CHAPTER 11

THE LOCAL SERVICES IN THE POST-WAR ERA

Clarke’s latest regional steamship operation was the Magdalen Islands Transportation Co Ltd, established in May 1945 to take over the subsidized service between Pictou, Souris, PEI, and the Magdalen Islands, where it served Havre-Aubert (Amherst) and Cap-aux-Meules (Grindstone), as well as Grande-Entrée. Longer 5-day sailings left Pictou on Thursdays and returned by way of Cap-aux-Meules and Havre-Aubert, and were interspersed with shorter 2-day Tuesday sailings that proceeded only as far as Cap-aux-Meules.

The Magdalen, which had already served the route for twenty-one years as the Lovat, could carry 30 first- and 12 second-class passengers and was staffed by a crew of twenty-nine. With dimensions of 182 feet overall by 29 feet, she had a deadweight capacity of 375 tons and 30,650 cubic feet of cargo space. This was about 90 per cent of the capacity of Clarke’s own North Gaspé which met the Magdalen each fortnight on her own voyages from Montreal and Quebec.
The *Magdalen* had been completed in June 1924 by Bow McLachlan & Co of Paisley, ten years after the *Sable I* had come from the same builders. The *Magdalen*’s coal-fired triple-expansion steam reciprocating machinery, by her builders, gave her a service speed of 9 knots on a consumption of 13½ tons of coal per day.

**Pictou as a Clarke Port**

While Clarke had continued to serve the Magdalen Islands from Montreal and Quebec throughout the war, it was the first time it had been back to Pictou since the beginning of the war. The *Gaspesia*, *New Northland* and *North Star* had all taken cruise passengers there and chartered canallers had brought cargo in the summer time. The war had then changed Pictou from a quiet pastoral town into an industrial shipbuilding centre. The Canadian Government shipyard had four slips and was managed by Foundation Maritime. Up to 600 women had worked in the yard and male and female workers together had produced twenty-five 4,700-tonners, more than half the ships of that type produced in Canada.

Although Pictou was now a base port for one of its local services, Clarke no longer served it directly from Montreal and Quebec, although one could connect via the Madgalen Islands, where one could transfer to or from the *North Gaspé*. Where Clarke had used Mackenzie Irish Macdonald Ltd as its port agent before the war, the Magdalen Islands Transportation Co now had its own office on Front Street.

**Coopérative de Transport Maritime & Aérien (CTMA)**

By buying the *Magdalen*, Clarke had been able to offer the Magdalen Islands not only its link with mainland Quebec, offered by the *North Gaspé*, but now also a link with the Maritime Provinces. With Clarke now having control of both its St Lawrence and Maritimes connections, not all islanders wanted to be in the hands of one carrier. In the eyes of some, the acquisition of the *Magdalen* had given Clarke a monopoly on scheduled sea transport services to and from their islands. As well as having their own security of supply, islanders wanted guaranteed access to the mainland in times when shipping supply was tight.

Just a month after Clarke bought the *Magdalen*, Coopérative de Transport Maritime & Aérien (CTMA) was formed in Cap-aux-Meules on May 28, 1944, with a capital of $400,000 to start a competitive service. In June 1945, a year after its formation, CTMA paid $85,000 for the 145-ton wooden motor schooner *Maid of Clare*, with which it started service between the Magdalen Islands and Halifax.

Nine months later, on March 7, 1946, "The Gazette" carried a Canadian
Press report from Douglastown, Gaspé, that announced another new shipping service: -

A regular freight and passenger shipping service between Montreal, Quebec, the North Shore of the St Lawrence River, points along the northern coast of the Gaspé peninsula and the Magdalen Islands will be inaugurated this summer by a recently formed shipping firm, it was learned tonight.

The route will be covered by two newly constructed steamers, the *Havre-aux-Maisons* and the *Havre-Aubert*, which will also be used in green codfish trade between the Magdalen Islands, Quebec and Montreal.

The 197-ton wooden goélettes *Havre-aux-Maisons* and the *Havre-Aubert* were actually motorships that were being built for CTMA at St-Laurent, Ile d’Orléans, in the same shipyard that had delivered the *Orléans* in 1946. They shared with the *Orléans* the same midship engine and superstructure. CTMA would now operate not only between the Magdalens and Halifax, competing with the *Magdalen*, but also between the islands and the Quebec mainland, competing with the *North Gaspé*.

