

GLENELG

Without a doubt, James Playfair was one of the most important and colourful Canadian shipping entrepreneurs of all time. Born of Scottish parents at Toronto on July 8, 1860, his influence on the lake shipping industry extended for many years beyond his death on May 25, 1937. It is, therefore, not surprising that we have presented Playfair-operated vessels in this publication on many occasions, the most recent being the May issue where we featured the steamer RENVOYLE (ii), which began life in 1925 as (a) GLENLEDI, built for Playfair's Great Lakes Transportation Company Limited, of Midland, Ontario.

Playfair operated a number of shipping companies over the years, but the largest of these was the Great Lakes Transportation Company Limited, which was incorporated under the Dominion Companies Act on April 2, 1914. It acquired an eclectic collection of rather venerable upper lake steamers together with some canallers, and then set about having built to its order, in the 1920s, a number of new canallers as well as upper lakers. In fact, its largest vessel (and the Great Lakes' largest freighter at the time) was on the ways at Midland when the company and its assets were sold in 1926.

James Playfair was president of the Great Lakes Transportation Company, but almost all of its financing came from James Richardson & Sons Limited, a prominent firm of grain dealers and shippers. Henry W. Richardson was vice-president, secretary and treasurer of Great Lakes Transportation until his death in 1918, at which time his nephew, James A. Richardson, succeeded him. Via Henry Richardson, who also was interested in mining, there came to the Playfair shipping operations a major financial connection with James A. Paisley and the Valley Camp Coal Company. It is not, therefore, unusual that Playfair would plan the construction of a vessel designed specifically for carrying coal.

The September 1922 issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World" reported as follows: "Midland Shipbuilding Co., Midland, Ont. - The Great Lakes Transportation Co. has ordered from this company a canal size self-unloading ship of the single deck type, and following dimensions - length 259 ft.; breadth 43 ft.; depth 25½ ft., with a carrying capacity of 2,000 tons on a 14 ft. draft. The propelling machinery will consist of a vertical triple expansion engine, with cylinders 17, 25 and 43 ins. diameter by 30 stroke, steam to be supplied by 2 Scotch boilers 12½ ft. diameter by 11 ft. long, with a working pressure of 185 lb.

"The unloading gear will discharge 500 tons of coal an hour, the conveyor running at 300 ft. a minute. These conveyors will consist of 2 steel belts 4 ft. wide, running the full length of the hold, and will be located about 7 ft. each side of the centre line. The cargo will be carried to the forward end of the hold where it will pass into a hopper with a single outlet at bottom, allowing it to fall on to a central belt which will convey it up through the deck and on to a boom. This boom will be of steel, 75 ft. long, with a rubber belt conveyor running its full length, and it will be arranged to swing overboard to either port or starboard side. The unloading apparatus will be run by 5 motors, power to be furnished by a 156 k.w. steam turbine generating set.

"The ship will be built of steel, and classed to the highest requirements of the American Bureau of Shipping for lake service. A double bottom 3 ft. deep will be fitted, extending between peak bulkheads, with side tanks 8½ ft. deep for the full length of the cargo space.

"The crew's accommodation has been designed with consideration for convenience and ventilation. The after deckhouse will contain quarters for the engineer, firemen and deckhands, together with dining room, galley, pantry, etc., with cooks' quarters adjoining. The captain, officers, electrician and wireless operator will be located forward. The keel will be laid this autumn, when construction will be pushed so that the ship may be delivered for the re-opening of navigation in 1923."