

Most of the steamers that operated for Canada Atlantic Transit over the years were package freighters, but the BROWN and the ELPHICKE were bulk carriers. We have never seen any description of what these vessels did, but we suspect that they operated in the usual bulk trades, with heavy emphasis on the grain trade, as the Canada Atlantic Railway was a heavy eastward trans-shipper of grain.

In 1906, however, WILLIAM L. BROWN and MARY C. ELPHICKE were sold to Captain John Mitchell, of Cleveland, a highly-renowned vessel owner, operator and designer. He put them in his Cleveland Steamship Company fleet, where they were to operate for five years. The Mitchell boats had black hulls, white cabins and forecastles, and black stacks with a broad maroon band. (The red band tends not to show in photographs of the day which were made using orthochromatic processing which was not sensitive to red, and thus made it look much the same as black.)

Little was recorded about the comings and goings of the BROWN and the ELPHICKE when they were owned by Mitchell, although they probably spent most of their time in the iron ore trade when downbound, and carrying coal from Lake Erie when upbound. Our records do show that WILLIAM L. BROWN was chartered during the 1908 season to George Ashley Tomlinson, another renowned lake ship operator. This charter was not long-lived, and there is no indication that it ever included the ELPHICKE.

Another change in ownership for both steamers came in 1911, when both were acquired by the Republic Transportation Company. This was a subsidiary of the Republic Iron and Steel Company, and it was managed by the M. A. Hanna Company, Cleveland vessel operators. On May 5th, 1911, Republic Transportation took over WILLIAM L. BROWN and MARY C. ELPHICKE, as well as the 356-foot, 1903-built G. WATSON FRENCH, which also had a history of operation by the Elphicke interests.

Republic kept the BROWN and the ELPHICKE (as well as the FRENCH) for ten years. As early as 1910, the BROWN and ELPHICKE had been re-registered at Duluth, Minnesota, and this remained their home port during their Republic years. Under Hanna operation, their hulls remained black, and their forecastles and cabins white, but the black stack now bore a white star, on which was superimposed a large, red letter 'H'. After a few years, this star-and-'H' insignia also was placed on the foremast of each steamer, outlined in lights which were illuminated when the whistle was blown.

During 1913, each of the sisterships underwent a hull rebuild, being given a new spar deck supported by means of the arch system. The hull was now divided into three cargo holds, and there were 24 hatches spaced on 12-foot centres. The work done on each ship must have been identical, because each emerged from the rebuilding with tonnage of 4904 Gross and 3879 Net. We know that the work on MARY C. ELPHICKE was done at Buffalo, New York, by the Buffalo Dry Dock Company, and we must assume, in the absence of any information to the contrary, that WILLIAM L. BROWN was reconstructed at the same shipyard.

As well, during the years of Republic ownership, each of the sisters was given an enclosed upper pilothouse. It took the same squarish shape as the old cabin below, but sported large windows across the front and down each side, the windows shaded by a prominent sunvisor. Entrance to the new pilothouse was gained via a door in its aft face.

During their years under Hanna management, WILLIAM L. BROWN and MARY C. ELPHICKE ran mostly in the ore trade, although coal remained a frequent back-haul on upbound trips. In the autumn of 1923, however, there came a change, not only for the BROWN and the ELPHICKE, but also for their Republic Transportation fleetmate, the G. WATSON FRENCH.

On October 23rd, 1923, the incorporation took place at Albany, New York, of