

HISTORY OF THE WINDSOR AND  
DETROIT FERRIES

By

F. J. HOLTON, D. H. BEDFORD  
and FRANCIS CLEARY

(Reprinted from Papers and Records, Vol. XVI Ontario Historical Society.)

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In the early days of the eighteenth century in the Great Lakes region, transportation was to a great extent carried on by means of birch bark canoes and bateaux. A bateau was a particular kind of boat very generally used upon the large rivers and lakes in Canada. The bottom of it was perfectly flat and each end was built very sharp and exactly alike. The sides were about four feet high, and, for the convenience of the rowers, four or five benches were laid across, according to the length of the bateau. It was a heavy sort of vessel for either rowing or sailing, but preferred for the reason that it drew little water and carried large loads, and was safer on lakes or wide rivers where storms were frequent. The bateau was at times propelled by means of sails, oars, and poles. The early inhabitants brought their furs to market either in canoes or bateaux. The furs were exchanged with the traders in return for supplies, ammunition, trinkets, etc.

In this region, nearly surrounded by water, the question of transportation was a most important one, and in the early days of the nineteenth century one among the modes in vogue between Detroit and the Canadian shore, of which we have definite knowledge, was that of a log canoe owned by a man named Pierre St. Amour, who, during the period of 1820-1830 kept a small tavern about where the north-east corner of Sandwich Street and Ouellette Avenue now is, and ran his ferry from the shore there across to Detroit, and landed his passengers as might best suit them, either at Griswold Street or Woodward Avenue.

The other ferry was log canoe (No. 2), owned by a man named Francois Labalaine, who lived on the Jeanette farm, about where the Canadian Pacific Railway station now stands. He ran his ferry from the shore at that point to the Detroit side of the river. At the door of his home was hung a tin horn, four feet long, which was used by Madame Labalaine to call him from across the river when passengers were waiting to cross over.

In the winter at that period, and for a long time previous to that time when the river was frozen over, the trip was made in sleighs crossing over on the ice. They were guided by brushwood placed at intervals on each side of the course to be followed. Crossing in this way was attended by great risk of danger and even by loss of life at times. As a proof of this the following is taken from the parish records of the Church of the Assumption, Sandwich, under date of January 1st, 1785: "Time, 8 a.m.; Menard, wife of Belair, was drowned with Demer's little girl while crossing the ice on a cutter. Demer's wife, who held her one-year-old child in her arms, was rescued by her husband. Were rescued also Belair and Duroseau, who hung on to Demer's cape."

Friend Palmer, in his book, "Early Days in Detroit," published in 1906, gives the following account of a trip he made from Buffalo, N.Y., to Detroit,

Mich, in May, 1827: "We came from Buffalo on the steamer *Henry Clay*, Captain Norton. She was a luxurious boat and the captain was an aristocrat. While walking on the streets of Detroit he was the observed of all observers. The trip covered a period of two days and two nights. After passing by Sandwich, the first sight that greeted us was that of the Windmills—three on the Canadian side and two on the American side. On nearing Detroit a more interesting sight was that of a horse-ferry boat, Captain John Burtis, running between Detroit and the Canadian side. It was propelled by a horse walking around in an enclosure which looked like a large cheese box on a raft."

The ferry business at that time was not a very paying one, as is shown by the following statement, taken from an old record of 1828: "John Burtis filed his statement of income in 1828 of the Ferry between Detroit and the Canadian side. The income was \$1,325.66 and expenses \$1,704.33, leaving a deficit of \$378.67."

It is very well known that Robert Fulton was the first one who successfully developed the idea of the steamboat. In 1807 he brought out the steamer *Clearmont* on the Hudson River at New York City, and for some time she made regular trips between New York and the City of Albany at a speed of five miles an hour. One of the first steam-propelled ferry boats between Detroit and the Canadian side was the *Argo* (No. 1), built by Louis Davenport, of Detroit, in 1830. It was built on the catamaran plan, being composed of two dugouts decked over and propelled by steam power. In 1836 Mr. Davenport built the steamer *United*, and in 1837 and for a number of years after that she ran as a ferry between Detroit and the Canadian side.

