

involved, although she undoubtedly had her full share of bumps and scrapes over the years. For a while around 1936, OSLER's owner's name was painted off her sides, for the steamer was operating under charter to the Upper Lakes & St. Lawrence Transportation Company Ltd., Toronto. She did, however, retain her red hull and her C.S.L. stack colours during this charter.

OSLER survived the effects of the Great Depression, which had made themselves so extensively felt in the C.S.L. fleet. The company had disposed of a great many of its obsolete canallers and even a number of its smaller upper lakers during the mid-to-late 1930s, but OSLER was large enough and sufficiently economical to operate that her place in the fleet was assured. Nevertheless, OSLER no longer was one of the larger upper lakers owned by C.S.L. Eight of the company's upper-lake straight-deckers were larger than OSLER and only three were smaller in carrying capacity.

At the same time, C.S.L. had achieved a certain success in operating self-unloading vessels, and it was one of only a few Canadian fleets which ran colliers equipped with self-unloading machinery, namely the canallers GLEN-ELG, COALHAVEN and COLLIER, and the upper laker MIDLAND PRINCE. The latter steamer had been converted to a self-unloader back in 1929 at Midland.

Accordingly, in 1939, C.S.L. made the decision to convert OSLER in a similar fashion, and she was taken in hand by the shipyard at Collingwood during the winter of 1939-1940. There, she was converted to a conveyor-type self-unloader. Some of the early self-unloaders were "scrapers"; that is, the cargo was dragged toward the elevating equipment by means of cable-drawn scoops or scrapers in the hold. In a conveyor-type self-unloader, the cargo dropped down through gates in the bottom of the hopper-shaped hold, landing on a conveyor belt which carried it forward to the elevating equipment which took the cargo out above-deck and dropped it onto the belt which ran out along the unloading boom. This is the same basic type of self-unloading gear which, with many modern modifications, is still used in lake self-unloaders today.

One of the interesting results of the conversion of OSLER was that it made her even more distinctive than she already had been (with her rather odd forward cabin arrangement). Most self-unloaders on the Great Lakes had their elevator equipment arranged with a large A-frame; the top of this frame usually was pointed, and from its apex ran the cables by means of which the unloading boom was suspended. OSLER, however, was given an "A-frame" which had its top cut off square, and in this respect she joined only a handful of other self-unloaders with this feature. It rendered her instantly recognizable from a great distance.

OSLER emerged from her conversion with increased tonnage of 7051 Gross and 4784 Net. She had three watertight bulkheads and five cargo holds, with twenty hatches on twelve-foot centres. Her outward appearance, apart from the addition of the A-frame and boom, was not altered, except that after the conversion, her hull was painted black. This change was sensible, in that her prime cargo now was coal, and a red hull would have shown the effects of spilled and blown coal dust, thus requiring frequent washing. For a while, the company name did not appear on the sides of the ship, but this soon reappeared.

Further improvements to the steamer were made in 1943, when OSLER's original boilers were removed. In their place were fitted two single-ended, coal-fired Scotch boilers, which measured 14'6 3/16" by 11'9". They were manufactured by the Dominion Bridge Company Limited. At the same time, the ship was given a new and much larger pilothouse, which was raised about half a deck level above the location of the old cabin. As well, the large windows in the texas were plated over and portholes cut in the plates. The combination of these changes in the bridge structure gave OSLER a most imposing forward end, and all the more so in that the forward mast, the pilothouse sunvisor, and all of the forward end railing trim, etc., was painted black, no doubt in an effort to minimize the visibility of collected coal dust. Also about this time, a "doghouse" was added on the boat deck aft to provide additional