Ship of the Month No. 266
J. C. STEWART

During the second and third decades of the twentieth century, the City of Toronto undertook a very major, much needed and long overdue reconstruction of its harbour facilities. While the chain of islands protecting the port from Lake Ontario remained and had become a major park and amusement area, with a large seasonal residential community, the eastern end of the harbour was mostly marshland, while the waterfront was a rabbit warren of aging, closely packed and ill-planned woden wharves. It was decided that the whole waterfront area needed to be reconstructed, and plans were formulated by the Toronto Harbour Commissioners (formed May 19, 1911) for the filling in of the eastern marshes and the construction of modern wharves, the Keating Channel and Ship Channel, and for the relocation of the central waterfront area several hundred feet to the southward and with a whole new system of wharves to be built. A new western harbour entrance was to be created, and the eastern entrance much improved. All of this work was outlined in the Commissioners' waterfront plan of 1912.

"Canadian Railway and Marine World" noted in its issue of July 1913 that: "The Toronto Harbour Commission has awarded the contract for dredging in connection with the water front development at Toronto, to the Canadian Stewart Co., Montreal (sic). The plans and specifications call for the removal of approximately 35,000,000 cubic yards of material by hydraulic dredging, and borings indicate that 70% is sand and gravel, and 30% a mixture of sand, silt and clay. The estimated amount to be spent in harbour development is $19,142,088, of which $6,462,344 will be expended in dredging."

Four contracts for various parts of the redevelopment project were awarded by federal order-in-council on September 15, 1913, and in answer to questions raised in the House of Commons early in 1914, the Minister of Public Works stated that the total value of the contracts amounted to just in excess of $25 million, with the dredging contract awarded to the Canadian Stewart Company Ltd. being valued at $5,371,372.17.

Canadian Stewart had its offices in the Dominion Bank Building, which still stands on the southwest corner of King and Yonge Streets, Toronto, and two of its principals were Glyn Osler and Miller Lash, of Toronto. The company needed to put together a whole new dredging fleet in order to fulfill this huge contract, and it awarded a number of construction contracts to local shipyards in this respect. To the Polson Iron Works it let contracts for the building of two large suction dredges and a derrick scow. The dredges were the big and powerful CYCLONE (C.134451), launched in July of 1914, and TORNADO (C.137895), launched on August 15, 1914. These dredges, perhaps the most famous ever to operate in this area, were each 170.0 feet x 42.1 x 12.0, 911 and 737 Net Tons respectively (we have no idea why the difference in tonnage between the two), and each had towering twin funnels that belched massive clouds of black smoke when the dredges were working. Their suction pipes were 24 inches in diameter.

The derrick scow was 120 x 42 x 12, and Polson's yard launched her on July 18, 1914. "Canadian Railway and Marine World" reported in its August 1914 issue that during the launch, the steel scow "collided with the old Knapp roller boat, which has been lying there for several years. The scow was undamaged, but the roller boat had a large hole cut in her side."

Another contract, let to the Thor Iron Works Ltd., Toronto, was for a steel-hulled steam tug, and she was launched on October 10, 1914. Christened EMILY STEWART (C.134458), she was 71.0 (80 feet overall) x 19.6 x 8.3, 104 Gross Tons and 48 Net. Her hull was divided into four compartments with watertight bulkheads.

The Canadian Stewart Company needed more tugs, however, in order to fulfill the massive amount of work for which it had contracted, but by August of 1914, World War One had broken out and Canada was involved in the hostilities. Accordingly, materials such as were needed to build steel-hulled steam