

trades.²⁹

Consequently, there was little in the experience of the trade prior to Hamilton's bankruptcy in 1861 to encourage the shipowners either to think in terms of incorporation or to expect that the legislature would be very sympathetic. Unlike the major ocean lines like the Royal Mail Steam Packet Co., the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Co., or even Allan's Montreal Ocean Steamship Co., the Lake Ontario and River St Lawrence Lines never offered any dramatic departures in service which might have induced governments to offer them the privilege of a limited liability corporation. Nevertheless, unlike the Mississippi-Ohio system, the St Lawrence-Lake Ontario trade would benefit from a series of shipping contracts, beginning with the troop contracts and graduating to those with the post office, which provided a continuing impetus for line members to cooperate. Moreover, the advantages held by those with the contracts were sufficient that they discouraged serious opposition.

Why then should we care about the development of line organization? Essentially the line is a pattern for the organization of shipping, rather than a pattern for ownership. But as such the concept helps to clarify the transition from individual proprietorship or the joint stock partnerships or associations into the modern corporation.

With the exception of a few regional writings, of which this paper is unabashedly one, there is little in the general maritime historiography apart from studies of the emergence of the "liner companies" on the major trades, the North Atlantic being the favourite, with all that these lines have come to mean in terms of speed, regularity, luxury, complex management structures, financial capitalism, and shipping conferences. But what about the secondary trades — the coastal waters and inland lakes and rivers? And what of the lines established in the first half of the nineteenth century, before improvements in technology made many of the long distance liner routes profitable? Did these routes have parallel patterns of development? How similar was the upper St Lawrence and Lake Ontario experience with that on the Hudson River or Chesapeake Bay, or any one of a hundred short trades? And if a closer look was taken at the roots of some of the late nineteenth century's great liner companies, how many would be revealed as the outgrowth of multiple proprietor lines? Although pride of place may still be conceded the great liner companies, perhaps as marine historians we should be looking more closely at their antecedents.

²⁹ See dimensions given in John M. Mills, *Canadian Coastal and Inland Steam Vessels, 1809-1930*, (Providence, R. I.: Steamship Historical Society of America, 1979), for the river steamboats built after 1843. (eg. *Passport*, *Magnet/Hamilton*, *Comet/Mayflower* or *Kingston*).