

C.C.G.S. GRENVILLE**- by Ronald F. Beaupre -**

The very first ship in which the author became genuinely interested was the Canadian Coast Guard Ship GRENVILLE. This was in the early 1960s and, at the time, a good friend was employed on board this vessel. The friend just happens to be the one who "introduced" the history of shipping on the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes to the author, who remembers a spring day in the early 1960s, watching GRENVILLE struggle to break ice above Iroquois Lock. She would run ahead into the ice until she stopped. Then a large block of concrete, an anchor for a buoy, was hoisted off the deck on her main boom and swung to and fro as the engine worked full astern. Once released, she would back up a few hundred feet and then the process was repeated. Suddenly from out of the lock appeared the tug ROBINSON BAY. She rushed past GRENVILLE as if no ice were present, no doubt showing all that old low-powered steamers were becoming a thing of the past.

GRENVILLE often was reported in the news as being the first ship out and the last one in for the season. Her job was to place, maintain and remove aids to navigation along the rivers and lakes. Thomas E. Appleton was the marine historian for the Canadian Coast Guard and Marine Services. He prepared an article which appeared in "Transport Canada" in 1969, and parts of that article are reproduced here with several additions from other sources.

"From June 6, 1915, when she was commissioned, until December 18, 1968, when the order was given to abandon ship, CCGS GRENVILLE made a yeoman contribution to the marine service of Canada.

"The career of the GRENVILLE, built in 1915 and lost in 1968, covers an interesting phase of inland water development and made a notable contribution to it. Shortly before the vessel was put into service, the St. Lawrence canals were dredged to 14 feet, and traffic was on the increase. Lake vessels had increased greatly in size by the time the Welland Ship Canal was built... it had achieved a depth of 22 feet by 1932... and the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream came in 1959 with the opening of the Seaway.

"At the start of this period of development, the Department of Railways and Canals was responsible for aids to navigation in the section from Montreal to Kingston. For this they used two wooden steamers, the SCOUT and RESERVE, to handle the buoys. Elsewhere in the Great Lakes, the Department of Marine and Fisheries employed chartered steamboats to supply the lights and maintain the buoys and spars. In 1903, Marine and Fisheries took over the entire system, fell heir to the SCOUT and RESERVE, and established depots at Prescott and Parry Sound shortly afterwards. In 1909, they built two new buoy tenders, the LAMBTON and SIMCOE, to handle the Upper Lakes work. It was soon found that the SCOUT and RESERVE, harbour tugs in all but name, were unsuitable for Lake Ontario and a new vessel was ordered.

"Named after the County of Grenville on the Ontario shore of the St. Lawrence, the new ship was a great success. She was built by the Polson Iron Works of Toronto, a firm now long defunct, which had an excellent record in production of ships and marine machinery for the Department, including the 22-knot Fisheries cruiser VIGILANT in 1904 and a number of self-propelled lightships. The GRENVILLE was a steel single-screw steamer of handy size, 155 feet, and was fitted with a triple expansion engine taking steam from two marine boilers under draft. Commissioned on June 6, 1915, the GRENVILLE spent her first season between Prescott and the Niagara River, a period which was interrupted by her being rammed on the port quarter by the tug J. C. STEWART, when alongside a dock at Toronto. The repair job, at the expense of the tug owners, took most of the ensuing winter."

The Sessional Papers for the Department of Marine for 1915 stated: "She was placed in commission on June 5 and carried out for the balance of the season all necessary lighthouse and buoy work west of Prescott as far as Niagara River. While at dock in Toronto Harbour she was struck by the tug J. C. STEWART and injured on the port quarter. Repairs were made at the expense of the owners of the tug, during the winter, and the vessel was made ready for next season's work."

An incredibly complete description of GRENVILLE was contained in the December 1914 issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World". "The s.s. GRENVILLE, a buoy tending steamboat for the Marine and Fisheries Department, was launched at Toronto, Nov. 7, and it is expected that she will be ready for service before the opening of next navigation season. Following are the principal particulars: Length, between perpendiculars, 155 ft.; Length, overall, 164 ft. 6 ins.; Breadth, molded, 30 ft.; Depth, molded, 13 ft.; Draught, fully loaded with 183