

Three-Man Ferry Fights Storms And Fog To Give Islands Faithful Service



ONLY TWO MISSES IN FOUR YEARS — The Provincial Government operated ferry "T. I. Service" (right), carries mail and freight between Chester, the Tancook Islands and the island of Ironbound in Mahone Bay. It also provides a means of transportation 24 hours a day in case a doctor is needed on any of the islands. In photo at left, Capt. Paul S. Conrad, of Rose Bay, the licensed master, loads a bag of mail onto the wheelbarrow handled by Avery Heisler, of Big Tancook Island. It is taken by wheelbarrow from the pier to the post office for distribution. (Staff Photos by Slunwhite).

By HAROLD SHEA

(Staff Writer)

BIG TANCOOK ISLAND — The sturdy 20-ton ferry "T.I. Service" operated by the Provincial Government to serve the Tancook Islands in Nova Scotia's Mahone Bay, is a small craft with a big job.

This 56-foot vessel—which on a "busy day" travels only 28 miles—carries all the mail and most of the freight between Chester, the Tancooks and the nearby island of Ironbound.

But its duties are not confined to carrying mail and freight. The T.I. Service carries passengers and provides transportation on a 24-hour call should a doctor be needed by any of the 186 families on the three islands.

There is no doctor on Ironbound of the Tancook Islands, situated about 10 miles from Chester.

Since it went into service in 1935 the ferry has become as much a part of the Tancooks as the cabbage patches and sauer kraut plants which provide the residents with their main source of revenue.

Majority of the kraut producers here use the ferry to transport their product to Chester where it is

packed and shipped to wholesalers all over the Maritime Provinces.

Started 15 Years Ago

Some of the residents own boats—Cape Island vessels—which are primarily used for fishing and are not constructed for heavy freight. For economy in a rush season, these crafts are sometimes used.

The services between the mainland and the islands was started 15 years ago, and until 1948 when it was taken over by the Provincial Government, operated under private ownership.

The owner had a government mail contract and provided a freight and passenger service.

Since taken over by the government, the added duty of transporting doctors when needed became compulsory.

And during its first Winter under government command the vessel was called upon 56 times to bring a doctor here from Chester. This rush season came in the midst of an epidemic of influenza.

On a "busy day" when it leaves its base here, for calls at Chester, Little Tancook Island and Ironbound before returning to Big Tancook, the T. I. service covers only 28 miles—believed to be the short-

est sailing run of any ferry of its type in Canada.

The craft has two of these round trips a month.

15 Cent Fare

Service to Little Tancook from the mainland is three times a week, and to Big Tancook, daily.

The T. I. Service, now eight years old, is licensed to carry 17 passengers, and has a comfortable little cabin, heated in Winter with a pot-belly wood stove.

Fare is 15 cents for adults, and children of school age pay 10 cents.

Capt. Paul S. Conrad, of Rose Bay,

Lunenburg County, has, since he became licensed master 11 years ago, met all the residents of the Tancooks and Iron Bound, and knows them by their first names.

He is proud of his little ship, driven by an 85 horsepower engine,

and capable of sailing at eight knots an hour.

But he says there should be another ferry so that better service could be provided. His view is shared by his crew—Russell Baker, engineer, and John Stevens deck-hand—and all the other residents of the islands.

This ship has provided a steady if not adequate service to the islands, and has missed only two mail deliveries in four years. That was because of heavy ice packs in Mahone Bay.