

UNLOADING OF FERRIES DELAYED

Not enough immigration officers at Fort Erie for traffic in busy times

Neither customs nor immigration inspection delayed the steamers until two weeks ago, when the village authorities put into effect a keep-to-the-right rule. Neither customs nor immigration officials appear to have been able to adjust themselves to the rule of keep-to-the-right. It was assumed when the change was made that there would be no trouble because it appeared that the only change necessary was the use of former outgoing enclosure for vehicles being used for incoming vehicles and vice versa.

But the customs officers when inspecting cars stand close to the gangway and each car must pause for a moment or two while the officer looks them over.

Immigration officers cause an even greater delay in certain hours by ordering when only one officer is on duty that no vehicles be permitted off the boat until all the foot passengers have disembarked and been looked over.

Ferry company officials declare that this causes delays, since the boat cannot be loaded until it is unloaded and prevention of unloading both foot passengers and vehicles at the same time renders useless the elaborate system of gangways designed for quick loading and unloading.

Mr. Willox, immigration inspector-in-charge at Niagara Falls, was sent to Fort Erie on Wednesday to look over the situation. He agreed that the three immigration officers on duty work hard and that it would be unjust to compel them to walk to the enclosure south of the wharf in order to inspect cars after they had left the boat. The distance is about 100 yards. When two officers are on duty, the vehicles are not held until foot passengers are disembarked.

Both Inspector Willox and Chief-Inspector W. J. Kee avoided stating just what are the hours of the officers at the ferry. There are three officers there and each works eight hours they said. The total time on duty is 19½ hours each day.

The Fort Erie ferry company and Reeve Barnhart of Fort Erie have appealed to W. M. German, M. P., to bring about changes in methods of customs and immigration inspection at the ferry wharf in order that the ferry steamers will not be delayed.

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June 1923

FORT ERIE, ONTARIO, FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 1922

STORM RIVALLED THAT OF DECEMBER 18th

80-mile gale causes river to rise and overflow Niagara Street --- Accident to Ferry

The 80-mile gale of Wednesday night and Thursday, while not so severe as the memorable storm of December 18th, damaged the Erie Beach railroad again and made operation of the ferry steamer Orleans difficult. The Orleans was laid up with a bent piston rod from Tuesday night until Thursday morning.

The waterfront, lake and river was a stirring scene early on Thursday morning. The waves were breaking over the breakwall so rapidly and constantly that the riprap appeared to the fanciful observer to have grown a full set of flowing white whiskers. Monster swells frequently covered completely the horseshoe-reef light, half a mile west of the Buffalo harbor entrance, although the lighthouse stands at least 40 feet above the normal water level.

The barge canal or Black Rock harbor channel from Porter avenue north overflowed its banks and some damage was done to the riprap on the Bird-island pier. This was washed out in the storm of December 18th and recently has been repaired under the direction of United States navy engineers at a heavy expense.

Ferry service was rendered under difficulties, owing to the high wind and the height of the water. Until after 10 o'clock in the morning only foot passengers were carried. The water had subsided somewhat by 10 o'clock, however, and when the landing aprons were built up with planks, automobiles were able to get on and off the steamer.

It was estimated that the water was eight feet above normal at 5 o'clock on Thursday morning, or with three feet of the unprecedented height reached on December 18th of last year. But even Thursday saw the water covering the concrete pavement along the front in Fort Erie.

Parts of the Erie Beach railway were washed out again and the Michigan Central Railway company had a gang of men repairing its tracks from the ferry wharf north to Saint Paul's church.

Albert J. Scheu, general manager, and Harry McClure, general superintendent, of the Erie Beach line, confessed yesterday morning that they were somewhat discouraged by the kicks of wind and weather and water.

The entire line had to be rebuilt with new ties this spring, owing to the December 18th storm, and the job was completed on Wednesday morning. Yesterday it was discovered that a good part of the work will have to be done over again.

It was planned to put the line into operation for the season this Saturday. The damage done on Thursday, however, will necessitate a delay of probably a week.

Ferry Broke Down Tuesday

The breakdown to the Orleans occurred at 7:50 o'clock on Tuesday evening while the steamer was in the middle of the stream. But the boat was able to make the wharf under her own steam. At 10 o'clock the bridge-tug International towed the boat to the Fort Erie shore and back with a full-load of cars and many foot passengers.

That was the last trip the boat made until Thursday morning. All the folk who travelled later than 10 o'clock on Tuesday night went around by the bridge and many travelled that way—except those who journeyed to Niagara Falls in automobiles—on Thursday.

It was at first announced that the ferry steamer Newtown, which has been laid up all winter, would be in service sometime early on Wednesday. But evidently all hope of getting her into service was abandoned soon, and efforts were concentrated in getting the Orleans repaired.

The interruption to the service was taken without complaint by the Fort Erie folks and most were even good natured about the hike to the bridge on Wednesday morning. But when evening arrived and there was still no boat, there began to be mutterings.

Some folks recalled that the company, under the provisions of its charter from the Canadian government, and under the terms of agreement with the city of Buffalo, is supposed to have two boats in readiness for service at all times during the year. The steamer Newtown, it is thought, could not be operated while there is ice in the stream but it is declared that she would have been satisfactory if she had been in service on Wednesday.

It is probable that this matter of a reserve ferry steamer will be broached at the next meeting of the Fort Erie Council.