Captain John D. Sullivan, at one time superintendent of the Detroit & Windsor Ferry Company, in his account of the Battle of Windsor, which took place on the 4th of December, 1838, makes reference to the steamer *United*, as follows: "The old officers' quarters were occupied by Robert Motherwell and family, the father and son being respectively first and second engineers on the steamer *United* of forty tons, a ferry between Detroit and the Canadian side. This boat was some years afterwards destroyed by an explosion of her boiler, and Engineer Motherwell killed."

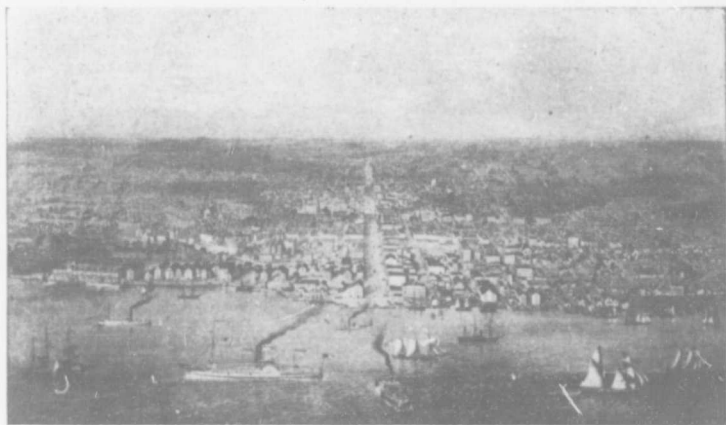
The *United* was under command of a Captain Clinton, father of Captain W. R. Clinton, who at a later date was for many years connected with the Detroit & Windsor Ferry Company.

The ferry *United* ran from the lower Ferry Street dock to the Griswold Street dock in Detroit. In connection with the landing on the Canadian side, the location is set forth in the following advertisement of Provett's Hotel, which appeared in 1838: "Windsor Castle Ale and Beer House. S. T. Provett respectfully informs the inhabitants of Windsor and Sandwich that he has opened a small establishment on the old country plan, where he always keeps on hand good schnaps in the Edinboro Ale, Sandwich and Detroit Beer brewed from the London recipe. Soda Water, etc., etc. A good snack in the shape of spiced beef and tongue, boiled eggs, pickled fish and crust of bread and cheese. Tarts, crackers, etc., always on hand. Moreover, a private room where an old countryman or others who prefer it may enjoy the river breeze over a jug of the best beer this country affords and their pipe and tobacco or first rate cigar. The Windsor Castle stands on the Ferry wharf between the two tailor shops."

The small, square, two-storey brick building at present standing on the

wharf on the west side of Ferry Street was occupied as a customs house in the days when the first steam ferries ran from that dock to Detroit. Between the years 1845 and 1858 the ferries brought out were the *Alliance*, afterward called the *Undine*; the *Mohawk*, Captain Thomas Chilver; the *Argo* (No. 2), built by Louis Davenport, of Detroit; and the two steamers *Ottawa* and *Windsor*, built by Dr. George B. Russell, of Detroit, who was a son-in-law of Mr. Davenport.

The *Ottawa* and *Windsor* were used as ferries by the Great Western Railway between Windsor and Detroit. The *Ottawa* carried freight, and the *Windsor* carried both passengers and freight. When the late King Edward VII, as Prince of Wales, visited Canada, he arrived in Windsor at the Great



THE WATER FRONT IN THE LATE FIFTIES. (Looking toward Detroit.)  
Old Type of Steam Ferry in Central Position.

(By courtesy of the Pere Marquette Railway.)

Western Railway station in September, 1860, and crossed over on the ferry *Windsor* to the Woodward Avenue dock in Detroit.

