

SOUTHCLIFFE HALL and her sisters were built with virtually no hull sheer. They had bluff bows and very heavy, deep-cut, counter sterns. The anchors were stowed in round-topped pockets at the spar deck level, close to the stem. The quarter-deck was raised almost three feet above the level of the spar deck. There were six large hatches, five on the spar deck and one aft of the "step". Three masts were fitted, the fore being a short pipe stepped immediately abaft the pilothouse. The heavy pole mainmast was located between the second and third hatches, while the mizzen was placed just forward of the step in the deck. The main and mizzen masts each sported two heavy cargo booms. (It should be noted that the mast arrangement was somewhat different in SHIERCLIFFE HALL, which only carried two spars.)

In fact, the entire class of steamers exhibited very little by way of new design, and they really were only modernized versions of the "Dishpans", the steamers that were built for Hall and other fleets in the late 1920s by the Smith's Dock Company Ltd. at South Bank-on-Tees. Perhaps this similarity was most evident in the cabins, where the flattened texas front with three portholes, the rounded pilothouse set on a bowed-out bridge deck, and large after cabin with overhanging boat deck, were easily recognizable. The major differences were that the pilothouses of the new steamers were larger, and their stacks were shorter! As well, their lines were "softened" somewhat in comparison with the austerity of the earlier ships, through the incorporation in their design of a few more curves, such as in the break of the forecastle.

The new steamers were used extensively in the grain and coal trades, though most of us remember them best with their decks piled high with pulpwood on their upbound trips. One of their most frequent destinations when carrying wood was Waddington, New York, which is located nineteen miles down the St. Lawrence below Ogdensburg. It was SOUTHCLIFFE HALL that opened the navigation season at Waddington on May 14, 1952, with a load of pulpwood brought from Mechins, Quebec.

However, one other cargo played a very important part in the early years of SOUTHCLIFFE HALL and her sisters, and that was bauxite, the ore from which aluminum is extracted. It was in the bauxite run to Eastern Canada from the Caribbean and South America that many of the lost canallers had been serving when they fell victim to the seas or to enemy action, but the need for canallers on the bauxite run outlasted the war. SOUTHCLIFFE HALL and her mates were frequently used in this trade during the winter months and, in particular, it is recorded that SOUTHCLIFFE HALL spent the winter of 1951-52 in this service. Fortunately, all of the new Hall Corporation canallers were lucky in this trade, and none of them were lost in heavy weather while running bauxite. This service lasted for them into the early 1950s, until more suitable tonnage was available to serve the bauxite run and the canallers could be returned permanently to their home waters.

SOUTHCLIFFE HALL continued to operate in the usual canaller trades until just before the Seaway opened. With the new canals to be able to accommodate larger ships in the 1959 season, the Hall Corporation management decided to enlarge SOUTHCLIFFE HALL and convert her to a self-unloader. Up until that time, there had been only one self-unloader in the Hall fleet, that being the steam canaller COALFAX, which had been built in 1927 in England, and which was purchased by Hall in 1956 from the Coal Carriers Corp. of Brockville. It had become evident to Hall that self-unloaders were the ships of the future, and that more vessels of this type should be acquired in order to ensure the fleet's viability.

Accordingly, over the winter of 1958-59, SOUTHCLIFFE HALL was taken in hand by the Canadian Vickers yard at Montreal. There she was lengthened to 334.6 feet, and her depth was increased to 21.6 feet through the raising of the forward part of the hull in order to remove the step in her deck. This reconstruction increased SOUTHCLIFFE HALL's tonnage to 3061 Gross and 2171 Net. More importantly, she was fitted with self-unloading gear, with an A-frame set midships on the spar deck, and a boom, slung pointing aft, on the starboard side of the deck. In addition, she was given an almost entirely