

the St. Mary's River by U.S.C.G. MACKINAW, and joining the "convoy" at the Soo was the craneship YANKCANUCK, which had loaded a cargo of steel coils for Trenton, Michigan. The first commercial upbound passage at the Soo did not take place until March 27, when the barge JOSEPH H. THOMPSON and tug JOSEPH H. THOMPSON JR. passed up, followed by the FRONTENAC.

The St. Lawrence and Welland canals also had been scheduled to open on March 25th, but the severe ice conditions caused the opening day to be put back to March 31st. On that day, the St. Lawrence canals did open, the first upbound (and official "first" ship of the season) being the saltie REGINA OLDENDORFF which was bound for Toronto with a load of sugar from Acajutla, El Salvador. The first downbound vessel, also on the 31st, was the C.S.L. self-unloader JEAN PARISIEN.

The story was a bit different at the Welland Canal, where ice conditions were such that early daylight-only passages were permitted commencing on March 26. That day, Upper Lakes Shipping's CANADIAN ENTERPRISE passed down with a load of coal for the Lakeview generating station, where stockpiles of coal had reached a precariously low level as a result of high demand for electricity during the unusually cold winter. A number of other ships followed. The "official" first vessel, feted on the morning of March 31st in a ceremony at Lock 3, was Algoma Central Marine's ALGOCAPE, sailing from lay-up at Toronto. It was interesting to see a straight-decker chosen to be honoured and we believe that it actually is the second time this ship has been "first" at the Welland. It is our impression that she also got the "hat" back when she was sailing for C.S.L. as (a) RICHELIEU.

The Toronto cement boats STEPHEN B. ROMAN and ENGLISH RIVER usually get an early start on the navigation season, but this season their start was delayed as a result of heavy ice on Toronto Bay and also in the Bay of Quinte. As a result, the ROMAN did not depart her Toronto lay-up berth until March 25th, when she sailed for Picton. She was back to Toronto the next day with a load of cement, and thus she won the ceremonial hat for the first arrival of the season, something she has done with considerable regularity ever since she went into this service. At the time of this writing, ENGLISH RIVER was all fitted out but had not yet gone into operation.

Another vessel off to an early start this year was Lower Lakes Towing's SAGINAW, which departed lay-up at Sarnia on March 26, went to Detroit to load a cargo of coke which she delivered to the Algoma Steel plant at the Canadian Soo, and then proceeded to Marquette, where she was first arrival of the season early on March 31. SAGINAW was assisted into Marquette by U.S.C.G. SUNDEW and MACKINAW, and was there to load a cargo of ore for the Soo.

Why would SAGINAW be taking the coke and ore to Algoma Steel? The fact is that Lower Lakes Towing now has a five-year contract to handle the inbound float for the steel plant. The shipment of coal to the plant will be subcontracted, at least in part, to the Interlake Steamship Company. To handle the ore float from Marquette to the Soo, Lower Lakes is in the process of acquiring from Interlake its 1952-built, 698-foot steamer ELTON HOYT 2nd, which last operated in the 2000 navigation season and has been laid up at Superior, Wisconsin. As yet, the HOYT has not begun to fit out and, until she is ready to enter service, SAGINAW will be doing duty on the ore shuttle from Marquette. We believe that the HOYT will look superb in L.L.T. colours, and it will be interesting to see what name the new owner will select for her.

Meanwhile, late in March, extensive winter work on Lower Lakes Towing's CUYAHOGA was completed at Port Stanley. The work involved the complete upgrading of the ship's port tunnel and its conveyor equipment. The final step in the work was to install a "new" belt, this piece of equipment being salvaged from the scrapped TARANTAU and resized to fit the smaller CUYAHOGA.