The *Argo* (No. 2), Captain James Forbes, ran on the regular ferry route until 1872. The steam ferries previous to 1858 ran from the lower Ferry Street dock in Windsor, but after 1858, in which year the town dock was built at Upper Ferry Street (Brock Street), the dock at the Lower Ferry Street was then abandoned, and the boats afterwards ran from the Brock Street dock in Windsor to the Woodward Avenue dock in Detroit. This change was made on account of the building of the old Great Western Railway into Windsor and the locating of the passenger station at the foot of Brock Street. The old passenger station is still standing, having been for a number of years past used as a freight shed.

The town dock at Brock Street had the distinction of being the site of the original Windsor water works, viz., the town pump, from which anyone with a horse and wagon and a barrel could fill the barrel with water and sell to anyone desiring to buy the same for the sum of fifteen cents a barrel, a common practice before the establishment of the present fine water works system in 1872.

The old Great Western Railway (now a part of the Grand Trunk system since 1882) was built into Windsor in 1853, and the passenger station built at the foot of Upper Ferry Street (Brock Street). The road was opened for traffic on the 21st of January, 1854. To connect with the railways in Detroit the company operated ferries for passengers and freight. The steamer *Transit* (No. 1) was put on the ferry between Windsor and the Third Street dock of the Michigan Central Railway of Detroit, and the steamer *Windsor*, built by Dr. Geo. B. Russell, of Detroit, was run as a ferry between Windsor and the Brush Street dock of the old Detroit and Milwaukee Railway Company.

In 1856 the Great Western Railway Company had under construction the steamer *Union*, which was built by Henry Jenking at his ship yard, which was then located at Walkerville, on the Canadian side just above Windsor, and the *Union* made her first trip in June, 1857. She was a large side-wheel steamer, with a large cabin and dining room on the upper deck, and had two smoke stacks standing side by side. She was equipped with powerful condensing engines, consisting of two cylinders placed in the hold at an angle inclined upwards to connect direct with the wheel shaft. She was put on the run between Windsor and the Michigan Central Third Street dock, Detroit.

The smaller ferries at that time burned wood for fuel, but the *Union* was one of the few coal-burning boats and had a coaling dock enclosed at the sides and located at the foot of Church Street, where the Cadwell Sand & Gravel Company now is. She was the ice-crusher of that period, and, besides helping to keep the river clear of ice in winter, often went to the assistance of the smaller boats. During the years 1857 to 1870 the *Union* was often resorted to by the residents of Windsor in crossing the river in winter when the smaller ferries were laid up on account of the ice.

After the *Union* was brought out, the *Transit* (No. 1) was used for ferrying cattle across the river until 1867. Captain Charles W. Stone was her captain for a number of years previous to that time. The propeller *Globe* was also used by the Great Western Railway for ferrying cattle across the river until March, 1866, when, at the Michigan Central Third Street dock in Detroit, owing to a rush of cattle on board, she capsized and sank. Of the eighty head on board, a number swam across the river and landed on the Canadian shore.

The steamer *Windsor*, Captain W. R. Clinton, ran until the night of the 29th of April, 1866, when, at the Brush Street dock in Detroit, she was burned. The fire started in the warehouse, and, fed by the oil stored there, burned so rapidly that it spread to the boat, cutting off all means of escape by way of the dock and leaving only one way of escape for those on board, and that was by jumping overboard into the river. Twenty-eight lives were lost by drowning. Others were rescued, a number being saved by the efforts of two sons of John Horn, of Detroit. The son, John Horn, Jr., was for years afterward the champion life-saver of the river front.

From 1854 to 1867 no cars were taken across the river on car ferries, but in 1866 the Great Western Railway Company had under construction the steamer *Great Western*, the first car ferry which was to take cars over the river in train-loads. She was built of iron, on the Clyde, in Scotland, brought over in sections, and put together in Henry Jenking's shipyard at Walkerville, and made her first trip on the first of January, 1867, from the slip dock at the foot of Glengarry Avenue, in Windsor, under command of Captain John D. Sullivan, who had been transferred to her from the steamer *Union*. The steamer *Great Western* was at the time of building generally spoken of as "the iron boat," being one of the first boats to be built of iron in this locality. When first built she was enclosed the entire length over the tracks, giving her much the appearance of a floating tube. This was later removed on account of the weight, leaving her deck clear. At the time she was launched many in the crowds who witnessed the launching expected to see her sink when she took to the water, but in this they were, of course, disappointed.

