

PETER G. CAMPBELL

This month, we feature a relatively small canal barge which later was converted to a motorship, and which enjoyed a career rather longer than might have been anticipated for her. Despite her diminutive size, she was an extremely notable vessel in that she had the first all-welded hull ever to be built in a British Empire shipyard. Not a single rivet was used in the construction of her hull.

The Shell Oil organization began moving petroleum products on the Great Lakes in 1932 when Dominion Tankers Limited, Toronto, was formed with Alfred R. Roberts as president and J. H. Solery as manager. The company was backed by John A. McDougald, whose name was carried for a number of years by one of the company's tankers. The Dominion Tankers vessels operated under charter to Shell Oil. The first tanker built for the fleet was the steam-powered cannaller LAKESHELL (i), which was completed in 1932 at Newcastle-on-Tyne, England, by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd. The company returned to Swan, Hunter for its second new-built vessel, the all-welded barge to which we already have made mention.

This barge, christened PETER G. CAMPBELL for another of the company's backers, was completed in 1933 at Newcastle as Swan, Hunter's Hull No. 1485. It was reported that she originally was to be named NO. 35 (for reasons unknown to us), but she entered service as the CAMPBELL. She at first was enrolled as Br.161572, with Newcastle as her home port, but she soon was placed under the Canadian flag as C.161572, registered at Toronto. Her first registered owner was the Florence Transportation Company Ltd., Toronto, so named because of the identity of the tug that was acquired to tow her. More about that later.

PETER G. CAMPBELL originally was 174.0 feet in length between perpendiculars (179 feet overall), 34.0 feet in the beam and 14.9 feet in depth, and her Net Tonnage was 711. (The Dominion register did not at that time record the Gross Tonnage of unpowered ships.) She was designed to carry 1,700 tons of oil in four main tanks, each of which was divided in two by longitudinal bulkheads. The piping was arranged so that any compartment could be filled independently of the others, and so that unloading could take place simultaneously over each side of the ship.

The barge was completely flush-decked, with a short closed steel bulwark forward and an open post-and-wire rail around the rest of her spar deck. There was only a very small deckhouse aft which incorporated a small pilothouse, and a huge emergency steering wheel was mounted outside, on the aft bulkhead of the cabin. The only spars were two short kingposts with booms that handled the cargo hoses. The barge's hull was black, her deckhouse was white, and the kingposts and booms were buff.

The German sea-going tug AJAX was hired to bring the CAMPBELL across the North Atlantic on her delivery voyage and, after 44 days at sea, she finally arrived safely at Montreal during the month of May, 1933. Unfortunately, the press clipping (we have copies from both the Ivan Brookes and Jim Kidd scrapbooks) announcing the arrival was not dated, but from another source we know that the CAMPBELL arrived at Montreal on May 26, 1933.

The tug obtained by Dominion Tankers (and which was to be registered to its affiliate, the Florence Transportation Company Ltd., but the change was not registered before the tug was lost) was a wooden hulled vessel (C.88309) named FLORENCE, which had been built in 1885 at Levis, Quebec, by Maritime & Industrielle Cie. and was 91.0 x 19.8 x 9.0, 113 Gross and 30 Net Tons. She originally had been owned by Jewell and Co. (Henry Jewell), of Quebec, and was sold in 1900 to T. Tremblay, of Chicoutimi. In 1903, she was acquired by the Hackett Towing and Wrecking Company, of Amherstburg, Ontario, and in 1906 she passed to the Quebec Transportation and Forwarding Company Ltd., Quebec. She was reboilered in 1912 and was sold in 1914 to the George Hall Coal Company, Montreal, and in 1927 to the Essex Transit Company Ltd., of Ford City (Windsor), Ontario. After a period of inactivity, she sank at her dock at Windsor in 1932, but the following year, she was acquired by the Dominion Tankers interests and was refitted to tow the PETER G. CAMPBELL. It is quite remarkable that a more modern and powerful tug was not acquired to handle the valuable new barge.

A clipping from the Ivan Brookes scrapbooks is dated August 17, 1933. "The tugs RIVAL and J. COX towing the Dominion Tankers barge PETER G. CAMPBELL arrived here this morning from Montreal with a large cargo of molasses for the (Gooderham & Worts) distillery. This is the new barge's first visit to the Port of Toronto." RIVAL, of course, was the well-known Sin-Mac tug of 1923, but we have no record of a tug named J. COX or anything similar.