

In 1896, the Bertram yard turned out its Hull 16, the Niagara Navigation Company's sidewheeler CORONA, which was powered by the engine from the burned CIBOLA, and which in Ye Ed.'s humble opinion was the most handsome day-boat ever built on the lakes. (Yes, I know that I likely will be stoned by CAYUGA enthusiasts, but "them's the breaks"...) In 1897, the Bertrams built KEENORA for the Northwestern Ontario service and she lasted on Lake Winnipeg until 1965. (The poor old CORONA was a victim of the Great Depression and was scrapped in 1937 at Buffalo.)

In 1899, the Bertrams built for the R & O their HULL 29, the sidewheel night boat TORONTO, which was to operate from Toronto via Charlotte to Kingston, Clayton, Frontenac, Alexandria Bay, Brockville and Prescott, to connect with the rapids steamers running between Prescott and Montreal. The ship left Toronto in the mid-afternoon and arrived at Prescott in mid-morning the following day, permitting an early evening arrival at Montreal with connection for the night boats to Quebec City and intermediate ports.

The 278-foot (overall) TORONTO, 2779 Gross and 1652 Net, was designed by Arendt Angstrom, who became manager of the Bertram yard and later was chief naval architect for the Canadian Shipbuilding Company Ltd. TORONTO was a one-stacked sidewheeler with an inclined, triple expansion engine, three decks of passenger facilities, and a decorative galleried interior that surpassed anything then afloat on the lakes.

Then in 1901, the Bertram yard built a larger and even grander running mate for TORONTO, the yard's Hull 37. This was the Angstrom-designed, two-funnelled KINGSTON, 2925 Gross and 1909 Net. She was a bit more than 18 feet longer between perpendiculars than TORONTO, and was considerably more ornate in her interior furnishings. KINGSTON entered service in 1902. These two ships came as close as lake steamers ever got to the design of the great overnight steamers of Long Island Sound. KINGSTON was to last until 1950, at which time she was scrapped because her wooden superstructure could not economically be made to conform with newly revised fire safety regulations which were introduced following the loss of the same owner's NORONIC at Toronto on September 17, 1949. KINGSTON began her last trip on the afternoon immediately following the burning of NORONIC.

The Bertram yard was still working on the superstructure of KINGSTON when it received an order from the R & O for the largest and grandest passenger ship the R & O would ever own. The new ship's hull was built on ways atop the wharf next to the slip where KINGSTON was being completed, and it was launched on Monday, March 3rd, 1902. We never have seen an official record of the new ship's Bertram hull number, but as KINGSTON was Hull 37, and the freighter TADOUSAC, built in 1903, was No. 40, the ship that was to be christened MONTREAL must have been either Hull 38 or 39, and we vote for No. 38. The new MONTREAL was eventually given Canadian official number 116600, and she was enrolled at Montreal, although the enrollment did not take place right away.

The best description of the launch of the MONTREAL we yet have found appeared on Tuesday, February 4th, 1902, in "The Globe", which in those years generally carried more marine news than any of Toronto's three other newspapers. In fact, we have been unable to find even the slightest mention of the launch of MONTREAL in the "Mail and Empire", the "Evening Telegram", or the "Daily Star". So let us read what "The Globe" had to say about the new vessel on its Page 2, under the headline "Success to The MONTREAL".

"Another floating palace was added to the fleet of the Richelieu & Ontario Navigation Co. yesterday, when the hull of the MONTREAL was launched at Bertram's shipyards. The new boat is worthy of her name, and worthy to sail as a companion vessel to the KINGSTON and the TORONTO. The launch was delayed for an hour owing to the lateness of the eastern trains, but when finally the gun was fired, and Mrs. Pellatt, wife of Col. (H. M.) Pellatt, one of