The steamer *Union* was continued in service until 1874, when all the trains, both passenger and freight, were taken across the river on car ferries. At that time she was under command of Captain D. Nicholson, who afterwards became superintendent of the Detroit & Windsor Ferry Company.

It was in the latter part of 1874 that Lord Dufferin, then Governor-General of Canada, in making a tour of the West, landed at the Great Western Railway station in Windsor and crossed the river on the *Union* to the Woodward Avenue dock, where he was given a great reception by the citizens of Detroit after he had landed. After being taken off the ferry run the *Union* was laid up at Sarnia, on the St. Clair River, and shortly afterwards burned to the water's edge.

In 1872 the *Transit* (No. 2), a twin-screw wheel steamer, was built at Jenking's shipyard, and in 1873 the large side-wheel steamer *Michigan* was built at the same shipyard, and both vessels added to the fleet of the Great Western Railway car ferries.

In 1858 the small side-wheel steamer *Gem* was brought out by W. P. Campbell, of Detroit, owner, and Thomas Chilver, captain; and about 1863 the side-wheel steamer *Essex*, built by Henry and Shadrach Jenking, of Walkerville. Captain George Jenking was her captain. He was noted for the care and attention he gave to the matter of dress and to his personal appearance. About 1865 the side-wheel steamer *Detroit*, W. P. Campbell, owner, and Thomas Chilver, captain, was put on the ferry between Windsor and Detroit, and ran until 1875. After the death of Captain Thomas Chilver, his son, Captain William Chilver, for a time sailed the *Detroit*.

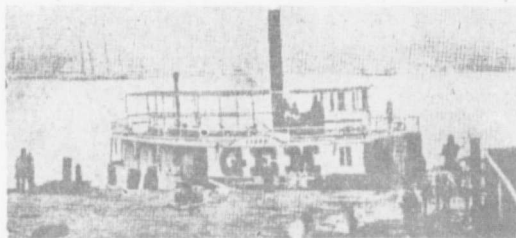
The years from 1858 to 1870 marked the first period of the ferry development proper, and that during the time of the American Civil War period—1861-1865. After the steamer *Detroit* came on the ferry run, the steamer *Gem* was run as a ferry at Sandwich for one season during the year 1865, and ran from the town dock in Sandwich across to Clark's dry dock opposite on the Detroit side. On the dock at Sandwich at one side of the landing, and opposite the Custom House, there was a saloon kept for the accommodation of the patrons of the ferry. It was owned by a man known only by the name of "The Indiana Banker." He was one among the large colony of both Northerners and Southerners who sought a temporary refuge in Canada during the



trying times of the American Civil War. From 1865 to 1870 the three regular ferries running between Detroit and Windsor were the steamers *Argo* (No. 2), Captain James Forbes; *Essex*, Captain George Jenking; and *Detroit*, Captain Thomas Chilver, and they ran from 6 in the morning until 6 at night. The steamer *Gem* then took the night run from 6 o'clock until 11 o'clock at night.

The night ferry at that time was not a particularly good paying business, for Captain J. R. Innes, in his application to the Windsor town council for a license for a night ferry, dated 29th June, 1866, asked the council to be as moderate as possible in the fee charged, as the night ferry business was not a very profitable one. Of this period, among the very few remaining veterans of the ferry service is Captain James Carney, retired, of Windsor, who was mate on the steamer *Essex* from 1867 to 1870. During those years the not very powerful regular ferry boats experienced considerable trouble at times in crossing in winter when the ice was heavy.

Owing to a peculiar action of the current in the river at about the foot of



THE STEAMER GEM.

This was the first steam ferry that plied between Sandwich, C.W., and Springwells, Mich., in 1865.

