

Buffalo, she was 238 feet in length and 1608 Gross Tons. Later renamed (b) GEORGE H. VAN VLECK, she was rebuilt as a bulk carrier in 1906. She foundered in the Detroit River near Ecorse, Michigan, on December 3, 1918, and was a total loss.

The next incident was reported by the "Owen Sound Times" on September 28, 1897. "Badly Burned. An accident occurred on the MANITOBA yesterday morning while she was still outside which will no doubt be remembered by the chief cook, Mr. Robert Baker, for some time. While getting breakfast ready some grease caught fire and Mr. Baker, who was standing immediately in front of the great cooking range, was caught in the sudden blaze. His clothing took fire, but was quickly extinguished, however not before he had received nasty burns on his arm and face. One of the assistant cooks was also severely burned in extinguishing the flame. When the boat reached port at 8 o'clock the sufferers were placed under medical care and their injuries attended to."

The C.P.R. frequently updated its ships during this period, and in the mid-1890s removed the auxiliary sails and gaffs from the masts of its steamers as soon as the insurers no longer required such auxiliary equipment. Then, during the winter of 1899-1900, MANITOBA received an extensive overhaul of her electric plant, and was fitted with new "steerage" quarters (such as the minimal facilities of that type ever were) for second class passengers.

The next step was to create an enclosed forecastle by plating in the old open foredeck. The new forecastle head was crowned, to throw off boarding seas, in such a way that it was known as a "turtle-back". This type of reconstruction had been completed on ALBERTA and ATHABASCA during February and March of 1897, perhaps as a belated consequence of the heavy damage sustained by ALBERTA in May of 1894, when she was struck by an extremely large sea that came over the bow and smashed its way into the forward cabin and pilothouse.

The construction of MANITOBA's new forecastle was not done until a few years later, and was reported in the "Owen Sound Sun" edition of January 15, 1901. "Mr. Ed Trist, the master builder of the steamer MANITOBA, commenced work yesterday putting a turtle back on the bow of this vessel to make her correspond with ATHABASCA and ALBERTA. The steamer's engines are also to be counterbalanced for next season's business, which will be a great improvement. The chief engineer, Mr. Lewis, of Toronto, will have charge of this work. The two undertakings will employ quite a staff of men for several weeks."

By mid-February of 1901, the heavy iron framework for the new turtledeck was nearly all in place. The same paper reported on March 29: "The crews of the C.P.R. boats MANITOBA, ALBERTA and ATHABASCA reported for duty this week and the finishing touches will now be put on the work that has been going on for some time under the supervision of carpenters and painters. The turtle deck of the MANITOBA, for instance, has been completed and the painters are taking their turn."

With this new deck in place, the pilothouse was raised (or, more probably, a new one built) to allow for better visibility forward and aft. However, the ship still was navigated from an open bridge on the monkey's island atop the pilothouse, and the C.P.R. management was most insistent that this practice should be retained. A high closed rail ran around the monkey's island to provide protection for the navigation officers who had to stand watch on the open bridge.

Back in service in 1901 after her rebuild, MANITOBA came upon a ship in distress in the upper St. Mary's River near Pointe aux Pins. The wooden steamer AVON (19) (U.S.105733), (b) STORMOUNT (II) (C.140962), was downbound with flour and merchandise for Buffalo late in June of 1901, when she was discovered to be on fire. MANITOBA was in the vicinity and stood by with the big ore carrier VICTORY to render assistance if possible. Two tugs came up from the Soo and pushed AVON out of the channel until she was in shallow water.