

COLLINGWOOD TRIPLETS

For a great many years, the shipyard at Collingwood, Ontario, was one of the most active on the Great Lakes, serving as a vital repair facility and building a large number of vessels for service both on the lakes and off. Many of those ships were to become famous (for various reasons) and a number of them have been featured in these pages over the years. This time around, we feature three sistership canal-sized steamers, now gone from the lake scene for almost half a century, that came from the Collingwood yard. They still were in service when your Editor was taking his early photographs around Toronto Harbour and along the Welland Canal, and they always were favourites of ours. Granted, Ye Ed. always was a great admirer of the workhorse canallers, but these three steamers were just a bit different from many of the others, and they readily attracted our attention.

These steamers were built for the George Hall Coal & Shipping Corporation, Montreal. Although this company shared the Hall name with several other venerable concerns, it was only formed in 1922 and by very early in 1925 it had come under the control of James Playfair, of Midland, Ontario. We never have seen anything definite in print about the exact date the company contracted with the Collingwood Shipbuilding Company Ltd. for the building of the three sistership canallers, other than that their upcoming construction was mentioned in the February 1925 issue of "Canadian Railway and Marine World". However, we tend to suspect that the orders were placed either very soon after Playfair attained control of the Hall firm or else soon before and in anticipation of his formal acquisition of control of the company.

If that were so, why were the ships not built at the Playfair-owned shipyard at Midland? The simple answer is that the Midland yard had as much as it could handle building a series of three large upper lake bulk carriers (GLENIFFER, GLENEAGLES and GLENMHOR) for Playfair's Great Lakes Transportation Company Ltd. and so another yard had to be chosen. The Collingwood facility had the capability of turning out the three canallers very quickly, and did just that. The steamers were Collingwood's Hulls 74, 75 and 76, and the fact that they were built so very speedily makes us wonder whether they might have been built to plans previously drawn up by the yard and therefore already on hand and ready to go when the Hall order was received.

The first mention of the new Hall canallers in "Canadian Railway and Marine World" came in its issue of April 1925, in which the fleet's appointments for that season were announced. Only one of the ships had then been assigned a name, ROBERT J. BUCK, and her master and chief engineer were to be R. Chatel and T. Aussant, respectively. The other two simply were listed as "New Steamship", the appointments for one of these being W. Liddell and U. Hamelin, while to the other were assigned B. A. Sullivan and B. Langdon.



ROBERT J. BUCK goes into the water at Collingwood.

The next report of the trio came in the monthly publication's issue of June 1925. "The first of the 3 canal size steamships ordered by this (Hall) company from Collingwood Shipbuilding Co., Collingwood, Ont., was launched there on May 10 (sic), and christened ROBERT J. BUCK, after the corporation's former President, who is still a director, the christening being performed by his wife.

"The 3 ships are being built to British Corporation classification, their principal dimensions being: - length overall, 259 ft. 7 in.; length between perpendiculars, 252 ft.; breadth, moulded, 43 ft.; depth moulded, 19 ft.; deadweight capacity on 14 ft. draft, 2,650 tons. Each ship will have a raised afterdeck and 6 hatches, 4 of which will be 12 x 30 ft., and two 16 x 30 ft.