Glengarry Avenue, Windsor, and extending across to the elevator on the Detroit side, there is many times an open space there when the lower river is blocked with ice, so that, in order to keep navigation open as much as possible, the open space above was taken advantage of, and the boats crossed there when possible until the regular crossing was again opened. To reach this landing it was necessary to walk along the Great Western Company's docks as far as Glengarry Avenue, and after landing at the elevator in Detroit, to cross over the tracks of the Detroit and Milwaukee Railway to get to the city proper.

In 1869 the screw-wheel steamer *Favorite* was built by John Horn, of Detroit, and in 1870 put on the ferry run, with W. L. ("Lew") Horn as captain. She was the first regular screw-wheel ferry, and was a greater success as an ice boat than any one of the side-wheel ferries had been up to that time. In 1873 John Horn bought the side-wheel steamer *General Grant*, in Sandusky, Ohio, and, with Captain Lew Horn, she ran as a ferry in the years 1873-4-5. A screw-wheel steamer, the *Clara*, Captain J. R. Innes, and owned by W. P. Campbell, ran as a ferry during the period 1870-1871.

In the spring of 1870 a new and larger side-wheel steamer was brought

out by George N. Brady, of Detroit, and Captain W. R. Clinton, of Windsor. She was named the *Hope*. In their application to the Windsor town council for a license, her dimensions were given as: Length, over all, 104 feet; breadth, 25 feet; and depth of hold, 8 feet 2 inches. The *Hope* had a one-cylinder, high-pressure engine, placed in the hold just back of the middle part and inclined at an angle upwards to connect direct with the wheel shaft. Captain W. R. Clinton had always considered a side-wheel boat as the only effective ice-cutting boat, but a later experience with the *Hope* converted him over to the screw-wheel type.

It was in the heavy ice in the following winter that the *Hope* became fast in the ice and was held so for hours. At that time the screw-wheel steamer *Favorite* was making the passage across all right, and Captain Clinton at last called upon Captain Lew Horn of the *Favorite* to come to his assistance, which he did, and released the *Hope*. Captain Clinton then became convinced of the superior ice-cutting powers of the screw-wheel ferry, and in December, 1872, Messrs. Brady and Clinton brought out the screw-wheel steamer *Victoria*, the most successful ice-cutting boat at that time, and one whose model has never been improved upon, and in the main has been followed in the building of all the larger ferries since that time. She is still running regularly on the ferry after forty-three years of service.

The second period of the ferry business development was during the years 1871-1883. The regulation of the ferry service between Detroit and Windsor on the Canadian side had been granted to the town of Windsor for a term of twenty-five years by a lease from the Province of Canada, under letters patent, dated at Quebec, the 1st of October, 1863. The lease provided for boats propelled by steam, of not less than a 60-foot keel, and to have an engine power of at least 20 horses—a power just about equal to the ordinary automobile of the year 1916.

In February, 1873, Mr. Brady applied to the Windsor town council for exclusive rights to the ferry for the unexpired term of the government lease to the town of Windsor, viz., fifteen years, basing his claim on the fact that the screw-wheel steamer *Victoria* had during the previous severe winter kept the ferry service open between Detroit and Windsor. A special ferry committee of the council considered the request, but decided not to comply with it at that time. Competition from then on became keener between the rival ferries. In May, 1874, Messrs. Brady and Clinton again made application to the Windsor town council for exclusive rights to the Detroit & Windsor Ferry Co. (with the steamers *Victoria* and *Hope*), under which name they had organized the company under American letters patent, dated October 13th, 1873. At the same time the rival association, under the name of the Windsor and Detroit International Ferry Co., also made application for exclusive rights. This association was represented by W. P. Campbell, for the steamer *Detroit*; W. L. Horn, for the steamer *General Grant*; and Henry and Shadrach Jenking, for the steamer *Essex*. The steamer *Essex* had, during the period 1872-1873, been rebuilt, and nine feet added to her length.

