

MOHAWK DEER REVISITED

In the January issue, we presented a nine-page (plus two sides of photos) feature on the steamer MOHAWK DEER, (a) L. C. WALDO (16), (b) RIVERTON (44). This already was a repeat of an earlier feature, in that MOHAWK DEER had been our Ship of the Month No. 11, appearing in Vol. III, No. 2, in November of 1970. The original feature was only a bit more than two pages, and hardly did justice to the story of this thrice-wrecked steamer.

But when, during December, we penned the new feature, we knew that there was a lot more to be said about the ship. There were several reasons why we did not do so at that time; the first was that we had completely run out of space for the feature, and the second was that we wanted to see how much additional material our readers could produce to assist us in our efforts. And we are pleased to say that our members came through in stalwart fashion and provided us with a wealth of further material, including some very rare photographs which we quite simply had to share with all of you.

So we now set out once again to delve into the mists of the past and sail anew in this famous steamer as she weaves her way through seventy-one years of remarkable history.

All the things we said about the construction and early service of the L. C. WALDO appear to have been correct, with one exception. We based our description of the WALDO on photographs which we had of her which we taken after the 1905 lengthening, the best of these being the Young photo we reproduced, showing her downbound out of the Soo Locks. We had no photo of her prior to 1905, but knowing the period in which the ship began her life (she was built by F. W. Wheeler & Company at West Bay City, Michigan, in 1896), we might have guessed that her pre-stretching mast arrangement might have been different than what we saw in the post-1905 pictures. We had no way of knowing for sure, however.

Now we do. We have now been shown not one but three pre-lengthening photos of L. C. WALDO, and in all of them she is seen to be sporting not two but rather three masts! The foremast is the same one she carried after the reconstruction, and the pre-1905 mizzen, stepped abaft the smokestack, is the same spar that later served as her mainmast. But before the lengthening, her main was as tall and well-raked a heavy spar as the other two, and was positioned between the sixth and seventh of her eleven hatches. One of these photos shows her partly loaded alongside an ore or coal trestle, with her hatches opened, and the piles of hatchcover sections clearly indicate the number of hatches she had originally, something we had been unable to determine from any early registers. The second mast simply was removed when the steamer was stretched, and photos of the ship at the Craig shipyard at Toledo in 1905 would indicate that the new piece was added at just about the spot where the old mainmast had been placed.

We mentioned that L. C. WALDO was involved in a collision in May of 1896, very shortly after her commissioning, with the Lake Superior Iron Company's "straightback" stemwinder CHOCTAW on the St. Mary's River. We did not, however, have any details to flesh out this episode. Now we do, and we hasten to share them with our readers.

"The Marine Record" of May 21, 1896, reported: "The L. C. WALDO bound down with ore, and the CHOCTAW, bound up light, collided at daybreak Wednesday morning (May 20th), near Spry's lumber dock, just below the Sault locks. The stem of the WALDO cut into the CHOCTAW amidships, and cut a hole from deck to bilge. The WALDO's collision bulkhead is filled, and she will have to be lightened before proceeding. Her stem is broken and badly twisted below the water line."

The "Buffalo Morning Express" of May 21st reported in more details, under a dateline of Sault Ste. Marie, May 20. "The stm. L. C. WALDO, Capt. John Duddleson, bound down, with ore, and the stm. CHOCTAW, Capt. John Ward, upbound