

Back in late November of 1995, the two former Norfolk Southern railbarge-pushing tugs from the railway's defunct Windsor-Detroit crossing were towed up to Thunder Bay, as they had been purchased by Gravel & Lake Services Ltd. of the Canadian Lakehead. The larger of the two, the 1954-built R. G. CASSIDY (150 feet overall) was to be used in active service at Thunder Bay, while the 123-foot, 1952-built F. A. JOHNSON was to be used as an office for the company's tug operations. An interesting downbound passage in the Welland Canal on December 18th, reportedly en route to service in Newfoundland, was the tug FRENCH RIVER (II), which turns out to be none other than the former R. G. CASSIDY! Her new owners were not identified to us at the time, but we could not help but wonder how a relatively shallow-draft and extremely low-freeboard, river-style pusher tugboat could possibly be used on the exposed and often stormy waters of Canada's tenth province. We shall await further reports with great interest, including any word that FRENCH RIVER has actually reached Newfoundland safely bearing in mind the fact that the 1998 late-season weather has not been of the kindest nature.

A late-season visitor to the Port Weller shipyard was the Erie Sand Steamship Company's 1943-built, "Maritime-Class" self-unloader RICHARD REISS, (a) ADIRONDACK (43), (b) RICHARD J. REISS (II)(86). A relatively frequent visitor in the Welland Canal, the REISS apparently visited the drydock on December 18th for survey and inspection, taking advantage of familiar locale and an extremely favourable international exchange rate!

A very unusual visitor to the port of Ogdensburg, New York, during mid-November, was the barge PERE MARQUETTE 41, the former Chesapeake & Ohio Lake Michigan carferry CITY OF MIDLAND 41, which, in tow of its usual tug UNDAUNTED, came down to load a used turbine generator from a defunct cogeneration plant in Canton, New York. The generator was loaded on the barge on November 19th, but inclement weather delayed the departure until the morning of November 20th. The barge delivered its cargo to Burns Harbor, Indiana, for its new owner, the Dynergy Energy Company, of Houston, Texas.

Speaking of Ogdensburg, the port has apparently given up on its hopes of obtaining, for display purposes, the retired U.S. navy cruiser DES MOINES, based on unfavourable projections concerning the cost of bringing the vessel up from the Philadelphia area. Ogdensburg, apparently determined to have a warship on display on its waterfront, will now try to obtain a smaller and more readily available frigate for preservation along the riverfront. Reports have DES MOINES eventually bound for Duluth, Minnesota.

Toronto is not the only lake port which has lost its grain elevators. The Lake Ontario port of Oswego, New York, was once a major downbound destination of grain-hauling lakers. In recent years, however, with the Seaway a reality, lake grain trans-shipment facilities were no longer needed and the last of the Oswego elevators, built in 1925, was last used by the Genesee Brewing Company for barley storage in the late 1980s. A Buffalo contractor began demolition of the elevator in late November and press reports indicated that the silos would be gone by the end of the year, an estimate which experience re the demolition of Toronto elevators leads us to believe was "very optimistic". In fact, the former Canada Malting section of the Victory Mills complex of silos at Toronto's Parliament Street slip remains standing despite the rush early in 1998 to demolish the office area of the plant which, known as "The Rooster Squat" was being used as a residence by a large group of young homeless and "squeegee kids". As well, much of the rubble left from the razing of the Victory Mills plant itself remains in mounds onsite. (For a look at the site in its prime, please see the MOHAWK DEER photo on our current photopage.)

A report in the November, 1998, issue of the World Ship Society's "Marine News" reports the new name of the Pierre Gagne Contracting Ltd. bulk barge SAGUENAY (acquired in 1997 from C.S.L.) as M.A.C. GAGNE. News to us? Yes...!