

BEAVERTON and EDMONTON

When we featured the 1913-built canaller TYNEMOUNT (14), (b) PORT DALHOUSIE, in the May issue, we noted that many of the canallers built during the early years of the twentieth century were much more interesting than their mass-produced cousins which were churned out by British yards during the 1920s. In most cases, the earlier vessels were of heavier construction and of more aesthetically pleasing design than were later vessels of their size. Some of them were of very innovative design, enjoying varying degrees of success. They generally were not built in large groups, but rather were constructed as single units, or perhaps as pairs or triplets. Many of them fell victim to the hostilities of World War One, while some of them were lost in heavy weather while on salt water. A few even perished right on the lakes, where they were designed to operate.

But a number of the early canallers enjoyed long and successful lives on fresh water and, amongst them, two British-built steamers, which were near-sisterships, lasted until the advent of the new St. Lawrence Seaway. At the time of their eventual retirement, they were two of the oldest canallers serving in the fleet of Canada Steamship Lines Ltd. Their careers ran generally parallel course, with a few minor exceptions. They were built by the same shipyard, and each of them kept her original name for her entire lifetime.

On many occasions in these pages, we have mentioned the Mathews Steamship Company Limited, of Toronto. The Mathews fleet was very successful for many years but, almost invariably, mention of the fleet concerns its financial collapse and the disgrace of its last president, Alfred Ernest Mathews, during the years of The Great Depression. Not so this time, however, for our current feature touches on the Mathews fleet at a much earlier point in time, more than twenty years before the onset of the over-extension that was to lead to the company's "troubles" when the economy took its infamous dive.

The Mathews fleet traced its beginnings back to 1856, when its lake shipping operations were commenced by James Mathews, of Toronto. It later became a partnership, which was known as J. and J. T. Mathews. This partnership continued the business until 1902, when James Mathews retired; he passed away in 1912. J. T. Mathews, son of James, carried on the interest after his father's retirement, and was joined in this venture by his brother, A. E. Mathews. On October 15th, 1905, the Mathews Steamship Company Limited was incorporated at Toronto, with capital of \$250,000. The principal founders of the firm were J. T. Mathews, Alfred Ernest Mathews, George G. Gooderham (of the distillery family), and R. L. Denniston-Taylor.

The new Mathews company took over the management of the canal steamer HADDINGTON, which had been built on speculation by the Bertram Shipbuilding Company Ltd. at Toronto in 1904. That steamer originally was owned by S.S. Haddington Ltd.

The first vessel actually built for the Mathews Steamship Company Limited was the canal-sized steamer EDMONTON, which was constructed in 1906 by the firm of Robert Stephenson & Company Ltd. at Hebburn-on-Tyne, England. She was Hull 110 of this yard which, as far as we have been able to determine, built only two canallers for lake trade.

The April 1906 issue of "The Railway and Marine World" reported that "The Mathews Steamboat (sic) Co., of which J. (sic) and J. T. Mathews are managers, is having a steamer built in Great Britain. Unconfirmed reports state that her dimensions will be: length, 356 ft.; breadth, 47 ft. 6 in.; depth, 23 ft.; that she will have a capacity of 110,000 bush. on the Upper Lakes, or 70,000 to Montreal, and will have a speed of 12 miles an hour. As the locks on the canal system are 270 ft. by 45 ft., there must be some error in the reported dimensions."

There certainly were some errors in that original report, and the record was