

HAMONIC

This history of one of the most beautiful and beloved passenger vessels ever to operate on the Great Lakes is dedicated to our late friend and longtime T.M.H.S. member Capt. Horace Loudon Beaton. Were it not for his heroic efforts on the morning of Tuesday, July 17th, 1945, this feature would have not only a sad ending, but a terribly tragic one.

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Over the years, the members of the Toronto Marine Historical Society have offered to us a great many suggestions for ships to be featured in these pages. One of the ships most requested in all that time is HAMONIC, which has been mentioned in many publications over the years, but whose "complete" history never has been told. We will now attempt to remedy that situation, and to share with our readers the story of a most unique vessel.

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We last touched on the history of the Northern Navigation Company (such as we knew it then) back when we featured the steamer UNITED EMPIRE (better known as "Old Betsy") back in our issue of February 1987. In fact, this was a company with some very early roots, and as the years have passed, we have learned much more about those antecedents. The oldest of the company's roots lay in the Beatty family shipping interests. Back as early as 1865, William Beatty, of Thorold, Ontario, was running a shipping operation which soon became known as J. & H. Beatty and Company, and which was operated by William, his sons James H. and John D. Beatty, and his nephew Henry Beatty. It was known as The Lake Superior Line by 1870, and the name of the firm was changed in 1876 to the Northwest Transportation Company Limited, of Sarnia, its formal incorporation occurring on March 5th, 1877. The company commonly was known as "The Beatty Line", and proved to be very successful, operating mainly from Sarnia (and Collingwood in the early years) to Port Arthur and Duluth, with calls at numerous way ports. Apart from UNITED EMPIRE (C.80776) of 1882, some of its other famous ships were WAUBUNO (no Canadian number) of 1865, MANITOBA (no number) of 1871, ASIA (no number) of 1873, QUEBEC (C.71212) of 1874, ONTARIO (C.71211) of 1874 and MONARCH (C.96843) of 1890. Henry Beatty left the family firm in 1882 to become the manager of the lake shipping operations of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but "The Beatty Line" would continue in business for many more years, UNITED EMPIRE and MONARCH carrying on the route alone after 1898.

One of the promotional statements made by the Northwest Transportation Company over the years was that its vessels were staunch and strong, and that the company never had lost the life of a passenger through accident. Very few fleets could make such a claim in those days when wooden ships frequently burned or were wrecked, but it was quite true in respect of "The Beatty Line". No passenger was lost in any of the bumps or scrapes that all of the steamers sustained from time to time, nor were any lost when MANITOBA and QUEBEC suffered major accidents that took them out of the fleet. It is true that ASIA was owned by the Beattys when she foundered with considerable loss of life on Georgian Bay in September of 1882, but at the time of the accident, she was operating under charter to the Great Northern Transit Company and her day-to-day service was not under any control of the N.W.T.Co. The Beatty family also had owned the ill-fated steamer WAUBUNO at one time (she was built for the Beattys), but she was sold out of their fleet long before her tragic loss in 1879.

Another of the roots of the Northern Navigation Company lay in the previously mentioned Great Northern Transit Company, commonly known as "The White Line" because its vessels' hulls were painted white. It could trace its history back to 1875, when it was formed as the Georgian Bay Navigation Company by Thomas Long, John J. Long, Charles Cameron, and Capt. Peter M. Campbell.