

THE STEAMER BROCKVILLE

At the 100th Anniversary of her Launch

- by Capt. Gerry Ouderkirk -
with the Editor

It was stated in his obituary that Capt. Melancthon Simpson moved to Toronto "to spend the evening of his days in the company of those with whom he had been intimate during his active life". He began building ships at Oakville, Ontario, in 1848 with his younger brother, Capt. John Simpson, according to the late C. H. J. Snider. Among those with whom Melancthon had been intimate were the well-heeled Gooderham family of Toronto, for whom he built the cutters AILEEN and CONDOR in 1882. In 1884, he launched the Toronto Island ferry MAZEPPA. The following season, he built the propellor KAKABEKA (Ship of the Month No. 169, December 1988), the first vessel ever registered at Port Arthur, Ontario. Also in 1885, he launched the ferry QUEEN CITY (I), which was renamed (b) ONGIARA (I) in 1889, the year that he launched a 31-ton steam yacht, ABEONA, for A. E. Gooderham and Thomas Blackstock.

The last vessel built by Melancthon Simpson left the ways one hundred years ago, in 1898. Her launch was reported best by "The Toronto Globe" on Saturday, June 11, 1898: "Launch of the BROCKVILLE: There was a gay little scene at the foot of Berkeley Street this afternoon, it being the occasion of the launching of the new steamer BROCKVILLE, built at the Reid yard by Capt. Melancthon Simpson for the Brockville Navigation Company. Mr. W. S. Buell, the Secretary-Treasurer of the company, was here from Brockville, and was aboard the vessel with several friends and a representative of "The Globe" when the vessel went off the ways. There were also aboard several ladies and Mr. J.E. McGlade and Engineer T. Crossley, who are the purser and engineer respectively of the BROCKVILLE when she takes up her regular trips. Capt. Melancthon Simpson oversaw the launch in person, and it is a foregone conclusion therefore that it should be a perfect success. The vessel had to be brought several lengths of herself over the land and be moved sideways on to the ways before she could be launched, but the whole performance was gone through without the slightest mishap, and at 4 o'clock this afternoon the new vessel began to slide on the ways of the marine railway, and at two minutes past four, she was floating tranquilly in the slip. Those on board felt not the slightest jar during the transit. Mrs. Simpson, the builder's wife, christened the vessel.

"The BROCKVILLE is a snug vessel. Her contract calls for a speed of fourteen miles an hour, which is difficult to attain on the light draught of five feet which the boat has, but Capt. Simpson can fulfil the contract if any man can. The BROCKVILLE's length is 105 feet, with 21½ feet beam and 7 feet depth, and she is licensed to carry 375 passengers. Her engines, built by the Polson Company, are compound fore-and-aft, with cylinders 9 x 18 and 14 inch stroke. She is already fitted out and is almost ready to go into commission. Tomorrow she will make a trial trip around the Island, and tomorrow evening she will leave for Brockville. Her interior fittings are handsome, especially those of the ladies' cabin on the middle deck. The painters are putting on the finishing touches there. The walls are covered with a pretty design in embossed metal sheeting. Capt. Joseph Jackson is to have charge of the vessel on the trip to Brockville, where he will hand her over to the charge of Capt. Sam. Scott, who will run her during the season between Brockville and the adjacent summer resorts, making a daily run of fourteen miles. She is fitted with a perfect incandescent electric light plant, and on top of the wheel house is an immense electric searchlight, which is to be utilized to show the beauties of the river by night. The windows at the head of the companion way and in the doors of the cabin are of beautifully stained glass. All the life preservers are on board, and every thing is in readiness for a trip, which is a condition which is seldom attained previous to the launching of a vessel. There is a fully furnished galley and dining room