

Capt. Stitt's narrative, from his letters to Charles Henry Jeremiah Snider, continues: "During the early part of the summer of 1903, alterations had proceeded to the point of having the 90 feet built on the bow up about five feet above the water line and she resembled for all the world a sugar scoop. (The new bow was to be conical but we are not sure what shape was intended for the stern -Ed.) The work had been slow and they needed the space in the dock, as some good jobs were looming up, so they ordered the removal of the 'Roller Coaster' (from the drydock).

"This is where I came in for my share of trouble with this marine contraption, as Knapp had contracted with the Canada Starch Company, owners of the big tug CARDINAL, to tow the 'Roller Coaster' or 'Sugar Scoop' from Montreal to Toronto. I being captain of the CARDINAL at that time, was ordered to go to Montreal and make the transfer. And it was the worst towing job I ever had in my many years in the tugging game, much worse than the time I had towing the Christopher Columbus Caravels in 1893...

"With the salt water crew who had never been up through the canals, the small blade of a rudder that had no effect on the ship at all, and the sharp unfinished bow plates cutting my towing hawsers when she sheered from side to side, it was certainly some conundrum to do anything with her at all. Knapp came along with me on the CARDINAL to keep an eye on his idol. Three times in the Soulanges Canal his 'roller baby' got hungry and dove into the nice soft canal banks and scooped a mouthful of earth out.

"It was one continuous round of troubles in all the canals, but our biggest occurred in the currents between Cornwall and Prescott, for she broke away no less than four times, sheering back and forth, cutting our towing hawser off on the sharp bow plates, and before we could get a line on her, went down broadside over the shoals. That was the time she really did roll and lived up to her name.

"When we finally reached Kingston, Knapp wouldn't let me tow her up over Lake Ontario, but insisted on going by the Bay of Quinte and follow the shore from Presque Isle to Toronto. As the CARDINAL drew too much water to pass the Telegraph Narrows and Murray Canal, I had to engage the tug BEAVER, a smaller tug, to tow her from Kingston to Presque Isle. He (Knapp) also made arrangements for another lake tug to tow her from Presque Isle to Toronto, so I was released and went back to my own trade again."

Knapp's "Roller Baby" finally did make it safely to Toronto, and although some reports indicate that she then just lay at the Polson yard, we are inclined to doubt this, and we believe that Knapp actually had the proposed \$45,000 conversion work finished. On our photopage, we reproduce a strange photo from the collection of the Institute for Great Lakes Research. It shows a tubular vessel with a conical bow, a pilothouse of sorts forward on the "upper deck" with a flying bridge, and a tall, sawmill-type smokestack aft. A lifeboat is suspended over the port side from davits. That this is the former ROLLER BOAT seems inarguable, since the old flange/paddles are still there, some of them enlarged so as to become rubbing strakes. The vessel is flying a large Red Ensign from the mast located abaft the pilothouse. There is no sign of unloading equipment, but there seem to be hatches topside. We cannot identify the exact location of the photo, but we must assume that it was taken at Toronto.

The evidence presented by this photo coincides with a report contained in the December, 1905, issue of "The Canadian Engineer", which reported that Mr. Knapp had addressed the November 9, 1905, meeting of the Engineers' Club of Toronto. Apart from spouting more of his usual guff about the efficiency of rolling boats, Knapp was quoted as saying that he then was "engaged on the design and construction of a tubular boat at the ship yards of the Canadian Shipbuilding Company, Toronto, which it is understood, will be ready for trial and operation in the spring of 1906. It is fully expected that this new type of boat will revolutionize the coal trade between Nova Scotia