

## PRESCOTT

When the St. Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959, most Canadian lake fleets were comprised of old and inefficient ships. Their canallers, most of which were steam powered, were no longer viable, as they had been built to fit the small locks of the old system and carried crews as large as did upper lake ships. The upper lakers operated by most of the fleets were old and worn out, many of them dating from the turn of the century or earlier, and very few of them came anywhere near approximating the size of vessel that could be accommodated by the big locks of the new Seaway.

Accordingly, during the years immediately following the opening of the new St. Lawrence canals, there was a rapid weeding-out of older tonnage, while Canadian shipyards were busy building new hulls of maximum Seaway size. For a while after the Seaway was operating, observers could watch in the canals a great assortment of ships, both new and old, all running as hard as they could to fulfill cargo commitments. Canada Steamship Lines was one of the fleets caught with a large number of obsolete bulk carriers and package freighters in its fleet, and it did the best it could to replace them with newer and more efficient tonnage as soon as possible. But for a while, many of its older steamers plodded on, much to the delight of photographers. The handsome PRESCOTT was one of those veterans which continued to operate for several years after the new canals were in service, but which soon found her way to the breakers.

The history of PRESCOTT began in 1903, when the steel-hulled bulk carrier was built as Hull 155 of the Detroit Shipbuilding Company at Wyandotte, Michigan. She was launched on Saturday, October 3rd, 1903, and was christened WESTERN STAR by Miss Elsie L. Cressweller. She was enrolled at Oswego, New York, under registry number U.S.200376.

The steamer was built to the order of Michael J. Cummings, of Oswego, who had been in the shipping business for many years, and whose interests had included a fleet known as the Red Star Line. The majority of the vessels with which he had been involved were schooners, some of whose names incorporated the word "Star". It is not surprising that WESTERN STAR was the name chosen for the big steamer, particularly when her operations would be limited to the upper lakes as a result of her size, which prevented her passage down to Lake Ontario.

WESTERN STAR was 416.0 feet in length, with a beam of 50.8 feet and a depth of 29.0 feet. Her tonnage was calculated as 4764 Gross and 3593 Net. She was powered by a triple expansion engine with cylinders of 22, 35½ and 58 inches diameter and a stroke of 42 inches. Steam was provided by two coal-fired, single-ended, Scotch boilers which measured 13 1/6 feet by 11½ feet. The engine and boilers were built for the vessel by the shipyard and they served her well for many years, although eventually the engine proved to be the immediate cause of her retirement.

The ship was given a beautiful hull, with a straight stem, a graceful counter stern, sweeping sheer lines, and prominent fender strakes which were mounted in such a manner that their curves matched the sheer of the deck. There was a half-forecastle and a closed rail ran back for most of the length of the forecastle head. Atop the forecastle sat the texas cabin, in which were located the master's accommodation and office. Immediately forward of the texas was situated the pilothouse. The latter was a rather small structure, which had a slightly rounded front and three large windows facing forward. The forward cabin was, in fact, rather similar to that carried by many of the vessels of the Mitchell fleet, and the general appearance of WESTERN STAR was such that one might wonder whether Capt. John Mitchell might have had a hand in her design.

The foremast was set immediately abaft the texas and was well raked. The mainmast rose just abaft the tall and fairly heavy smokestack, and sprouted from the after cabin, which was set on a flush quarterdeck. A closed steel taffrail ran around the fantail to shelter the after cabin from the seas.