

## FLEETWOOD (ii)

As our readers will recall, we have on several occasions gone back to revisit ships which we featured in these pages many years ago. While our earlier features were valiant efforts to recount the histories of some famous lake ships, our information base has broadened considerably in the intervening years and we have become more able to present a meaningful and significantly complete vessel history. So, when we look back on some of our earlier efforts and cringe when we read them, so many years later, it prompts us to try to do better. So very much better, we hope...

Back in Volume VIII, Number 6, the issue of March 1976, we featured as Ship of the Month No. 55 "The Other WIARTON". We were referring not to the 1907-built Upper Lakes Shipping straight-deck bulk carrier WIARTON, (a) THOMAS LYNCH (65), but rather to an older and smaller steamer which ran for a number of years as WIARTON for the Mathews Steamship Company Limited, of Toronto. Looking at what we wrote almost 32 years ago, however, we are not happy with the content of that old feature, nor the minimal way in which it was illustrated. We can do far better than that. And we recently have acquired the best photo we ever have seen of this ship under what was to be her final name. So here she is, this time as FLEETWOOD (ii).

One of the things that attract us to this steamer is that she was one of the famous "Wolvin canallers". What does that mean? Over the years, we frequently have mentioned the careers in the lake shipping business of Augustus B. and Roy M. Wolvin (the latter, of course, much involved in his later years with the Montreal Transportation Company and Canada Steamship Lines). However, back in the very early years of the twentieth century, the Wolvins developed plans to build a whole fleet of canal-sized steamers, thinking that they would be able to capture a large part of the U.S. export grain trade. The St. Lawrence Terminal Company Ltd. was incorporated in 1902 to handle the trans-shipment of the grain at St. Lawrence River ports, while the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Transportation Company, of Duluth, Minnesota, of which A. B. Wolvin was president and R. M. Wolvin was general manager, was formed in 1903 to own and operate the vessels.

As well, two ocean-going ships, MINNETONKA and MINNEWASKA, were built at Cleveland in 1901-1902 and were intended to carry the export grain across the Atlantic. It originally was thought that most of the grain would be trans-shipped from the canallers at Quebec City, and the Wolvins even planned to build a large grain elevator there but, by 1903, it was stated by the firm that most of the grain would be trans-shipped at Montreal.

Ten canal-sized steamers, virtual sisterships, were built for Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Transportation in 1903 at four different lake shipyards. Named for supporters of the enterprise and associates of the Wolvins, the steel-hulled ships were christened JOHN CRERAR, H. G. DALTON, A. D. DAVIDSON, GEORGE C. HOWE, J. S. KEEFE, JOHN LAMBERT, ALBERT M. MARSHALL, S. N. PARENT, JOHN SHARPLES and ROBERT WALLACE. They were of very distinctive design and they were fitted with large, triple-chime steam whistles which gave them distinctive voices as well - big voices for small ships!

This time around, we are particularly interested in the JOHN SHARPLES, which was built at West Superior, Wisconsin, as Hull 507 of the Superior Shipbuilding Company. Launched on Saturday, June 13, 1903 (without ceremony, as with all of the Wolvin canallers), she went into the water exactly two weeks before her sister H. G. DALTON, built as Hull 508 by the same yard. The SHARPLES was enrolled at Duluth under U.S. official number 77587. According to the Great Lakes Register (Bureau Veritas), the SHARPLES was 241.0 feet in length between perpendiculars, 41.0 feet in the beam and 18.0 feet in depth, with tonnage of 1614 Gross and 919 Net. The steamer's hull was divided into three holds, fitted with three watertight and two non-watertight bulkheads.

The SHARPLES was powered by a triple expansion engine built in 1903 for the ship by the shipyard. It had cylinders of 14, 25 and 42 inches diameter and a stroke of 30 inches, and it produced Indicated Horsepower of 650 at 95 revolutions per minute. Steam at 240 p.s.i. was produced by two coal-fired watertube boilers manufactured in 1903 by the Babcock & Wilcox Company of New York. Each boiler had one furnace and in total there were 64 square feet of grate surface and 3,300 square feet of heating surface. The engines in all ten steamers were very similar - although in three (SHARPLES, CRERAR and DALTON) the high pressure cylinder was reported as 14 inches bore while in the other seven it was shown as 15 inches. This could be explained, however, simply by whether fractions of inches were rounded upward or downward in reporting.