The ferry committee of the town council, after due consideration of the two petitions, refused both requests. All five boats were now running from the Brock Street dock. They were the steamers *Hope*, *Victoria*, *Detroit*, *Essex* and *General Grant*. Competition was not then working in the best in-

terests of the public, for the rivalry was carried so far in the early part of 1874 that the boat coming into the dock would attempt to crowd out the boat then lying at the dock, and at other times they would land alongside of each other two and three at a time, much to the inconvenience of the travelling public.

To endeavour to straighten out matters the town council appointed one John Foster, a bailiff at that time, to act as a ferry boat starter. For a while he was stationed at the dock and ordered the time of staying and leaving of each boat. A by-law was also passed by the Windsor town council on the 15th June, 1874, providing for the regulation of ferries of a length of not less than 75 feet and breadth not less than 19 feet—30 feet over all—and fixing the rate of fare for single passengers at five cents from April 1st to January 1st, and 10 cents from January 1st to April 1st in each year.

In 1875 the screw-wheel steamer *Fortune* was brought out by Walter E. Campbell and placed on the ferry run, and the steamer *Detroit*, Captain George Beane, was then taken to Sandwich and opened up a ferry route between the town dock in Sandwich and Clark's dry dock on the Detroit side. She ran only during the season of 1875, being destroyed by fire of mysterious origin while lying at the Sandwich dock in September, 1875. In 1876 the screw-wheel steamer *Excelsior* was brought out by John Horn, of Detroit, Lew Horn as captain, and the steamer *General Grant* was then taken off the ferry and laid up.

During the period 1875-1877 Messrs. Brady and Clinton, with the steamers *Hope* and *Victoria*, opened up the ferry route from the lower Ferry Street dock in Windsor and landed on the Detroit side at the west side of Woodward Avenue, thus leaving the Brock Street dock to the rival ferries, the steamers *Essex*, *Fortune* and *Excelsior*. About 1877 the different interests united under the name of the Detroit and Windsor Ferry Association, and on March 28th, 1878, the Windsor town council granted to W. R. Clinton and others the right to erect a gate at the Brock Street dock for the collection of fares before going aboard the boat. The lower Ferry Street dock was then abandoned for a while and all of the boats ran from the Upper Brock Street dock.

The closing of the lower Ferry dock caused considerable dissatisfaction in the western part of the town, and as time went on this increased so that on February 14th, 1881, James Lambie, a merchant at that time, and other business men and residents of the town petitioned the town council "that boats may be caused to run to both docks." As a result of the petition, and to satisfy the public generally, the ferries were again run from the lower dock in connection with the upper dock, all of the boats running alternate weeks from the upper and lower docks during the period 1881-1883. This arrangement caused a great deal of confusion and inconvenience, for many times persons would go to either one of the ferry landings only to find that the boats were running to the other landing during that week. This in time called for a remedy and that remedy was brought about chiefly through the efforts of Francis Cleary, ex-Mayor of Windsor, and Dr. John Coventry, Mayor in 1882.

At that time Mrs. Lucetta Medbury, of Detroit, was the owner of the land on the north side of Sandwich Street, extending from the corner of the Upper Ferry Street and west of the line of Ouellette Avenue. Mr. Cleary and

Dr. Coventry interviewed Mrs. Medbury, and succeeded in convincing her of the gain both to herself and to the town of Windsor by opening up Ouellette Avenue through her property to the river front and there establishing a central and permanent ferry landing. Mrs. Medbury consented to give a right of way for the street opening, and this was confirmed by a by-law—No. 393—passed by the town council of Windsor on the 20th of November, 1882.

Work on the improvements was commenced at once. A three-store, two-storey brick building and basement stood just across the proposed extension of Ouellette Avenue to the river. A Chicago firm of expert house movers was employed to move the building, which they did, taking it 150 feet west of where it then stood, and without any mishap whatever, which was considered a great engineering feat at that time, the operation being watched by crowds as the work went on. The right of way being then clear, the town filled in and graded the street to the river. A dock was built and waiting rooms, custom house, etc., erected, and in the latter part of the year 1883 the ferries commenced running from that dock, then abandoning both the upper and lower docks.

