

CHEYENNE

It has given us considerable sadness during the summer and autumn of 1995 to watch the disappearance, under the wrecking balls and hammers of Greenspoon Bros. Ltd. of the milling plant and concrete elevator silos of Victory Soya Mills, at the foot of Parliament Street on the Toronto waterfront. The last active grain elevating operation on Toronto Bay (although not the last elevator still standing), the Victory Mills plant has stood vacant for a number of years since the abandonment of the operation by Central Soya, which had acquired Victory but wished to concentrate its soya bean milling at Hamilton. The City of Toronto had threatened to expropriate the premises for its ill-conceived and never-constructed Ataratiri housing project but Victory held out against the loss of its plant, only to close down on its own accord later. Central Soya contracted with Greenspoon in the spring of 1995 for the demolition of the plant and elevator.

We have been reporting the disappearance of the Victory elevator in the last few issues of "Scanner" as the demolition has progressed. What time could be better, then, than our last issue of 1995, to feature the story of the freighter which brought the very first cargo of soya beans to the Victory Mills half a century ago? She was the CHEYENNE, and we venture to say that even fewer observers will remember her today than recall the building of the elevator during the years of World War Two. They might, however, remember her more easily by her very last name, SORELDON, under which she was scrapped during 1966.

Our story begins during the early part of the year 1929, when the North American economy still was strong enough to encourage investment, but was teetering on the brink of the greatest depression the continent has known. The firm of E. S. Crosby and Company Inc. was, at that time, a grain dealer and elevator operator at Buffalo, that city having been for many years a major grain receiving and trans-shipment centre. The company operated the Frontier (Washburn-Crosby) Elevator, which was located on the old Buffalo City Ship Canal, just to the north of the old Michigan Avenue bridge. This elevator later became part of the facilities of General Mills Inc.

The Crosby interests realized that eastward-bound grain had to be unloaded from upper lake steamers at Buffalo and Port Colborne and then reloaded into canal-sized freighters for the rest of the journey down to Montreal and other St. Lawrence River ports. They came to the conclusion that considerable profit might be made by operating their own canallers in this trade, although they might have thought differently had they known what lay in store for the grain trade during the Great Depression which began in the autumn of 1929.

In any event, E. S. Crosby, of Kenmore (a Buffalo suburb), New York, together with attorneys-at-law A. M. Saperston and O. G. Olds of Buffalo, barrister G. H. Pettit, of Welland, and T. J. Darby, of Humberstone, Ontario, joined forces at the beginning of 1929 to form a Canadian company which could handle these grain shipments through the old Welland and St. Lawrence canals.

The result was the incorporation, under the Dominion Companies Act, of St. Lawrence Steamships Ltd., with authorized capital of \$250,000. The new firm had its offices at Welland, Ontario, and its first officers were E. S. Crosby, president and general manager; Thomas H. Hanrahan, of Buffalo, vice-president; Ernest S. Crosby, of Buffalo, treasurer; A. M. Saperston, Buffalo, secretary, and G. W. Darby, of Welland, assistant secretary.

St. Lawrence Steamships Ltd., immediately placed orders in Great Britain with Barclay, Curle and Company Ltd., of Whiteinch, Glasgow, Scotland, for the construction of two canal-sized steamers, which were built as the yard's Hulls 631 and 632, and were launched in the spring of 1929. They were chris-