

north wind, it rolled from Prescott across the St. Lawrence River to Ogdensburg, but missed the channel to the upper harbor and rolled into the soft mud on a bar abreast the city and settled hard, surrounded by snow and ice. Efforts to tow the boat by long hawsers into the deep water were unsuccessful and she may not be released until spring. The inventor and the stockholders who were on board were taken off in small boats. The inventor claims success." A Donnelly tug from Kingston pulled ROLLER BOAT free on Thursday, November 28th.

It is amazing how Mr. Knapp could "claim success" every time something untoward hapened to ROLLER BOAT! We wonder whether the stockholders were as impressed as Mr. Knapp claimed to be. One cannot help but wonder, as well, why Knapp would take his craft out in such inclement conditions that would do nothing to improve her lack of manoeuvrability in close quarters. In addition, local press reports indicated that Knapp made no attempt whatever to avoid the Ogdensburg bar and tried to roll right over it rather than steering into the navigable channel. The result was predictable.

ROLLER BOAT was still aground on the Ogdensburg bar when the "Brockville Recorder" reported that she would be converted to operate as an "end-on" steam barge in the coal trade, with cargo loaded from above, and with a new unloading process installed. In fact, W. E. Redway, the Polson Iron Works architect who had been involved with Knapp in the original ROLLER BOAT plans, had himself made a drawing of a tubular boat with a conical bow and a pilothouse perched on deck, which had hopper gates in her hold and a horizontal conveyor belt running below. A 65-foot single belt was to angle up to a hopper on deck, from which cargo would be dropped onto a belt on a 45-foot boom suspended from a mast. Whether Redway had the original ROLLER BOAT in mind when he did this drawing in 1911 is not known...

Capt. W. J. Stitt, again quoted by C. H. J. Snider, recalled that ROLLER BOAT was taken back to Prescott (after her fight with the Ogdensburg bar) and there she remained for the winter. "The next spring," said Capt. Stitt, "she had a shaft and propeller installed (presumably only at one end -Ed.) and she made about four miles per hour speed with the small engine she had in." One wonders how the original engine at the one end, meant to cause the hull to rotate, could be geared to a propeller shaft. And was the engine at the other end removed? We must assume so but we may never know for sure.

Capt. Stitt continued: "So he (Mr. Knapp) came to the conclusion that he would make her a cigar-shaped craft and lengthen her to 250 feet and install more power. This was during the summer of 1902, I think, so he made arrangements with the Montreal Drydock Company to lengthen her and finish her into a first-class cigar-shaped ship. She was taken to Montreal under her own power (end-on, of course) and placed in the drydock and a new bow and stern were to be built on her, viz, 90 feet on the bow and 50 feet on the stern, to make the ship 250 feet in length..."

We should note that a contemporary (but unsourced) press report indicated that, when interviewed, Mr. Knapp said that he had just about revolutionized ocean traffic (!) and would have if the public could have grasped the rollerboat principle. Now he was giving the public something it could understand - cylindrical freight boats.

Frederick Augustus Knapp had more brass than the proverbial monkey, it seems! If he thought that ROLLER BOAT had failed because the public could not understand it, one wonders how he thought the public would find a cylindrical boat any easier to comprehend. In any event, the fact is that the ROLLER BOAT now became "The Tubular Boat" and thus has arisen the confusion between the two, some sources indicating that they were two different vessels. The fact that the ship never was officially registered under either guise does not make matters any easier for today's researcher to make much sense out of the situation.