

## GRAINMOTOR REVISITED

- by Capt. Gerry Ouderkirk and The Editor -

Back in June of 1973, when Skip Gillham wrote for us GRAINMOTOR as Ship of the Month No. 31, she had departed the Great Lakes for Ecuador under the name BULK GOLD. Since that time, additional material has been located, and GRAINMOTOR has become history, so it is time for us to revisit her story.

When the Montreal to Lake Ontario section of the St. Lawrence Seaway opened in 1959, most of the canallers built for the older and smaller canal locks were rendered obsolete. The majority of them were scrapped; some were sold foreign, and others met with worse fates. A few survived, given a reprieve through lengthening or conversion for specialized lake trades. Those that traded their freshwater careers for new opportunities on salt water met with varying degrees of success. Very few of them are still active.

The year 1929 was an active shipbuilding season for Canada Steamship Lines. It had built at Midland, Ontario, the canal-sized package freighter FERNIE, launched on February 28, and the upper lake bulk carrier STADACONA, launched on September 26. From its Davie Shipbuilding Company subsidiary at Lauzon, Quebec, C.S.L. had built the canal express package freighter CITY OF WINDSOR launched on April 27th, and Hull 503, GRAINMOTOR, which was launched on August 22 and christened by Mrs. M. P. Connolly, wife of C.S.L.'s Quebec City agent. A luncheon for company officials and friends aboard the Saguenay River division passenger steamer QUEBEC followed the launching. GRAINMOTOR was delivered to Canada Steamship Lines soon afterward and she completed her trial run on September 3rd, on which date she achieved a mean normal speed of 11 3/4 miles an hour, operating in ballast with and against the tide below Quebec City. On September 4th, she left Quebec for Port Colborne to load grain. It might be added that the new Lock 8 of the Welland Ship Canal at Port Colborne had only recently been opened to ship traffic, so GRAINMOTOR was amongst its first users.

After taking on 100,000 bushels of wheat, she departed for Quebec, where she arrived on September 13 after calling at Montreal en route, where she was inspected by C.S.L.'s president W. H. Coverdale, and T. R. Enderby, General Manager. To celebrate the completion of the ship's first round trip, the Quebec Harbour Commission gave a luncheon to a number of marine and business men on September 14th, at which J. H. Fortier, a C.S.L. director, and Capt. C. E. Scott, master of GRAINMOTOR, spoke on behalf of the company and the ship. Capt. Scott had formerly commanded the OXFORD. His GRAINMOTOR crew consisted of C. E. Fleming as Chief Engineer, along with two mates, three engineers, two oilers, two wheelmen, two watchmen, four deckhands and two cooks.

Given official number C.154473 and registered at Montreal, GRAINMOTOR was a standard steel bulk canaller measuring 251.9 feet in length, 43.1 feet in the beam and 18.3 feet in depth. She was registered at 1829 Gross Tons, 1093 Net, and her carrying capacity was 3,200 tons deadweight or 108,000 bushels of grain.

This vessel was unique amongst C.S.L. canallers as she was the company's first motorvessel. All of the company's other canallers of this era were powered by steam engines. GRAINMOTOR was propelled by a 950 h.p., 4-cycle, 8-cylinder, vertical Diesel engine having cylinders measuring 16" diameter by 20" stroke each. The engine was built by the Bessemer Gas Engine Company, of Grove City, Pennsylvania. The chief interest in this ship, designed for the St. Canal trade, centred in her Diesel propulsion machinery and her oil-electric auxiliaries, and the relation of them to her carrying capacity and earning power. Owing to the smaller machinery and fuel spaces, GRAINMOTOR was able to carry at least 5,000 bushels more than the largest comparable steamship. In 1929, that amounted to about \$275 more profit per trip from Port Colborne to Montreal. A good average cargo for a steamship was only