

LAKESHELL (I)

The mention in our October issue of the recent sale by auction at Brest, France, of the former Socanav and Shell tanker W. M. VACY ASH, (a) LAKESHELL (III)(87), brought to mind the fact that two other tankers named LAKESHELL served the Shell fleet on the Great Lakes over the years. The second LAKE-SHELL was a diesel-powered canaller built in 1940 by Marine Industries at Sorel. She served the Shell fleet for her entire career and was retired at the end of the 1968 season. Held in reserve as (b) RIVERSHELL (II) in 1969, she was sold in August of that year for scrapping at Hamilton.

However, of more interest to us at this time is LAKESHELL (I), a steam-powered canaller built at the height of the Great Depression. She was Shell's very first Great Lakes tanker, and she served the fleet for almost forty years. She survived her eventual retirement by Shell, and briefly served another operator before being sent to the breakers. She was an interesting little ship, and we hope our members will enjoy reading about her history.

The Shell Oil Company of Canada began moving petroleum products on the Great Lakes in 1932. The announcement of the formation of the Shell shipping affiliate, Dominion Tankers Ltd., of Toronto, was carried in the January, 1932, issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World". Backed by John A. McDougald, Arthur R. Roberts was president of Dominion Tankers, while Captain J. H. Solery was manager. Dominion had authorized capital of 10,000 shares of stock without par value. Another of the incorporators of Dominion was Peter G. Campbell, a Toronto barrister, for whom the company named its second tanker.

In its April, 1932, issue, "Canadian Railway and Marine World" reported on the launching of Dominion's first tanker. "The 600,000 gallon capacity oil tanker ordered by Shell Oil Co. of Canada, Toronto, from Swan, Hunter & Wig-ham Richardson Ltd., Wallsend-on-Tyne, England, to be used on the Great Lakes, was launched (Saturday) March 19, and christened LAKESHELL by Mrs. Howard G. Ferguson, wife of the Canadian High Commissioner to Great Britain, who was presented with a jewel casket. Those attending, in addition to the owner's and builder's officials, included the Agent-General for Ontario in London, W. C. Nixon, and the Agent-General for British Columbia, F. W. Burden.

"The launching was followed by a luncheon, the speakers at which included A. R. Roberts, President, Dominion Tankers Ltd., the operating company for the ship, who expressed the hope that trade development will be such as to enable further Canadian contracts to be placed on the Tyne, and Mr. Nixon, who stated that the launching was an augury for the increased Empire trade which can be expected to follow the Imperial Conference to be held at Ottawa. The LAKESHELL is said to be the largest ship of its type ever built in England for the Canadian trade. It will sail for Canada immediately following the trials, and is expected to arrive in Montreal early in April. It will be registered in Toronto."

In fact, this statement proved to be true, but not for a number of years. LAKESHELL actually was enrolled under British official number 161565 and was registered at Newcastle, England. It was not until the early 1940s that the ship was brought into Canadian registry, enrolled at Toronto and under the same official number (such numbers then being interchangeable between the British and Canadian registries).

The May, 1932, issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World" gave a description of LAKESHELL. "The single screw oil tank steamship... is about 260 feet long and 43 ft. 7 in. wide. She is designed to carry a total deadweight of about 2,750 tons on a mean draft of 15½ ft. The hull and machinery have been built under special survey to the requirements of Lloyd's Register for its class +100 A1 carrying petroleum in bulk, and also under British Board of Trade supervision to pass Canadian Steamboat Inspection requirements.

"The oil cargo will be carried in 10 main oil tanks or holds. The ship has a