

SOUTHCLIFFE HALL

There have been times when, searching for vessels to feature in these pages, we have considered writing about ships still active on the lakes. The problem with that, however, is that few ships currently in service have a history sufficiently interesting to merit a feature article, and even some of the older vessels scrapped in recent years had such routine careers that very little of interest could be written about them. In most cases, however, once a ship has finally met her demise, either through loss or dismantling, an interesting history of her can then be written. The vessel which we have chosen to feature this month is no exception, and now that she has been broken up, it seems appropriate that we should tell her story.

The years of World War Two were disastrous for most of the Canadian fleets. As a result of the small size of the locks of the old St. Lawrence canals, many of the Canadian lakers were steamers built during the Twenties and Thirties to canal dimensions. They carried many cargoes, but two of their most important loads were grain, brought down from Port Colborne or upper lakes ports, and pulpwood, which was hauled upbound from the ports of the lower St. Lawrence River. When the Second War began, much extra tonnage was required on salt water to help maintain the Allied efforts, and the Canadian canallers were the vessels that most easily could be pressed into emergency service. Unfortunately, a great many of them were lost, either by enemy action or as a result of the perils encountered in operating on the deep seas, for which they never had been intended or designed.

As a consequence, in the years that immediately followed the conclusion of the hostilities, the Canadian fleets found themselves desperately short of canal-sized bulk carriers, and it was several years before any new vessels could be constructed. In addition, many fleet owners were reluctant to invest large sums of money in the construction of new canallers when they were fully aware that such ships would become obsolete as soon as the St. Lawrence Seaway, then only in the planning stages but nevertheless inevitable, was built.

Not only was the Hall Corporation of Canada the first company to begin the large-scale construction of canallers after the end of the war, but it also was the only fleet which set about the replacement of most of its steam-powered, pre-war canallers with more modern, diesel-powered boats. The first post-war Hall canallers were built in 1947 by Canadian Vickers Limited at Montreal, and they were steam-driven. They were the almost-exact sisterships LEECLIFFE HALL (I)(Hull 228), STERNECLIFFE HALL (Hull 229), NORTHCLIFFE HALL (I)(Hull 230) and SOUTHCLIFFE HALL (Hull 231). Albeit somewhat different, a fifth member of the class, SHIERCLIFFE HALL, was built as the yard's Hull 248 in 1950. These vessels, as a class, were the last steam-powered, dry-bulk canallers ever built, and they would all enjoy careers that were rather longer than what might have been expected for ships built only a decade before the opening of the new Seaway.

SOUTHCLIFFE HALL, the last of the original series of four ships, began life on July 1st, 1947. On that Dominion Day holiday, her keel was laid at the Vickers shipyard. Construction progressed rapidly, and the steamer was launched on October 30, 1947, her sponsor on that occasion being Mrs. Frank A. Augsbury, the wife of the principal of the Hall Corporation. SOUTHCLIFFE HALL, enrolled at Montreal as C.179194, was delivered to the Hall fleet on 1st December, 1947, and she soon was pressed into service despite the lateness of the season.

SOUTHCLIFFE HALL was 252.6 feet in length (259.3 feet overall), with a beam of 43.8 feet and depth of 18.6 feet. Her tonnage was 1986 Gross and 1171 Net. She was powered by a Unaflow steam engine with two cylinders of 25 inches diameter and a stroke of 36 inches. Operating on a working pressure of 200 p.s.i., the engine developed 730 I.H.P. Steam was produced by two oil-fired, single-ended, Scotch boilers. All of the machinery was built especially for the steamer by Canadian Vickers Limited.