All boats running from a central dock proved to be a most satisfactory arrangement, and since that time boats have been landing at the Ouellette Avenue dock in Windsor and at the east side of Woodward Avenue in Detroit. In 1880 the screw-wheel steamer *Garland* was brought out by John Horn, of Detroit, and added to the ferry fleet. Soon after coming out the *Garland* met with an unfortunate accident while coming up the river near Wyandotte. She ran down a yacht having on board an excursion party of little children in charge of a priest. The accident resulted in the loss of a number of lives.

Shortly before the opening of the Ouellette Avenue dock the steamer *Hope* was the scene of a tragedy which, on account of its sensational features, was given much prominence. On Sunday night, August 19, 1883, while on the trip to Windsor, the passengers were startled by seeing a man, with a revolver in his hand, chase a woman around and shoot and kill her. The man proved to be a citizen of Detroit and the woman he shot was his wife. Being jealous of her, he had followed her to the boat and taken his revenge. When the boat landed in Windsor the man was arrested. A very fine point of law was raised in the case as to whether the shooting took place in American or Canadian waters. But it was finally decided that it had taken place in Canadian waters, and he was subsequently tried and convicted and hanged in the jail yard at Sandwich.

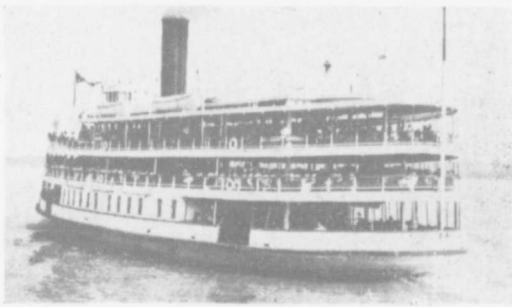
The steamer *Hope*, originally a side-wheel boat, had been changed to a screw-wheel, and later on was sold and taken to Fort Erie, on the Canadian side, opposite Buffalo, N. Y., there to be used as a ferry on the Niagara River between Fort Erie and Buffalo.

The steamer *Essex* was taken into the Ferry Association in 1878 and withdrawn from the ferry service and laid up for a while; but later on, about 1880, was taken over by the Walkerville Ferry Company to open up the ferry service between Walkerville and the opposite Detroit shore. After a short time she was sold and taken to Sarnia to be used as a ferry on the St. Clair River between Sarnia and Port Huron, and later on was destroyed by fire. The steamers *Ariel*, *Sappho* and *Essex* (No. 2), all screw-wheel steamers, were added to the Walkerville Ferry Company.

The steamer *Sappho* was afterwards bought by the Detroit & Windsor

Ferry Company, her present owners. On February 11th, 1884, the Windsor town council passed a by-law granting a lease to the Detroit, Belle Isle & Windsor Ferry Co. (the company which succeeded the Detroit & Windsor Ferry Association), the lease being for the term from April 1st, 1884, to September 29th, 1888, the latter date being the one on which would expire the lease given by the Province of Canada to the Town of Windsor in 1863 to run for a term of twenty-five years. On the 3rd of October, 1888, the ferry company was given a renewal of the lease direct from the Dominion Government to run for a period of five years. About a year later this was extended for a further term of five years, and the lease has been further renewed in 1895 and 1905.

The ferry business has been growing steadily during the years, and other and larger boats have been built, among those being the steamer *Promise*, built in Detroit in 1892, and the steamer *Pleasure*, built in West Bay City, Michigan, in 1894. The steamer *Fortune* was sold and taken to Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, to be used in the ferry business there. Since 1894 three



Ferry Boat Britannia.

still larger boats have been built by the company. These are the steamers *Columbia*, *Britannia* and *Ste. Claire*, making altogether one of the finest fleets of ferry boats to be found anywhere.

