

MANITOBA
(THE VOYAGE CONTINUES)

- by Ronald F. Beaupre -
with the Editor

When we left off the history of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company's three-masted passenger and freight steamer MANITOBA last issue, it was June of 1893. The vessel, built in 1889 at Owen Sound as a replacement for the tragically lost ALGOMA, but largely surplus to her owner's needs by the time she was completed, had run aground on Bear's Rump Island, just east of Tobermory, Ontario. Freed from her predicament, MANITOBA was towed into Tobermory and then was sent off under her own power en route to Detroit for dry-docking so repairs could be put in hand. But on the way, she again went aground, this time in the St. Clair River near Port Lambton.

A telegram was sent from North Thamesville, Ontario, by Mr. Arthur Piers, manager of the C.P.R. lake steamship department, to Thomas G. Shaughnessy, the company's vice-president, on June 7th, 1893. It read: "MANITOBA aground again - forty miles above Detroit - Wheel chain broke - Capt. has sent to Port Huron for tugs." On June 8th, Piers telegraphed from Detroit: "MANITOBA got off noon assisted by two tugs, safely docked here five p.m. Estimate repairs later." Another telegram was sent from Detroit by Piers on June 14, 1893. It read: "Damage estimated seven thousand eight hundred."

The "Windsor Evening Record" of June 27th reported: "A big piece of forging, being part of the stern and keel, is now being put on the C.P.R. steamer MANITOBA at the Detroit dry dock. The boat will get out of the dock about Thursday next." MANITOBA returned to her regular service between Owen Sound and the Canadian Lakehead once repairs were completed.

The sheer volume of cargo being handled at the C.P.R. terminal at Owen Sound late in 1893 presented problems for the managers. What follows is a series of telegrams sent to the Montreal office. On October 28, 1893: "Owing to blocked conditions of Owen Sound sheds with east bound freight have been delayed loading str. MANITOBA. It will take until nine or ten o'clock tonight to get what freight is here loaded on MANITOBA. Will I keep her that late?"

Later that same day, the following message was received in Montreal. "The trouble has been lack of car supply last night when MANITOBA was elevating & coaling. I employed fifteen cars by loading freight on boat and I had to load those fifteen cars with flour before I could get passages through the shed so as to load merchandise. It was raining and too hard to handle merchandise on open dock."

On November 7th, 1893, Arthur Piers telegraphed Thomas Shaughnessy: "Kerr says his eastbound engagements will fill all steamers to close of month. To take off one steamer will hurt both flour and grain business as he would have to stop receiving for lake and rail at end this week. Mr. Olds can add nothing to this. ALBERTA is having trouble with one of her crank pins and may have to lay off anyway at end of present trip." Shaughnessy received the following message on November 15th: "Am informed by Piers you wish to secure steamer Fort William to Owen Sound. Can obtain ROSEDALE, five cents per bushel for one or two trips as weather permits. ROSEDALE is now on her way to Midland. Please advise. (signed) G. M. Bosworth."

Generally speaking, however, upon completion of the rail line north of Lake Superior, the volume of passengers and cargo had dropped sharply, and ALBERTA and ATHABASCA were able to handle most of the available traffic. The under-employed MANITOBA continued to be left in layup for long periods during the shipping seasons of 1894 and 1895. The C.P.R. was anxious to build up its lake business and so it attempted to expand its service to include a call at Detroit. There was much speculation leading up to the changes which took place in 1895. The "Owen Sound Times" of March 21, 1895, reported: "The MANITOBA may go. Since last issue of the Times, in which it was reported