

E. B. OSLER

The steamer which we feature this issue was one which was extremely well known, particularly on the lower lakes, during the latter part of her life. She was one of the earliest upper-lake self-unloaders in the C.S.L. fleet, having been converted from a straight-decker. She was built for a company which has long since disappeared from the scene, and about which many lake historians have very little information. To top it all off, she was built by a shipyard which lasted only a very short period of time and about which very little ever has been written. All of that makes her a prime candidate for a "Scanner" feature, and there follows her most interesting life story.

The St. Lawrence and Chicago Steam Navigation Company Ltd., Toronto, was incorporated in 1890, although its conception probably occurred several years earlier. The company was started by a group of prominent Toronto businessmen, the principals being John H. G. Hagarty, wharfinger W. A. Geddes, and Captain Samuel Crangle. In addition to these gentlemen, Sir Casimir S. Gzowski, G. Hagarty, F. W. Kingston, W. D. Matthews and E. B. Osler were officers of the firm at the time of its incorporation.

The company was formed for the purpose of transporting grain down the Great Lakes, and it began operation with two steamers which had been built in 1888 in Great Britain for the interests of Thomas Marks and Company, of Port Arthur, Ontario. Named ROSEDALE and ALGONQUIN, these two handsome vessels passed to the ownership of the St. Lawrence and Chicago Steam Navigation Company Ltd. within a few years after their arrival on the lake scene. (It would appear that the transfer of the ownership of ROSEDALE took place in 1890, and that of ALGONQUIN in 1894.) They were to be the first of eight steamers that the company would own during its quarter-century of operation. It is indeed unfortunate that the fleet is today best remembered for its large and ill-fated steamer JAMES CARRUTHERS, which entered service on June 11, 1913, and was lost on Lake Huron on November 9, 1913, during the Great Storm. The company's final vessel, J. H. G. HAGARTY, an almost-exact sistership of the CARRUTHERS but with a few modifications, had been planned before the loss of the earlier ship, and was commissioned during 1914, two years before the St. Lawrence and Chicago fleet went out of business.

The sixth vessel to be owned by the St.L. & C.S.N.Co., and only the second upper-laker in the fleet, was a steamer which was commissioned in the spring of 1908. Enrolled on May 7th, 1908, at Toronto under official number 125977, she was christened E. B. OSLER. Her name honoured Sir Edmund Boyd Osler, who was a financier and stock broker of considerable note, and who was one of the pioneers of railway development in the province of Ontario. Born at Simcoe, Ontario, in 1845, he was president of the Toronto Board of Trade in 1896, and in 1900, 1904, 1908 and 1912 he was elected as federal Member of Parliament from the riding of West Toronto. He served on the board of many prominent corporations over the years, and was president at one time or another of many of them, including the Dominion Bank of Toronto. He was associated with a number of railroads, including the Ontario and Quebec, the Canadian Pacific, and the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo. His interests in the lake shipping industry were not limited to his association with the St. Lawrence and Chicago Steam Navigation Company, for in addition he was a director for many years of the Niagara Navigation Company Ltd. and the Toronto Ferry Company Ltd.

The contract for the construction of the steamer that would be christened E. B. OSLER was let by the St.L. & C.S.N.Co. to the Canadian Shipbuilding Company Ltd., of Toronto. It was with this company that was associated the famous marine architect Arendt Angstrom, who designed the passenger steamer CAYUGA which was constructed at the company's Toronto shipyard in 1906. The firm had made the decision to construct a shipyard which had access to Lake Erie so that it could build upper-lake vessels as well as canallers and vessels for Lake Ontario service, and so it established such a facility on a site at Bridgeburg (Fort Erie), Ontario. The E. B. OSLER was built as Hull 1