

RENVOYLE (ii)

"The... big, graceful, red-hulled RENVOYLE of Midland. She is an old sweetheart; whether one meets her on the Upper Lakes or the Toronto Waterfront, she is always a Queen. She has a bold flaring bow that sheds the sea, a long sweet curving sheer that springs her up to meet the next one, and a stern as graceful as a clipper ship's, despite the fact that she tucks a stockless anchor under her starboard quarter like a hanky peeping from a hip pocket."

Thus spake Charles Henry Jeremiah Snider in Schooner Days, CCCLXXVII, which appeared in "The Evening Telegram", Toronto, on December 24, 1938. This description of the Canada Steamship Lines package freighter RENVOYLE, especially coming from Mr. Snider who was a great devotee of the sailing ship and looked on few steamers with any real favour, truly caught the beauty of this famous ship. We recall her on many occasions moored majestically at the old C.S.L. docks at the foot of Bay Street, Toronto, her nose right up to the end of the slip and her long steering pole extended over the cars and pedestrians on the south side of Queen's Quay as if in triumph. At other times, we watched her slice through the waters of Toronto Bay en route to the Western Gap and Lake Ontario or, occasionally, if very light, inbound at the Eastern Gap.

No matter who was observing, she always was a favourite. We first ran her story, written by Skip Gillham, as Ship of the Month No. 23 in Volume IV, No. 9, the Summer issue of 1972. Many of our members will never have seen that feature, as the issue has been out of print for many years. As well, we have a lot more information now available concerning RENVOYLE. So as we now are approaching yet another summer season, we look back with fondness on one of the most handsome freighters that ever sailed the lakes.

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The March 1925 issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World" announced the amalgamation of James Playfair's Glen Line Ltd. and Glen Steamships Ltd., of Midland, Ontario, with the George Hall Coal & Shipping Corporation, of Montreal, with operations to be continued under the latter name. It was said that the resulting fleet would operate "in close co-operation" with another Playfair enterprise, the Great Lakes Transportation Company Limited, which had been formed in 1914 and operated mainly upper lakers. The article ended by noting that Great Lakes Transportation was "having another ship built in England, which will be 390 ft. long, so that its total fleet during this year will include 13 ships".

The next issue, of April 1925, reported further on "the package freight steamship which this company [Great Lakes Transportation] is having built at Wallsend-on-Tyne, England. The following revised, and in part additional, information has been received since. The general dimensions will be, length overall, 390½ ft.; length b.p., 379 ft.; width extreme, 44¼ ft.; depth moulded to spar deck, 27 ft.; deadweight carrying capacity in fresh water, 4,825 tons. The machinery will include 2 boilers 15½ ft. diam. by 11½ ft. long, 160 lb. working pressure, and triple expansion engines 22½, 37 and 62 in. x 42 in. stroke. The speed will be about 13.8 miles [per hour].

"The hull is being built at Wallsend-on-Tyne as a ship 235 ft. long, and 144 ft. of the midship body is being fabricated and will be stored on board for inserting in the ship after she arrives on the Great Lakes. This means that the two portions of the ship, the after part containing the machinery and boilers, will be built together and cut apart in a drydock on the Great Lakes for the insertion of the 144 ft. of midship length, thus obviating the necessity of having to cut the ship in two and tow the parts through the St. Lawrence and Welland Canals, which would be necessary if the ship was built as a 379 ft. one in the first place."