

In the May issue, we featured, as our Ship of the Month No. 243, the story of "Five Little Ferryboats". This was the history of the small Toronto Island ferry steamers ARLINGTON, MASCOTTE, JESSIE L. McEDWARD, ADA ALICE and ELSIE. All five of these steamers were rather enigmatic, in that there are portions of their stories that we probably never will know, and there are unknown photos of them in service that we never have seen, but hope some day to discover.

ADA ALICE (C.75642) was built in 1879 by the Abbey Shipyard at Port Dalhousie, and she first ran between Port Dalhousie and downtown St. Catharines along the old Welland Canal. By 1895, she was owned by the Doty family, of Toronto, which was involved not only in shipbuilding and engine construction, but also in the operation of Toronto Island ferryboats. She was owned by several different parties over the years, including Joseph Goodwin, of Centre Island, but we never have been able to find her registered to Lol Solman's Toronto Ferry Company Ltd., for which she operated for many years. Photos of ADA ALICE in service, and the 1904 Gibbons drawing of her which we reproduced in the May issue, however, clearly show the Toronto Ferry Company name painted on her forward bulwarks.

In our feature, we noted that the 1914 Dominion shipping register showed her being owned by the William Davies Co. Ltd., Toronto, while the 1915 Dominion List had her owned by the Muskoka Lakes Navigation & Hotel Company Ltd., Gravenhurst, and the 1918 List showed her owner as Levi R. Fraser, of Bracebridge. She was still in the 1924 List, with the same owner, although she was gone from the register by 1927. What happened to her in the Muskoka Lakes, to which she was carted overland after her days on Toronto Bay were finished?

We had hoped to consult the writings of Richard Tatley on the Muskoka Lakes steamers when we penned our ferryboat feature but, quite frankly, we weren't able to find our copy of the relevant volume in time. Now we have it, and we find ADA ALICE mentioned quite prominently in The Steamboat Era in the Muskokas - Volume II - The Golden Years to Present. Tatley takes up the story of ADA ALICE a bit earlier than we had expected, as we had not thought that she left Toronto Bay until the early years of World War One. In fact, she made the trip northward a few years earlier.

Tatley says: "In 1911, the William Davies Company of Toronto, a noted meat packing firm, having already opened a branch store in Bracebridge, also imported the steamer ADA ALICE... from Toronto Harbour to serve as a floating food store, delivering fresh and cooked meats to their customers... In 1912, the company also took over a butcher shop in Port Carling, and was soon selling meats, butter, eggs and vegetables even to the Hannas (longtime Port Carling merchants who operated their own supply boats on the Muskoka Lakes). But it came at a bad time. The prosperity of the (Sir Wilfrid) Laurier era came to an end in 1912, leading to a slump in the tourist trade. Apparently the ADA ALICE failed to make money. Worse still, the vessel caught fire at the wharf at Port Carling on the night of June 18 (1912?) and was badly damaged, though prompt action by the villagers prevented a total loss. (Port Carling residents were to be sorely tried by the scourge of fire, perhaps more than any one community ought to be tested - Ed.)

"Afterwards, she (ADA ALICE) was put up for sale - cheap. But no buyers stepped forward until March 18, 1915, when the Navigation Company somehow ended up with her. Since the ADA ALICE was repaired, it may be conjectured that her owners hired the Navigation Company to do the work, only to find themselves unable to pay for it. For its part, the Navigation Company never used the vessel, and promptly resold her to Capt. (Levi R.) Fraser, who wanted a tug to replace the SOUTHWOOD (then retired after 27 years of service). Fraser seems to have kept ADA ALICE until 1919, but after that she was allowed to sink at the Gravenhurst dockyards alongside the remains of