

NOVADOC (ii)

- by Ronald F. Beaupre -
with the Editor

With the recent demise of the Paterson fleet, it would seem appropriate that we feature another of its steamers. However, there are other circumstances which bring us to choose NOVADOC as this issue's "Ship of the Month". One is the recent discovery of a photo of the ship wrecked in the St. Lawrence River in 1932. The other is having a survivor's story of the NOVADOC's wreck in the great Armistice Day Storm of 1940 become available to us.

N. M. Paterson & Sons Ltd. entered the Great Lakes shipping business in 1915 as Paterson Steamships Limited with the purchase of the wooden steamer D. R. VAN ALLEN. The fleet was expanded gradually until 1926, when twelve upper lakers were purchased from U.S. owners. The principal cargo for the upper lakes fleet was grain brought to Fort William from a string of Paterson elevators located across the prairie provinces.

The next step in the expansion of the fleet was the building of new ships to forward grain cargoes down through the small locks of the old Welland and St. Lawrence River canals. In 1927, five canallers were delivered from yards of Swan, Hunter and Wigham Richardson Ltd. (Ship of the Month No. 69, Vol. X, No. 2). The following year, seven more were launched to the order of Paterson Steamships Limited.

The publication "Canadian Railway & Marine World" carried a series of articles regarding the construction of these new ships. From the January 1928 issue we have the following: "Paterson Steamships Ltd., Fort William, Ont., is having built in England, by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson, five steamships similar to the five received in April and May 1927. They are to be delivered in March and will have the following approximate dimensions: - length, 257 ft. (overall); breadth, 43½ ft.; moulded depth, 20 ft. They will each have capacity to carry 90,000 bush. of wheat through the Welland Canal on 14-ft. draft. They will be named CARTIERDOC, LAVALDOC, MONDOC, SORELD and TROISDOC, these names representing in the first syllables the names of cities and towns in the Province of Quebec, the 'doc' being emblematical of the Dominion of Canada, and being the fleet's insignia. These ships will increase the company's fleet to 25, with a total carrying capacity of 125,000 tons."

The order apparently was increased later from the original five ships to seven. From the C.R.&M.W. issue of March 1928: "Paterson Steamships Ltd., Fort William, Ont., had the first of 7 Welland Canal size steamships, which it has ordered from Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd., launched at Wallsend-on-Tyne, England, Jan. 23, and christened CARTIERDOC by Mrs. T. E. Thirlaway, wife of the building company's Vice Chairman. The second one, launched Feb. 3, was christened LAVALDOC by Mrs. Frank M. Ross, of Montreal, and the third, launched Feb. 10, was christened MONDOC by Mrs. E. B. Sutherland, wife of the Secretary-Treasurer of Paterson Steamships Ltd. At the time of writing, Feb. 18, it is expected that the other 4 will be launched on Feb. 21, Mar. 3, 9 and 22 respectively. All the ships are due to leave England during April, so as to reach Montreal in time for the opening of navigation.

"They are 253 ft. long and are being built to British Corporation requirements. They will have a raised quarterdeck 100 ft. long and a sunk fore-castle 35 ft. in length. For rapid handling of cargo from the 7 [sic - there actually were 6] large cargo hatches, winches and windlass are installed. Steam heating and electric lighting will be fitted throughout the living accommodations, which will comprise a house on the fore end of the ship for captain, officers and seamen, the rest of the crew being housed on either side of the engine and boiler casings. The engines, driving a single propeller, will be placed at the after end of the ships, and will be of the inverted marine type with three cranks, steam being supplied from 2 single-ended