

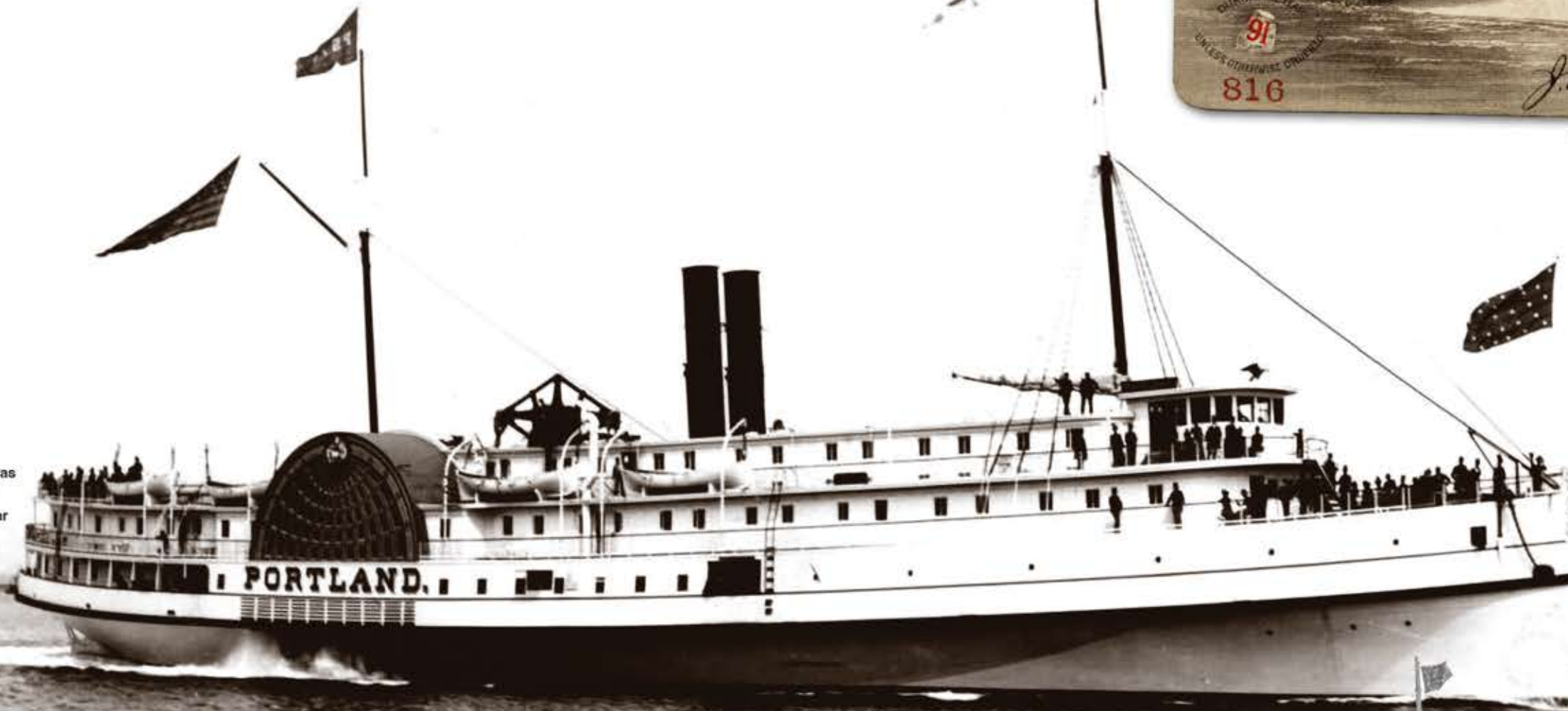
# MYSTERY OF THE STEAMSHIP PORTLAND

THE GREAT PORTLAND GALE WOULD DESTROY 71 SHIPS BUT THE WORST LOSS OF LIFE WOULD COME FROM THE STEAMSHIP PORTLAND - BY ROGER FREEMAN



Ticket for a trip on the *Portland*.

The *Portland* was a very popular ship and had gained a regular following of passengers.



Tragedy at sea is no stranger to the people of New England who long ago become accustomed to the inevitable fate of ships caught in the fierce storms so frequent to the Cape Cod area. Usually, there are very definite reasons directly attributable to every tragedy, for with such a preponderance of coastal shipping there are bound to be ships, crews, and captains of varying levels of seaworthiness, ship handling skill, and temperament. But, when a veteran steamship with a reputation for

reliability and soundness is lost with all hands, the quest for answers becomes a pressing matter that demands intense investigation and explanation. Such a tragedy was the loss of the steamer *Portland* on the night of 27 November 1898.

Seventy-one vessels were lost between New London and Portland, Maine, the locality of the fury, in the great storm. It was the most terrible weather experienced in that vicinity since the Lighthouse Gale of 1851,

which had toppled Minot's Ledge Lighthouse off Cohasset.

*Portland*, a side-wheel wooden steamboat with two funnels, left India Wharf, Boston, on Saturday night at 7 o'clock, under command of Capt. Blanchard, with a crew of 100 men and 200 passengers, returning to Maine homes to spend Thanksgiving at various locations. The weather was then not unfavorable for the run of 96 miles, ordinarily accomplished in seven or eight hours. The sky was overcast with a



*Portland* being launched on 14 October 1889 at Bath, Maine.