

MARCONI WIRELESS/RADIO OPERATOR

(The following is an excerpt from the diary entries of Austin Reesor, Radio Operator.)

April 29 - Joined *Keewatin*, John Pearson - Skipper, George Adams - Chief Engineer, Chick Miers - Purser, [Bill Pietz - Mate, Charlie Prentice - 2nd Mate].

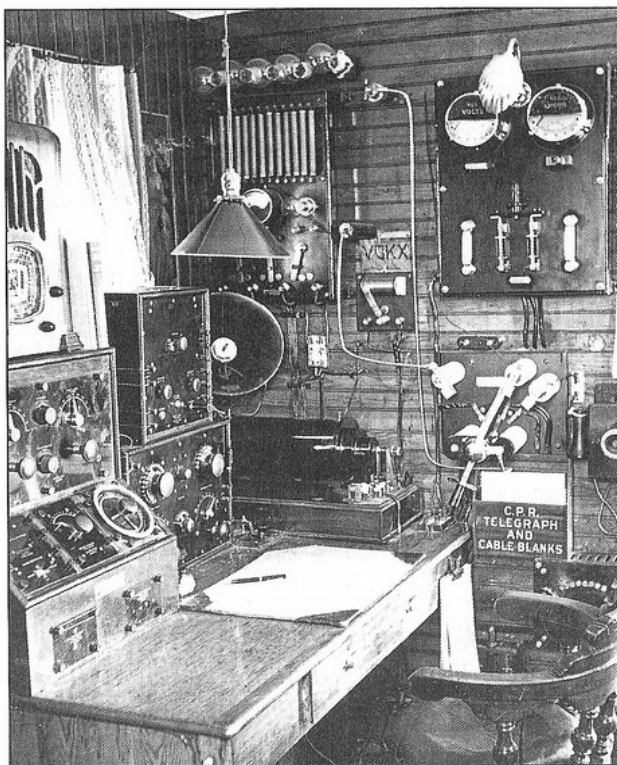
June 10 - *Keewatin* softball team defeated *Assiniboia* this evening at Fort William.

July 2 - Radio Cabin full tonight with passengers listening to radio program of Charlie [McCarthy] and Edgar Bergan.

September 3 - Great Britain declares war on Germany and six hours later France makes a similar declaration and thus World War II commences. Our English schoolgirl group deeply concerned in that they may not be permitted to cross [the] Atlantic [Ocean].

Austin D. Reesor was with the Canadian Pacific ships as a Marconi operator for over twenty years. The Marconi operators we not paid by the C.P.R. They were employees of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of Canada. He fondly recalls a "bulk tea dispenser, that when the base was turned, it would measure out a teaspoonful of loose tea into a pot." (This was before individual tea bags came on the market.)

A Captain's Log entry for May 30, 1945 mentions



Radio Shack, S.S. Assiniboia. (Austin Reesor photograph)

that "...wireless operator W. Russell took seriously ill...in the morning...was removed to the hospital at the Soo...received [a] radio message that he had died at 6:30 P.M."

Harvey Clarke, a former crewmember from the 1946 season, recalls Sparks, the radio operator, "...more friendly than most...had a fused spine from an accident on a Navy ship in the war...when he turned to speak to you, he turned his whole upper body, rather than just his head."

The Wireless Room was located forward of the main

mast. The *Keewatin's* radio call letters were VGMC, and the *Assiniboia's* were VGKX. The Radio Room of the *Assiniboia* was seen by these researchers in a maritime museum located in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

The present Wheelhouse was enclosed in 1946 when electronic equipment was installed. The Wireless Room was still in use at that time. By 1950 the three wooden masts had been replaced by two shorter steel masts. By then, the radio equipment had been relocated in the Wheelhouse.

From the book: *Ninety-Five Years Young*
The Story of the S. S. *Keewatin*: 1907 - Present