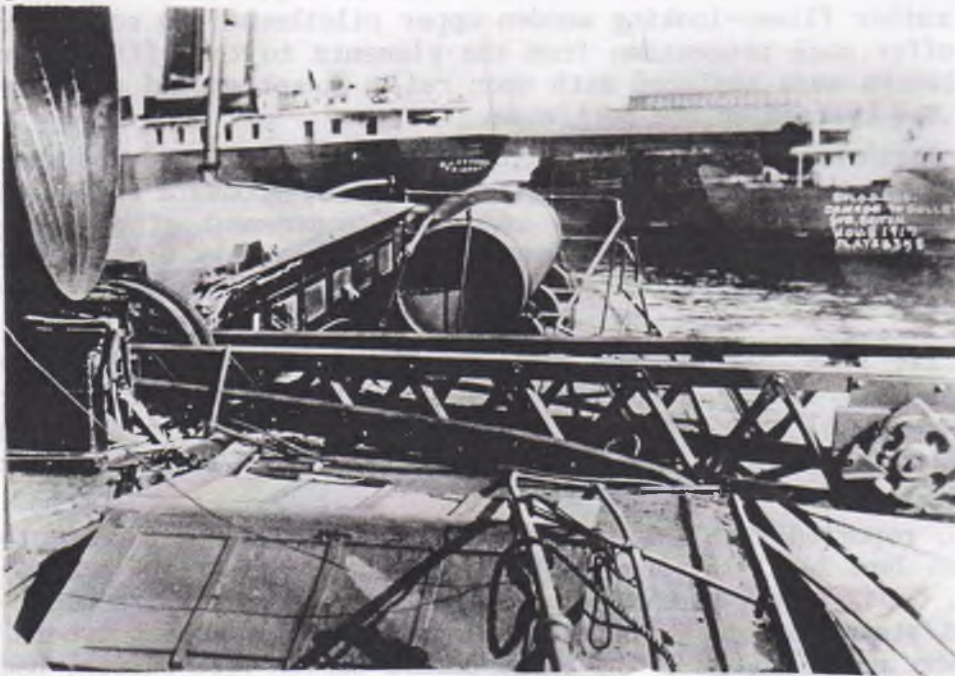


ship Company, of Boston, Massachusetts. She managed to escape any harm from the hands of the enemy.



Another Buffalo Dry Dock photo, November 8, 1917, courtesy of Jack Messmer, shows the boom of the crane fallen across BRITON's boat deck. It was lucky that damage was not worse.

None of the other former Menominee Transit ships returned to the Great Lakes after the end of World War One, but BRITON did. She was acquired in 1923 by the Buckeye Steamship Company, of Charleston, West Virginia, which had been formed on May 13, 1923, all of the common shares in the company being owned by John Thomas Hutchinson (2nd), of the well known lake shipping firm of Hutchinson & Company, Cleveland. The first two ships of the Buckeye fleet were BRITON and NORTH WIND, the latter also having gone to salt water during the war. Neither would serve for long, NORTH WIND being the first to go. She stranded to a total loss on Robertson's Rock in Georgian Bay on July 1, 1926.

BRITON, returning to the lakes, was cut in two at the Canadian Vickers Ltd. shipyard at Montreal, and was towed up through the canals, and was rejoined at Ashtabula. In Buckeye service, she had an ore-red hull, with the ship and company names in white letters on the bows, and an all-black stack. As far as we can tell, BRITON never carried the very large white letter 'H' on the stack that was so famous for Hutchinson ships. The foremast was buff, while the main was buff with a black top.

BRITON ran for a number of years for Buckeye, mostly in the grain trade from Duluth to Cleveland and Buffalo, for she was small enough that she could no longer run in the iron ore trade economically. As far as we know, she ran without incident into the autumn of 1929. Would such a small upper laker have survived the effects of the Great Depression which began for lake shippers with the deterioration of the grain trade in 1929? We will never know, for things took a decidedly bad turn for BRITON.

On November 13, 1929, BRITON was downbound on Lake Erie, heading for Buffalo with a cargo of flax for Spencer Kellogg & Sons Inc., under the command of Captain Johnson (BRITON being his first command). The weather became foggy as she neared her destination and, unfortunately, the fog whistle at the lighthouse at Point Abino, on the Canadian shore some 18 miles west of Buffalo, was not in operation. BRITON missed the turn to starboard that would have taken her safely into the Buffalo entrance and went aground on Pont Abino. Stranded on the southwest edge of the shoals, it originally was thought that she was on a sandy bottom and the Great Lakes Towing Company sent its tugs MARYLAND and COLORADO to assist BRITON, at the request of Boland & Cornelius, agents for the steamer.

Soon those tugs were joined by the same company's tugs TENNESSEE and JOHN M. TRUBY, but they were unable to free the ship, which actually had crushed her forepeak on a shale bottom and her forward end was filling. Two Coast Guard patrol boats stood by the scene. The 28-person crew remained aboard as there appeared to be no immediate danger as long as the weather remained calm, and the lighter RESCUE was summoned from Cleveland.

However, by the morning of Friday, November 15, the weather had changed and the ship was being pounded by waves and was flooding in the engine and boiler rooms. At about 11:00 a.m. the Coast Guard took the crew off BRITON and landed them all safely in Buffalo. Some of the crew were so enthusiastically celebrating their rescue that three of them were arraigned in Buffalo for public intoxication and given suspended sentences!