

EDWARD L. STRONG

There are a number of reasons why we choose certain ships to be featured in these pages, but we must admit that, perhaps above all else, we are fascinated by ships about which there is a mystery which must be solved if a comprehensive history is to be written. Every marine historian loves a challenge, and the exhilaration which comes from achieving a solution to the problem. However, in practical terms, this means that there are a number of ships on our "would-be" feature list which are being held in abeyance because there is something about the vessels which is posing difficulties for us.

The ship which we feature in this issue is a case in point. Not only was she built by a shipyard about which very little ever has appeared in print, but as well she was a cannaller built during the 1920s, and yet no photograph could be found of her under her original name even though she carried that name for the first five years of her life! We have had several requests to feature ships of her particular class, and we could have done one of the other three steamers, but we were so intrigued by this one ship that we decided that she was the one about which we would write, and that somewhere there simply had to be a photo which we could use.

Eureka! At long last the photo has appeared, so here, finally, is the story of the EDWARD L. STRONG, which survived the longest of the four handsome sistership cannallers of her type.

We begin our narrative at the north shore St. Lawrence River port of Trois-Rivieres (Three Rivers), Quebec. A shipyard was located there on a five-acre site on the western side of the harbour. It was operated during the last year of World War One by Three Rivers Shipyards Ltd., a company which was formed early in 1918 by T. M. Kirkwood, of Toronto, and which was incorporated specifically to take over a contract which had been let by the Imperial Munitions Board, on behalf of the British government, for the construction of two standard-type, wooden-hulled, cargo steamers. During the summer of 1918, before these 3,080 dwt. ships could be completed, the shipyard was sold to the National Shipbuilding Corporation, of Wilmington, Delaware, which operated the facility as its Three Rivers Shipyards Division. The two wooden steamers were launched on October 15 and November 2, 1918, and were christened WAR MINGAN and WAR RADNOR, respectively.

On March 12, 1919, the National Shipbuilding Corporation obtained a contract to build five wooden-hulled steamers, approximately 195 x 40 x 15, this being a subcontract in connection with half of a ten-ship order given to the Anderson Company, of New York City, by the French government. National Shipbuilding transferred the contract to its Three Rivers Shipyards. At the same time, the owners of the yard set about upgrading the facilities there in order to be able to construct steel-hulled vessels.

Unfortunately, during 1920, the owners of the Three Rivers yard found themselves in financial difficulties, and one of the firm's creditors made application for the winding-up of the company's affairs. G. W. Scott, of the firm of P. S. Ross & Son, Montreal, was appointed to the position of Provisional Liquidator, and began his efforts to sort out the shipbuilder's problems. His task was rendered more difficult by the consequences of the failure of the parent firm in the U.S.A.

At the time of the bankruptcy of the National Shipbuilding Corporation and its Three Rivers subsidiary, the Three Rivers yard had eight vessels under construction. Five were the wooden-hulled, French government steamers which had already been christened BOUXWILER, BOUZONVILLE, BRUMATH, CATTENON and CERNAY. The sixth was a 6500-ton, steel-hulled tanker, which was being built for La Societe Naphthes Transports, of Marseilles, France. None of these vessels were ready to leave the shipyard, and accordingly some extremely nasty litigation ensued as the owners of all of the ships attempted to se-