

Soulanges Canal where it opened into Lake St. Francis.

In 1926, the George Hall Coal and Shipping Corporation was reorganized as the Hall Corporation of Canada, and sold most of its steamers to Canada Steamship Lines Ltd., Montreal. The Hall interests then set about building a whole new fleet of more modern ships. In consequence, the ownership of JOHN B. KETCHUM 2nd was transferred to C.S.L., and she was renamed COALHURST by the new owners. The name most likely was an indication that the steamer would operate primarily in the coal trade.

COALHURST did not remain under C.S.L. ownership for long, however, for later in 1926 she was sold to James Playfair, of Midland, Ontario. Playfair did not want COALHURST for his own fleet, however, and he immediately turned her over to the British shipbuilding firm of Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd., of Newcastle-on-Tyne, as partial payment for the new steamer GLENROSS, which the shipyard had built at Wallsend in 1925 for Playfair and Frank Ross. In fact, GLENROSS had passed to the Hall fleet in 1925 when it took over a large portion of Playfair's operations, and then to C.S.L. (in the same deal that saw the KETCHUM go the same route) in 1926. It is evident that Playfair still owed money to Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson on the account for the construction of GLENROSS, and that neither Hall nor C.S.L. had assumed that debt.

Swan Hunter then turned around and resold COALHURST to Sin-Mac Lines Ltd., of Montreal, the famous towing and wrecking firm in which, not surprisingly, James Playfair held a considerable interest. The new owner immediately renamed the steamer NEEBING (II), the name being chosen to honour the area near the former city of Fort William, Ontario, through which the Neebing River flows, because it was intended that the ship would be used in the Canadian Lakehead area.

In fact, she was the second canal-sized steamer to carry the name NEEBING. The first NEEBING was a steel-hulled bulk carrier, Br.118618, which had built in 1903 on the Tyne for the Canadian Northwest Steamship Company, of Port Arthur, Ontario. Hull 745 of Armstrong, Whitworth & Company, she was 247.6 x 42.0 x 21.8, 1879 Gross Tons. She was sold to the Montreal Transportation Company Ltd. in 1917, and she was requisitioned for wartime service on salt water. She was acquired by Canada Steamship Lines Ltd. in 1920, but never returned to the lakes. She operated for many years on salt water as (b) JAN TOMP, latterly serving the U.S.S.R. and registered at Odessa. She was scrapped about 1954.

NEEBING (II) was painted up in typical Sin-Mac fashion. Her hull, fore-castle and poop were chocolate brown, her cabins were dark red, and her stack was black with a red band over a white band. By this time, she had been given an enclosed upper pilothouse, about the same size as the lower house, with three windows in its front but only a very small sunvisor over the centre window. Lower windows were provided to give those on watch a view down onto the fore-castle head. The steamer's original heavy masts had been removed and replaced with two very light pipe masts without booms. In 1928, a very large and ponderous steam crane was fitted on deck for use in salvage and construction work. The cabin of this derrick was large enough that it gave the steamer a very unbalanced profile and a top-heavy appearance.

Sin-Mac Lines Ltd. had been formed in the late 1920s by the merger of the venerable Sincennes McNaughton Line Ltd., of Montreal, with a number of other Canadian lake towing and wrecking firms. James Playfair was president, Frank Ross was vice-president, John E. Russell was vice-president and managing director, while Robert A. Campbell was general manager and treasurer. The latter two gentlemen will not be strangers to "Scanner" readers, for each was well known in the lake shipping business in his own right and both of them have been mentioned in our pages on numerous occasions over the years.