Toronto Island ferries. Your Editor remembers "Bert" Hogue from his years in the ferry/tug MACASSA II, particularly when the latter participated in the scrap tows of some old lakers in the mid-1960s. LADY HAMILTON herself was broken up for scrap in 1962.

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We must apologize for an omission which occurred on the photopage which accompanied the REDCLOUD feature. Not having a photo of REDCLOUD as a barge, we included a photo of REDHEAD at Welland, upbound in tow of the bent-masted tug JAMES WHALEN. The photo should have been identified as having come from the collection of longtime T.M.H.S. member and supporter Alan Sykes.

Another problem concerned mention of a July 17, 1942, grounding of REDCLOUD at Upper Point Traverse. Ron Beaupre and Ye Ed. both rechecked Willis Metcalfe's Canvas & Steam on Quinte Waters and can confirm that she was not bound TO Charlotte with coal (which would have been very strange indeed) but rather was taking soft coal FROM Charlotte to Cornwall when she stranded in heavy fog. An R.A.F. pilot on a training flight spotted the grounded ship and reported her predicament, while several crew members who rowed ashore walked 1½ miles to a South Bay farmhouse to notify the REDCLOUD's owners of the accident. Strangely, REDRIVER stranded under similar circumstances near Point Petre on April 19, 1938. Was there, perhaps, something in Charlotte coal that led "Red Barges" off course when they encountered fog?

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