

Aft, most of the accommodations were located inside the enclosed poop, but there still was a fairly large deckhouse on the boat deck above. There were two lifeboats, one per side, carried high on very prominent davits. The large (although not quite tall enough for our liking) smokestack was of the "coffeepot" style and had a fair amount of rake to its forward face. The reasonably tall mainmast was stepped not far abaft the stack.

LEECLIFFE HALL was painted in what for many years had been the traditional Hall fleet colours. Her hull, forecastle and poop were black, while her deckhouses were white. The foremast was buff while the main was buff with a black top. The smokestack was black, with the usual white "wishbone" and letter 'H' design on it.

For her first three seasons on the lakes, and most of her fourth, LEELIFFE HALL operated very successfully, and we are unaware of any problems that she might have encountered. She established a number of cargo records over the years, her last being a two-way record set in June of 1964. She hauled 28,300 short tons of iron ore up from Sept-Iles, Quebec, to Ashtabula, Ohio, and then on the downbound trip took 924,577 bushels of wheat from Fort William to Montreal. However, the vessels of the Hall Corporation fleet were beginning to encounter more than their fair share of accidents and it was just one such event that would put a most untimely and unfortunate end to the promising career of this steamer.

LEECLIFFE HALL passed downbound at Sault Ste. Marie for the last time on Wednesday, August 26, 1964, bound for the St. Lawrence River. After unloading her grain cargo, she proceeded to Sept-Iles, where she loaded 24,504 tons of iron ore consigned to Lackawanna, New York. On board the ship as passengers were Mr. and Mrs. Frank A. Augsbury, Jr., and their son, all of Ogdensburg, New York, together with Susan Sterne (who had christened the ship back in 1961) and Katherine Sterne. Also on board was Maurice Bourget, speaker of the Canadian Senate, who was hobbling around on crutches as a result of "a recent golf course accident".

She sailed on Friday, September 4th, and the late afternoon of Saturday the 5th saw her upbound in the North Channel of the St. Lawrence between St-Joseph de la Rive, on the north shore, and the Ile-aux-Coudres, some 57 miles northeast of Quebec City. In command of the LEECLIFFE was Capt. Walter M. Bowen, of Lipscomb, Ontario. He was on the bridge at the time as also was the pilot, Capt. Joseph-Emile Pouliot. They spotted on the radar another vessel some 3.9 miles ahead of them, heading downriver, and reportedly altered their course by a few degrees to give the other ship a wider berth. It was foggy at the time, and it was raining quite heavily.

The downbound vessel was the Greek-registered saltwater bulk carrier APOLLONIA, owned by Margrande Compania Naviera S.A., a Panamanian firm, and reportedly chartered to United Operator, a New York company. The ship had been built as Hull 563 of Ishikawajima-Harima Heavy Industries Co. Ltd. at Aioi, Japan, in 1961, and was 487.4 (505.4 overall) x 66.5 x 42.2, 11127 Gross and 6460 Net Tons. She had made three trips to the lakes in 1964, and on September 5 was outbound with a cargo of grain loaded at Trois-Rivieres.

APOLLONIA was commanded by Capt. Ioannis Andreou, of Athens, Greece, and the pilot on her bridge was Capt. Yves Pouliot, who just happened to be the nephew of the pilot who was guiding the LEECLIFFE HALL at the time. In the fog, the pilot of APOLLONIA thought from what he saw on radar that LEECLIFFE HALL was another downbound ship, and evidence adduced at the subsequent enquiry indicated that LEECLIFFE actually was out of her proper channel at the time, which may have led the salty's pilot to think that she was heading downbound ahead of them.

At about 5:15 p.m. local time, the two ships came together, and by the time they were within visual range, it was too late for a collision to be avoided. Capt. Bowen of the LEECLIFFE reportedly said to his pilot: "Look here, Pilot, there's a ship coming right toward us." The pilot quoted the captain's words as being: "There's a ship crossing our bow." LEECLIFFE's second mate, looking at the radar screen, had said that there was a ship off the port "coming toward us".

In any event, APOLLONIA did not actually cross the LEECLIFFE's bow, or else the outcome would have been far different. Instead, her own bow plowed into the port side of the Halco steamer. The salty's bow was badly smashed back but, as is often the case in such an impact, her bulkheads held and she remained safely afloat. Such was not the case with the side-damaged laker, however, and LEECLIFFE HALL began to take on water. She radioed for help and the tug FOUNDATION VIPER, commanded by Capt. Duncan Fiander, which was only some