

the Detroit River, BRITON, downbound with a full cargo of ore, met the 255-foot wooden steamer PROGRESS (built 1880 at Milwaukee) upbound with 1,978 tons of coal from Buffalo for Milwaukee. Press reports rather misleadingly suggested that both were "really owned" by Ferdinand Schlesinger, BRITON by Menominee Transit and PROGRESS by Mutual Transportation. (Our records have no such ownership for PROGRESS -Ed.) It was reported that twice BRITON blew for a two-whistle pass, and that PROGRESS answered each time, but still the ships collided, BRITON striking PROGRESS near the latter's foremast on the starboard side.

PROGRESS was cut almost half-way through and sank in three and a half minutes in 20 feet of water, only 12 feet from the Mamajuda light. All of the crew of PROGRESS were rescued although many had narrow escapes. The cook was rescued from inside the after cabin after it had floated off, while the chief engineer rushed on deck ahead of the rapidly rising water below, and climbed to the top of the smokestack, from whence he was rescued. BRITON was flooded forward of her collision bulkhead but was able to proceed downbound. She was unloaded at Cleveland and went on drydock for repairs to her damaged bow. PROGRESS eventually was raised and repaired. She was cut down to a barge in 1908 and was reported abandoned in 1928. Damage claims resulting from the collision were settled amongst the numerous underwriters involved in November of 1892.

Meanwhile, on October 14, 1892, there was a report from Cleveland that BRITON once again was in trouble. Capt. Gotham had telegraphed from the Soo that BRITON, upbound in the St. Mary's River, had struck bottom near Lime Island and had damaged her after port compartment and that water was running through under the engine, requiring the pony pump to be used to clear it. The steamer was sent to West Superior for drydocking and repairs.

The "Marine Record" of November 29, 1894, reported that "BRITON will follow CORSICA in the Cleveland drydock this week for repairs and then proceed to Ashtabula to lay up for the winter".

The following year, the fleet of the Menominee Transit Company was reduced from six sister-ships to five with the loss of the steamer that had been the first of the six to enter service. On May 31, 1895, NORMAN was involved in a collision some 14 miles off Middle Island in Lake Huron. The other ship involved was the wooden steamer JACK which belonged to the Calvin Company Limited, of Garden Island, Ontario. JACK was severely damaged in the collision but somehow she survived. The steel-hulled NORMAN, however, was mortally wounded and foundered with the loss of three lives.

A report in the April 1, 1897, issue of "The Marine Review", Cleveland, noted that Capt. James B. Watts had been appointed as master of BRITON, filling a vacancy caused by Capt. S. Stratton going over to the steamer JOHN J. McWILLIAMS, a steel steamer built in 1895 which then was owned by Mitchell and Company, of Cleveland.

An Elphicke interest again surfaced for BRITON when, in March 1898, it was announced that Menominee Transit had chartered SAXON, GERMAN, BRITON, GRECIAN and ROMAN for two years to the Canada Atlantic Transit Company for service between Duluth, Chicago and Depot Harbour to connect with the Canada Atlantic Railway in both grain and package freight service. We have spoken several times of Canada Atlantic in these pages, notably re ARTHUR ORR and KEARSARGE, and noted the early operation of the fleet's boats by C. W. Elphicke & Company, Chicago. The Menominee boats were to be turned over to Canada Atlantic by May 1, 1898, and as such it was necessary that work begin immediately on the fitting of side gangways and hoisting gear on all of the ships. As far as we know, there was no change in the colours of BRITON or her sisters when running under the Canada Atlantic charter, and they stayed in Menominee Transit livery.

The charter was over at the end of the 1899 season. That year, however, was to bring the first in a series of momentous changes. "The Marine Review" of July 27, 1899, reported: "Mr. L. C. Hanna of the firm of M. A. Hanna & Co., Cleveland, and President W. E. Reis of the National Steel Co., Chicago, have just executed in Cleveland contracts that involve the transfer to the National Steel Co. of all the property of the Chapin Mining Co., Winthrop Iron Co., Mutual Transportation Co. and Menominee Transit Co. This means mines capable of producing, when worked to the maximum in their present condition, 1,250,000 gross tons of iron ore, and ships that will move in the trade in which they will be engaged, Escanaba to Ohio ports - a full million tons of ore in a season... The management of the different interests transferred remains in the office of M. A. Hanna & Co., and there will, of course, be no disturbance in the details of operation as regards either mines or ships..."