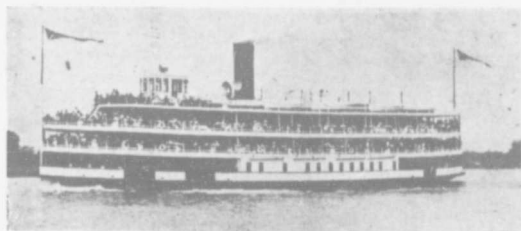
Nothing could illustrate the growth of the ferry company better than the increased size of the later built and larger boats, as shown by the number of passengers they are licensed to carry, as compared with the smaller boat, the *Victoria*, the *Columbia* being allowed to carry 3,511 passengers and the *Victoria* 600 passengers.

During the past thirty-five years the company has developed a large summer excursion business. For a while boats ran to the Sandwich mineral springs, during the period of 1876-1886. The Sandwich springs were situated on the Canadian side, about four miles below Windsor, and were noted for a flow of sulphur water which was supposed to have curative properties for certain diseases. The water was so strongly charged with sulphur that if a silver coin was dropped into it it would almost immediately turn black. Bath

houses were erected, and for a number of years the springs were well patronized until finally the flow of water stopped.

In 1885 a Mr. Geo. C. Buchanan, of Kentucky, opened an amusement park on the river front, just below the springs, and called it Brighton Beach. This only remained open for two or three seasons, and during that time the boats ran to both the Mineral Springs and Brighton Beach. Among the novelties of the Beach was a roller coaster, one of the first to be operated in this locality. Another feature was the staging of the then popular opera, "Pinafore," from the deck of a large sailing vessel anchored on the river front there. In the act where Dick Deadeye is thrown overboard (on the regular stage), in this case he was actually thrown overboard into the river.

In the early nineties there was open for a few seasons a summer resort on Fighting Island, a few miles further down the river, under the name of "Des-chree-shos-ka," an Indian term meaning "a place to catch good fish." A large casino was built for the summer trade and for a few seasons the resort was well patronized. The ferry company ran a line of boats to the island until the place was closed.



The Steamer Ste. Claire.

The last resort opened up was that of Bois Blanc Island. "Bois Blanc" is from the French, meaning "white wood." During the war of 1812-13 the celebrated Indian chief Tecumseh and his warriors encamped at Bois Blanc. It is now owned by the ferry company, and was opened to the public in 1898. A large casino and dance hall were built and the grounds improved and beautified. Since then a larger stone and steel dancing pavilion, with 20,000 square feet floor space, has been built; also a bath house, a women's building for the use of women and children only, and a modern cafe. The grounds have been still further improved by the laying out of play grounds for children and athletic fields, including six baseball diamonds. The island is situated eighteen miles below Detroit, at the head of Lake Erie, and the trip down the river is a most enjoyable one.

Belle Isle Park, owned by the City of Detroit since 1879, is a wooded island, two miles long, and contains 707 acres. It is situated three miles above the Woodward Avenue dock. In 1768 a Lieutenant George McDougall bought the island from the Ottawa and Chippewa Indian tribes for the value of about \$975, and in 1879 the City of Detroit purchased it from the Barnabas Campeau

heirs for \$200,000. Belle Isle is noted throughout the country for its location and its beauty, and is always visited by a great number of tourists who come yearly to Detroit during the summer season. The City of Detroit has spent large sums of money in beautifying the grounds and building an aquarium, conservatories, filled with plant life from all parts of the world, and also laying out a zoological garden, covering fifteen acres, and public play grounds, the latter being located near the centre of the island. Belle Isle has for a long time been the play ground of Detroit and Windsor as well. The ferry company has for years run a line of boats to the island, with a steadily increasing patronage, so that for some time past during the summer months boats between Detroit and Belle Isle have been run every twenty minutes during the days and evenings.

It must be said to the credit of the ferry company that during all of the years past, and with the multitude of passengers carried year after year, that its record has been singularly free from accidents.

NOTE.

[The foregoing instructive article is reprinted, with revisions, from the "Silver Jubilee" number of the Windsor "Evening Record" of May 23, 1917, Windsor being then 25 years a city.—Ed.]

