

This was important because ships could then operate in those areas with caution so as not to cause damage to themselves, to the dredges, or their equipment. Such notices were (and still are) sent out by Ottawa, generally every week, and similar notices would be issued by the U.S. authorities.

Dredging usually started in the Eastern Gap at Toronto in the early part of July and lasted until September 1st or so, and the 1934 season was no exception. The work did not begin early nor run late because of the threat of adverse weather conditions. In those days, the Eastern Gap entrance was located in a very exposed position and, if the lake were rough, the dredge couldn't work and all of the equipment would have to be hauled into the harbour for shelter. As well, a storm could quickly shift the lake bottom and then the contractor would have to go over the whole project again at his cost, in order to ensure compliance with the specifications.

On one particular day in the summer of 1934, there occurred an incident involving the DRAGON ROUGE and the Canada Steamship Lines passenger steamer CAYUGA, which was operating between Toronto and Niagara. CAYUGA was approaching the Eastern Gap, inbound, and her master apparently failed to exercise enough caution in the dredging area. (Passenger steamers generally did not reduce speed unless absolutely necessary, for they had tight schedules to maintain and passengers did not like to arrive late.) CAYUGA ploughed in toward the gap, perhaps a bit too fast, raising a wash as she swept onward.

As CAYUGA passed the DRAGON ROUGE, her wash caused one of the spoil scows to break loose, and it swung around and broke off one of the dredge's spuds. This caused the steam lines in the area to fracture, and most all of the steam escaped from DRAGON ROUGE's boiler before the crew got it shut off. There was a lot of yelling, fist-shaking, and invective on the subject of dredges, steamboats and their captains and the ancestors of the latter, before the air cleared. Fortunately, as I recall, no one was hurt. The CAYUGA went on about her business and docked at the foot of Yonge Street.

But here was a pretty kettle of fish for the dredgemen. Their DRAGON ROUGE was lying half-way out into the lake, with her dipper arm bent and resting on the channel bottom, the crane section which held the dipper arm also bent and swung out of place, and the spud broken and also on the bottom. One thing I always found about dredges was that in an emergency, the entire crew would pitch in and help, with no thought of overtime, either! DRAGON ROUGE's crew soon got the steam pipes in order again, but they were not able to raise the spud, which was anchored to the bottom for apparently it had been bent on impact.

The men got the boom pulled around, but the dipper arm still remained on the bottom. The only thing they could do was to secure the spud and the dipper arm so that they would not go down any further, and then try to tow the dredge back into Toronto Bay. Once they got into the deeper water of the bay, they could tow the dredge to a dock for the necessary repairs.

The ERL KING, which tended DRAGON ROUGE, was a tug with a single-cylinder, non-condensing engine, of 14 inches bore and 16 inches stroke. Her Fitzgibbon boiler carried steam at 160 p.s.i. A Fitzgibbon boiler looked like the boiler of a traction engine, except that it had return flues. It was a small boiler, for quick steam, and often was used in tugs, where space was a major factor.

ERL KING hitched onto DRAGON ROUGE and commenced pulling. The SAM KING helped too, but she was only a gas boat and didn't have much power. I can still remember the sharp staccato of ERL KING's steam exhaust as she huffed and puffed in trying to tow the injured dredge into Toronto Bay. It was like a steam engine working hard on a Baker fan...

I stood there and watched. They didn't seem to be making much headway, but then, little by little and inch by inch, they started to move. Her captain swung the ERL KING back and forth, from port to starboard and back again,