

PORT DALHOUSIE

To many ship fans of today, one of the most interesting classes of lake vessels of the past is that comprising the many different types of canallers. These little ships were the lifeblood of marine transportation below Port Colborne for many years, but a large number of today's shipping observers never had a chance to see them in service. The era of the canaller ended forty years ago, and with very few exceptions, the canallers were gone within a few years of the opening of the new St. Lawrence Seaway.

If the latter-day canallers, most of them mass-produced by British shipyards during the 1920s, were interesting, the canallers built before World War One were far more so. They were built by Canadian, United States and United Kingdom yards, and they tended to be much more distinctive in appearance and quite often were innovative in design. These early canallers sometimes were built in small groups of sisterships, but such groupings seldom were comprised of more than two or three vessels.

One of the major operators of canallers during the early years of the twentieth century was the Montreal Transportation Company Ltd. This famous and venerable firm, which at one time was Canada's largest lake and river transportation company, could trace its beginnings back to 1867, when the original Montreal Transportation Company was formed by Hugh McLennan, of Montreal. Before the improvements to the old St. Lawrence canal system were completed about 1900, the Montreal Transportation Company had been the largest operator in the forwarding business from Kingston to river ports, and the company owned and operated an 800,000-bushel elevator at Kingston. As well, the M.T.Co. carried much of the grain which was shipped out of the ports of Fort William and Port Arthur. One of the company's largest clients was the Ogilvie Flour Mills Company, of Montreal.

Amongst the shipbuilders which constructed a large number of canallers over the years was the famous firm of Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd., of Newcastle-on-Tyne, England. In 1911, this firm built at its Neptune Works the canaller TOILER, its Hull 840, which was powered by a primitive diesel engine. She was the first diesel ship ever to cross the North Atlantic, and the second was her sistership CALGARY, built in 1912 as Swan Hunter's Hull 892. These two vessels were operated on the lakes by James Playfair, but they were not a success. Over the winter of 1912-1913, TOILER's diesel engine was removed and replaced by a second-hand, fore-and-aft compound steam engine. She later was C.S.L.'s MAPLEHEATH, and served until the opening of the Seaway, at which time she became a wrecking barge for McAllister Towing & Salvage. CALGARY kept her original engine, but was sold off-lakes in 1916. She was re-engined with a better diesel in 1921 and lasted until 1947.

TOILER and CALGARY were built by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson "on speculation". In other words, they were built as experimental vessels, in the hope that some lake operator would take an interest in them and purchase them for freshwater service.

Swan Hunter did the same thing again in 1913, producing yet another experimentally-powered vessel of canal dimensions. This ship was built in the hope that the Montreal Transportation Company Ltd. would purchase her, and her builders gave her the name TYNEMOUNT, which honoured the place of her build as well as following the M.T.Co.'s practice of giving many of its steel canallers names incorporating the suffix "mount".

Before we go any further, we should note that, although most sources show that TYNEMOUNT was built by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd. at Newcastle-on-Tyne, some other sources show her builder as the Smith's Dock Company Ltd., of Middlesbrough, England, the location of the yard more commonly referred to as South Bank-on-Tees. In fact, we believe that both are correct and that the two shipyards collaborated in the construction of this extremely novel vessel. The 1915-1916 issue of Lloyd's Register showed the