

William Mulock (who at one time was Canada's Postmaster General, the first federal Minister of Labour, and later Chief Justice of the Exchequer Division of the Supreme Court of Ontario), Cawthra Mulock was a young man endowed with all of the advantages most of us wish we had, but which few possess. In 1905, at the age of 23, he led a syndicate (of which he was the major shareholder) which set about building a world-class playhouse for Toronto, and in 1907 this showpiece of the city opened as the Royal Alexandra Theatre. One of Cawthra Mulock's partners in the syndicate was longtime "Royal Alex" manager, Lawrence ("Lol") Solman, who also was proprietor of the Toronto Ferry Company, the amusement park and ballpark on Hanlan's Point and the Toronto Maple Leaf triple-A baseball club which played its games in the stadium on the Island.

Resurrected just before it was to be demolished for a parking lot in 1962, the restored Royal Alexandra Theatre today is one of the gems of the Toronto scene, and is one of Canada's most beautiful, most respected, and most successful live theatres. Cawthra Mulock, however, was destined to be carried off, on December 1st, 1918, at the age of 36, by the Spanish Influenza, with which he had become infected whilst on a business trip to New York City.

One of young Cawthra Mulock's business associates in respect of the National Steamship Company, was Capt. James B. Foote, a well-known Toronto vessel operator who had been and was to be involved in a number of local shipping enterprises. His name has been mentioned in the pages of "Scanner" on numerous occasions, most notably in connection with the operations of the Toronto Insurance and Vessel Agency and the Union Transit Company.

NATIRONCO was used to haul pig iron into the Toronto pipe plant, but that was not the entire scope of her operations. Indeed, she carried almost every type of cargo available, including grain, for which she was said to have a capacity of 90,000 bushels. That she was involved in carrying such a wide variety of cargoes, and not simply raw materials and product for her owners, can be explained by the fact that, although the National Steamship Company retained ownership of NATIRONCO, she seems to have been operated for them by Canada Steamship Lines Ltd., and its Merchants Mutual Line division.

NATIRONCO seems not to have taken on C.S.L. colours, however. The only known photo of the steamer at this stage of her career appears to show her with a black hull, white cabins and an all-black stack. Her name was painted in large white letters, well back on the forecastle rail, and as frequently was done in those days, a period was (for no valid grammatical reason) placed after the name. The photo, although poor, does not show any sign of the forward deck crane on the starboard bridge wing, so perhaps it may have been removed. The perspective of the photo, however, which was taken from close on the port bow, might not show the crane if it were there, although the other two cranes are plainly visible.

Perhaps National Iron had decided that the cost of maintaining its one-ship fleet was not justifiable, and that other vessels could be used as required. In any event, NATIRONCO was sold early in the 1917 season to the A. B. Mackay Steamship Company, of Hamilton. It was at this point in time that the steamer's luck took a turn decidedly for the worse, and it was not long before she got herself into serious trouble.

On Thursday, May 3rd, 1917, NATIRONCO carried away the upper gates at Lock Three, on the old Welland Canal above Port Dalhousie. We have no details of the accident, but would assume that it occurred in the same manner as most similar events, when a downbound vessel, approaching a lock that was not yet ready to receive her, failed to stop in time and ran up against the gates. Such an accident could have disastrous results if the lock were empty and the lower gates open at the time...

NATIRONCO does not seem to have suffered any major damage in the incident,