

All of this work did nothing to enhance EASTCLIFFE HALL's appearance, but it greatly increased her waterline length and had the happy effect of adding about a half-knot of speed without any significant fuel consumption penalty.

EASTCLIFFE HALL seems to have operated without many noteworthy incidents for most of her life. She made the news during 1961, however, and an unsourced clipping carrying a dateline of August 9, Port Burwell, Ontario, stated: "The coal carrier EASTCLIFFE HALL, stuck 36 hours on a sand bar, pulled free today with the help of the federal public works department (steam) tug HERCULES. The carrier, with 6,000 tons of coal in her hold(s), was not damaged. The EASTCLIFFE HALL ran aground in 37 feet of water Monday night (August 7), 500 yards off shore. The tug pulled the vessel free three times yesterday but high winds and waves pushed her back onto the bar."

In June of 1960, EASTCLIFFE HALL carried the first cargo handled by the new elevator at Baie Comeau, Quebec. However, the advent of the Seaway had brought sweeping changes in trade patterns for the "jumbo-ized" EASTCLIFFE HALL and for domestic shipping in general. The Hall Corporation was increasing its commitment to tanker operations and also was developing a fleet of maximum Seaway-sized bulk carriers. As the sixties wore on, the erstwhile canallers increasingly became "fringe" tonnage, laid up when cargoes were scarce. EASTCLIFFE HALL spent one season in the pulpwood trade between Anticosti and Trois-Rivieres, and another season running in Newfoundland waters, where she spent the winter of 1966-1967. She was laid up over the winter of 1967-1968 at Toronto and her 1968 season did not begin until June 19th, when she departed for Thunder Bay.

By 1970, however, the facts of life were all too apparent. The unmodified canallers ran only very sporadically, and EASTCLIFFE HALL and her enlarged sisters were nearing the ends of their careers, with the company actively exploring disposition of the vessels. EASTCLIFFE looked every bit the veteran now, too, with a rust-banded midriff, although her easy-handling qualities made her a favourite among captains who sailed her. But who could have foreseen the tragedy that would soon befall EASTCLIFFE HALL?

Her end occurred early on the morning of Tuesday, July 14th, 1970. EASTCLIFFE HALL was westbound in the Seaway with a cargo of 5,661 long tons of pig iron ingots loaded at Sorel, Quebec, for delivery to Saginaw, Michigan. She was drawing eighteen feet, five inches, of water.

In common with most domestic operators, the Hall Corporation avoided the expense of taking pilots in the Montreal to Lake Ontario section of the Seaway by employing senior personnel qualified by experience to pilot on the waters of that section. On any given ship, it was normal for the master and at least one of the mates to be thus qualified. Chief Mate Julien Marchand, 45, had performed this duty as the EASTCLIFFE HALL crossed Lake St. Francis on the evening of July 13th. At about 9:45 p.m., as the ship approached the Seaway International (Cornwall-Massena) Bridge, Marchand was relieved by 52-year-old Capt. Joseph Richard Groulx, who had joined the ship only two weeks earlier. Groulx continued in personal charge as EASTCLIFFE HALL transitted the Snell and Eisenhower Locks, and continued upriver. The night was dark, but all navigation lights were clearly visible.

At about 3:00 a.m. on July 14th, EASTCLIFFE HALL grounded on Gooseneck Island, a "drowned" island in Lake St. Lawrence, some twelve nautical miles west of Eisenhower Lock. Groulx had Marchand (who had been sleeping) called to the pilothouse, and advised Seaway Iroquois traffic control of the problem. The captain and mate worked the ship free at about 3:32 a.m. and proceeded, but at 3:45 a.m., EASTCLIFFE HALL struck a submerged object, sinking at about 4:05 a.m. in 47 feet of water, just west of Chrysler Shoal.

Six crew members and three passengers died: Capt. Groulx and his 16-year-old son, Alain; Chief Engineer Willie Demers and his wife, Jacqueline, and daughter, Nathalie, age 6; the fourth engineer; a wheelsman, the chief cook