

SIR THOMAS SHAUGHNESSY

In the years following the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, before the various Canadian lake fleets could build any number of new maximum-sized bulk carriers, there remained in operation an interesting assortment of veteran upper-lake steamers, many of which had started their lives under the U.S. flag. We came to think of these freighters as old, familiar friends, and when they started to go to the breakers during the 1960s, replaced by newer, larger and more cost-efficient tonnage, we all felt a great sense of loss. However, these ships had put in many years of good service, and they had earned their retirement. Perhaps we really were so sad to see them go to the scrappers because, in most cases, they were far more handsome ships than were their replacements.

One of these vessels, one which enjoyed a career of more than sixty years and carried the same name for her entire life, was the Mohawk Navigation steamer SIR THOMAS SHAUGHNESSY. She never was involved in any really notable incidents, but she was a handsome old workhorse that earned a good return for her owners during her many years of operation.

The SHAUGHNESSY began her life back in 1906, when she was built for a rather interesting U.S.-flag, upper-lake fleet operated by Charles Orlando Jenkins, who was only 35 years old when the SHAUGHNESSY was built for him. Jenkins was a young man with a law degree from Harvard, and he was fortunate enough to marry into the family of the late Captain William S. Mack. This latter gentleman, who was only fifty years of age when he died at Cleveland in 1896, had been born at Kingston, Ontario, and he was one of the pioneers of bulk shipping on the upper lakes.

Charles O. Jenkins, who practised law at Cleveland, took over the operation of the Mack Steamship Company for the Mack Estate in the early years of the new century, and some of the ships that he managed actually were owned by Mrs. William S. Mack. Two new steamers, WILLIAM HENRY MACK (14), (b) VALCARTIER, and F. B. SQUIRE (35), (b) HARRY WM. HOSFORD, were built for the Mack fleet in 1903, when Jenkins was managing its operations.

Late in 1905, Charles Jenkins ordered a steamer which was to be built for himself, rather than for the Mack Estate, and to operate her, Jenkins formed the National Steamship Company, of Cleveland. The new company was incorporated on January 18, 1906, and its directors were Jenkins, W. R. Gilbert, S. S. Pelow, C. E. Sullivan and C. F. Wallace. The ship Jenkins had ordered was built as Hull 164 of the Detroit Shipbuilding Company at Wyandotte, Michigan, and she was launched on Saturday, May 19, 1906.

What was most interesting about the new vessel was the fact that she was named SIR THOMAS SHAUGHNESSY, in honour of the Milwaukee-born gentleman who at the time of the steamer's launch was serving as president of the Canadian Pacific Railway. What has never, to our knowledge, been explained, is what connection there may have been between either Sir Thomas Shaughnessy or the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Jenkins and/or the National Steamship Company. That there was a connection of some nature is very certain because, in the absence of Shaughnessy, who was crossing the Atlantic at the time, A. D. MacTier and H. P. Timmerman, both highly placed with the C.P.R., attended on his behalf. Sponsor of the steamer at the christening was Miss Isobel Matthews, daughter of W. D. Matthews. (Both MacTier and Matthews also had lake steamers named in their honour.)

The SIR THOMAS SHAUGHNESSY was a fine new ship, although already lake bulk carriers more than 100 feet longer were being turned out by the shipyards. Enrolled at Cleveland (and like many other ships of the period, her home port frequently was shown as Fairport, Ohio, rather than Cleveland), she was given U.S. official number 203170. She was delivered to her owner by the shipyard on June 13, 1906.