

BATTLEFORD

When we select ships to feature in these pages, we like to use a combination of those that were well known as well as many that were not. When we do choose the more familiar ships, we like to pick ones that had, in some way, unusual careers. There are many things that could qualify a ship's life as being unusual or of interest. The steamer we have chosen this time around served Canada's largest lake fleet for the better part of her lifetime, and there was nothing so very odd about that. Likewise, many lake ships have been lengthened over the years, and a few have been shortened - still nothing so very strange. However, the ship we feature this issue was first lengthened and then, not so many years later, was shortened to return her to just about the same length she had originally. We think that really does qualify her as having had an unusual career.

During the 1925 season, the famous James Playfair, of Midland, Ontario, added four vessels to the lake fleets he managed. We already have featured the package freighter GLENLEDI (see the issue of May 2004) built new in the U.K. The GLENEAGLES came new from the ways of the shipyard at Midland, and the 1902-built consort barge GLENBOGIE was purchased. GLENLEDI was Hull 1271 of the yard of Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Limited at Wallsend-on-Tyne, England. The Playfair interests returned to the same yard that same year for another steamer, built as the yard's Hull 1275, and this was the canal-sized bulk carrier GLENROSS.

In fact, the construction of GLENROSS was financed by Frank W. Ross, Montreal, who at the time was general manager of the Saint John Drydock & Shipbuilding Company, of Saint John, New Brunswick. He also was a director of the George Hall Coal & Shipping Corporation, of Montreal. This latter firm, although it shared the Hall name with several other venerable concerns, had only been formed back in 1922, and control of it was acquired early in 1925 by James Playfair. It was a joint venture of Playfair and the Augsbury interests of Ogdensburg, New York, James Playfair being president of this firm while Frank A. Augsbury, Sr., was vice-president. A number of Playfair's canallers were transferred to this new corporation. Ross appears to have been involved in the financing of it, and Playfair honoured him by naming the new steamer for him, adding his usual "Glen" prefix to Ross' name. Frank Ross later went on to become Lieutenant Governor of the Province of British Columbia.

The September 1925 issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World" reported that GLENROSS had run her trials off the Tyne on August 12. "Her principal dimensions are: length between perpendiculars, 248 ft.; moulded width, 43½ ft.; moulded depth, 25 ft.; forecastle 42 ft. long. She has been built to Lloyd's requirements, has 4 cargo hatchways, a complete installation of electric lighting and steam heating, and a windlass. Water ballast is carried in the forward and after peak tanks and in the double bottom fore and aft. The engineers, oilers and firemen are housed aft in a steel deckhouse, on either side of the engine and boiler casings, and the captain, officers and seamen in the fore end of the ship. The engines, which are placed in the after end of the ship, drive a single propeller. 'Canadian Railway and Marine World' is advised that the ship is going to the George Hall Coal & Shipping Corporation."

It has been said by some sources that GLENROSS, when she sailed for Canada, brought in her holds the steel to be used to lengthen her once she was in Canada, in much the same way that GLENLEDI did. However, while GLENLEDI was taken to Collingwood and lengthened as soon as she arrived in Canada, GLENROSS was not. The November 1925 issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World" reported: "The steamship GLENROSS, designed for service on the Canadian lakes, canals and River St. Lawrence, and built by Swan, Hunter & Wigham Richardson Ltd. at Wallsend-on-Tyne, England, which ran her trials off the Tyne Aug. 12... sailed from Newcastle, England, in ballast, stopped at Godbout, Que., to take on a cargo of pulpwood for Waddington, N.Y., arrived at Montreal Sept. 3, and reported to George Hall Coal and Shipping Corporation, under which management she is being operated in the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes trade. C. W. Simpson is captain, and V. Parker is chief engineer."

So that pretty well confirms that GLENROSS did not bring her lengthening steel with her, for if she had, there would not have been room for her to have loaded a cargo of pulpwood at Godbout for Waddington. And far from heading straight to a shipyard, she ran in her regular service, mostly carrying pulpwood which was a mainstay of Hall operations, until the close of the 1925 season. We wish we could show you a photo of her taken during that season but we never have been able to discover one.

It was not until January of 1926 that both GLENLEDI and GLENROSS were formally registered in Canada, and both were enrolled at Midland, GLENLEDI under official number 148133, while