

Milwaukee. The boats are being improved at West Bay City (sic)."

As we already have commented, the Vandalia Line (the St. Joseph & Lake Michigan Transportation Company) was a dismal failure in its efforts to compete with the established Graham & Morton Line between St. Joseph and Chicago. We know that, by at least July of 1893 if not rather earlier, OSSIFRAGE was up in Lake Superior, for she took excursionists to the ROSEDALE wreck at Knife River. But was she still on Lake Michigan in the early part of the 1893 season? We doubt it. Appearances can be deceiving, however. There are photos of her (and one accompanies this article) with a black stack with a big white star on it, and the legend 'World's Fair' on her bow, a reference to the Columbian Exposition held at Chicago in 1893. However, a closer look reveals that painted on her promenade deck bulwarks forward was the additional legend 'Duluth & South Shore Transit Co.'.

It would appear that this may have been the Lake Superior service we mentioned in reference to the A. Booth Packing Company and/or the Smith-Fee Company, which seems to have lasted from 1893 or late in 1892 (whenever the Vandalia Line gave up) until George Arnold purchased OSSIFRAGE in 1895. She ran nowhere near the World's Fair, but the owners apparently were trying to cash in on the popularity of the event, albeit hundreds of miles away "down below".

But, to cloud the issue, we have a September 4, 1894, item from the "Buffalo Enquirer": "East Tawas, Sept. 4 - People along the shore (of Lake Huron) this afternoon were startled by the constant whistling of some unknown steamer out in the smoke on the lake. Tugs went out to ascertain the cause of the distress signals and found the passenger stm. OSSIFRAGE ashore between here and Alabaster. The steamer is a small boat engaged in the coast trade. Her passengers are safe. There is a fresh wind blowing from the south." Unfortunately we know absolutely nothing about what she was doing on Lake Huron at this time.

Likewise, we have very little news of OSSIFRAGE during her Arnold years, but the 'Arnold Line' name was painted on her upper deck bulwarks during this period and so there now can be no confusion between this service and her 1887 run from Cheboygan to the Soo. Presumably spending most of her time in the Straits of Mackinac, OSSIFRAGE seems generally to have operated without mishap for Arnold, who had her refurbished in 1897 at Manistee, where a new boiler was installed.

Nevertheless, Parker's Shipwrecks of Lake Huron lists OSSIFRAGE as having foundered in 1900 off Sturgeon Point (near Thunder Bay, on the Michigan shore of Lake Huron). David Swayze's website of Great Lakes shipwrecks confirms the date and location, noting: "She foundered and was thought to be an unrecoverable total loss, but later brought to the surface and sold Canadian... rebuilt at Owen Sound in 1901." We have no idea why Arnold had OSSIFRAGE down in that area, and presume that she may have been en route somewhere rather than operating locally. It would seem likely that this accident sped her departure from Arnold's ownership, although we suspect that the "foundering" was less serious than these reports might lead us to believe, as there is no other mention anywhere of the incident.

In anticipation of her move into the fledgling Algoma Central Steamship Line fleet, "The Marine Review" of November 22, 1900, noted: "The steamer OSSIFRAGE of the Arnold Transit Co. has been purchased by the Algoma Central Steamship Co. (Francis H. Clergue of Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.), and will be placed on the passenger run between the Sault and Michipicoten next season. The OSSIFRAGE will be turned over to the Algoma company at the close of navigation and will receive a thorough overhauling during the winter. (No mention here of the Lake Huron 'foundering' -Ed.) It is understood that Mr. Clergue will purchase another vessel of this kind (MINNIE M. -Ed.) for his operations in and around the Sault." So OSSIFRAGE truly was the very first "Algopassengerboat"....!