

Ltd., the towing firm which had been formed in 1929 by a merger of the venerable Sincennes McNaughton Line Ltd., Montreal, with several other towing and salvage companies. The new firm, unfortunately, soon encountered some very serious financial difficulties.

It was from Sin-Mac, after she had lain idle several years, that Russell chartered MUSCALLONGE in 1934, originally to tow ROY K. RUSSELL. The "Muskie" took both barges briefly after the HUDSON came out in 1935, but later left one at Prescott while taking the other up the lake alone. Then, MUSCALLONGE, while towing the HUDSON up Montreal Harbour, lost control in the current and rubbed the rock bank on the south shore. The barge, which had been lashed on the tug's starboard side, went adrift and only the efforts of two nearby harbour tugs saved her from being swept against an abutment of the Jacques Cartier Bridge. The "Muskie" had to go to Sorel for repairs, and it was then (October of 1935) that ETHEL was chartered to tow BRUCE HUDSON.

Meanwhile, the little AJAX was towing ROY K. RUSSELL back and forth in a daily trade between Port Credit and Toronto. The 1935 season was to be the RUSSELL's last, however, for late that year she grounded off Port Credit and it was not until the spring of 1936 that she could be refloated. She never ran again, and MUSCALLONGE then spent her time pulling the HUDSON, although in July of 1936 (probably while the HUDSON was tied up under seizure), MUSCALLONGE took time out to tow ROY K. RUSSELL up the lake to the scrapyard at Hamilton.

Time, however, was running short for the venerable MUSCALLONGE herself. At about 1:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 15, 1936, MUSCALLONGE was upbound in the St. Lawrence River just below Brockville, under the command of Capt. Steve Ahern and with Dorman Arbour as chief engineer. BRUCE HUDSON, with a full load of crude aboard, was lashed alongside the "Muskie", and on the other side of the barge was tied the little AJAX, whose master, Capt. Les Pickard, was asleep in his cabin due to the late hour (even though he usually bunked aboard the "Muskie" when AJAX was shut down after clearing the canals).

Suddenly there arose a cry of "Fire!", and it could be seen that flames were coming from the galley area of the big cabin of MUSCALLONGE and were leaping up around her tall funnel. Capt. Ahern immediately called the tug's crew and ordered that all, except for himself and Chief Arbour, should go aboard the HUDSON (it being so convenient that she was tied right alongside the tug). On Ahern's orders, the towlines were chopped by wheelsman Jerry Henry, who had been at the wheel when the fire broke out and had been surprised to see flames reflected off the inside of the front pilothouse windows). The HUDSON, with AJAX still alongside, began to drop back downstream in the current once she was loose. MUSCALLONGE continued on at full speed (her engineroom could not be reached by this time due to the rapid progress of the fire), and Ahern steered her for a light that could be seen in a cottage on the shore.

Capt. Pickard, roused from his slumbers aboard AJAX when the first cries went up, set about raising steam on the tug, his efforts being easier in that he had been instructed to leave her coal fires banked that night, instead of drawing them as usual once out of the canals. Nevertheless, by the time AJAX had enough steam to do anything, the HUDSON was almost two miles downstream.

Once BRUCE HUDSON was safely anchored, AJAX rushed upriver to assist the men aboard MUSCALLONGE. The burning tug eventually reached shore and hit with a resounding wallop. Much to the surprise of Ahern and Arbour, there then emerged from below the tug's cook, Hugh Lawson, who somehow had managed to sleep through all the hubbub and only was awakened by the impact when the "Muskie" hit the beach. The three men then left the tug as quickly