**Refitting the "Magdalen"**

In the winter of 1946, nine months after buying the *Magdalen*, Clarke appointed 21-year-old Léo Chouinard as her first officer, under Capt Ivan Pelletier. Part of the ships transformation included replacing two small forward deck cranes with long derricks and adding a boom aft to handle vehicles and heavy pieces. Chouinard wrote about his new ship in "Capitaine Silence": -

In February, I caught the train at l’Islet for Pictou, Nova Scotia, where the *Magdalen* was in dry dock. An interim captain was superintending alterations to the ship, in her new capacity. A few days after I arrived, the captain left, leaving me in charge. The whole crew was lodged ashore as we had to clean the ship and replank the holds. This was a strenuous month.

Capt Pelletier arrived on April 10 and we sailed shortly thereafter. Spring was difficult as ice blocked the Northumberland Strait. With June, the weather improved and the ice dispersed. It was difficult to clean ship as I wanted as we were always cluttered with fish boxes, wooden lobster cages, etc. Not having stevedores, we had to handle everything ourselves. The officers stood twelve-hour watches. By sacrificing sleep, we got through. A difficult introduction for a perfectionist first officer.
This was an era when ships were the only link between the Magdalen Islands and the continent. We always had lots of passengers on board with us. I remember a young doctor from Quebec, Dr Naud. He came down to work in the hospital at Cap-aux-Meules for a little while; he remained for forty years! ...

One Sunday morning, we arrived at Pictou with a cargo of fresh lobsters that we transferred into railway cars. It was very hot. Fire broke out, engulfing the old shed built on pilings, near which the Magdalen was tied up. The flames were so intense that we feared we might lose our ship. We could even hear the paint blistering on the lifeboats from the terrific heat. For reasons of economy, our engineers had let down steam. Without power, we had to haul the ship to an adjacent quay. In the captains absence I ordered steam back up. As soon as we had enough pressure, we moved the ship out into deep water and went to anchor. For the port of Pictou, this had meant a two million dollar loss. The next day, we loaded our passengers from a different dock.

Not only for the citizens of Pictou, but also for the islanders, the Magdalen was now a Clarke ship. With the North Gaspé, as well as the Island Connector sailing to Newfoundland between 1946 and 1949, it might have seemed to them that Clarke controlled most of their shipping, but it was the best service they had ever received from one company.

In the winter of 1948, meanwhile, while the Magdalen Islands were cut off by winter ice, instead of laying up at Pictou, the Magdalen went "to the ice" for the Canada Newfoundland Sealing Co. There, together with the Gaspesia, she took part in the seal hunt in the Gulf of St Lawrence, delivering seal pelts to La Tabatière for processing by St Lawrence Sea Products. This was a one-season endeavour, however, that was not taken up again.

The "Magdalen's" Career

Otherwise, things remained pretty much as they had been for the Magdalen, in her usual service from Pictou, but with new owners and a new name. Fares were quoted separately for transport, berths and meals. Two classes of passenger were carried, with fares from Pictou or Souris to the Magdalens set at $9.40 first class and $6.50 second class. Meals were $3.50 a day first class and $2.25 a day second class, although for passenger convenience first class was later changed to $1.35 for breakfast and $2.15 for lunch and dinner (the same total) while all second-class meals went to $1.25. A berth, meanwhile, was at first $2.50 per night, later rising to $3.50.

For through passengers, such as there were, the Magdalen connected with the North Gaspé from Montreal and it was once again possible to sail with Clarke all the way Montreal to Prince Edward Island and Pictou, but only
by changing at the Magdalens from the North Gaspé's Friday arrival from Montreal.

For pleasure travellers, the Magdalene Islands Transportation Co also offered short cruises of up to five days from "approximately $30" first class for the 2-day summer cruise from Pictou to Souris, Havre-Aubert and Cap-aux-Meules, and "approximately $55" for a 5-day cruise to the same ports plus Grande-Entrée, to load lobsters, in the spring and autumn. The actual fare depended on how many meals were taken.

The 5-day cruises were almost as long as the North Gaspé's Gaspé coast cruises from Montreal and featured in the 1949 issue of Harian's "Travel Routes," a guide published in New York:

From Pictou via Souris (Prince Edward Island) to Amherst, Grindstone and Grand Entry on the Magdalen Islands (in Gulf of St Lawrence), returning via same ports to Souris, thence back to Amherst and Grindstone, returning from Grindstone via Amherst and Souris to Pictou.

The Magdalen's schedule was changed in the early 1950s, when Charlottetown replaced Souris as the Prince Edward Island port. As Charlottetown is on the south side of the island, this meant extra steaming compared to Souris, which, located on the eastern tip of the island, is much closer to the Magdalens. But Charlottetown was the island’s capital and a port that was well known to Clarke.

The Magdalen led more or less a charmed life and did not get into much trouble. On May 23, 1951, however, she did manage to put herself briefly aground at Ile d'Entrée while en route from Pictou to Havre-Aubert with ten passengers, but she was safely refloated the same evening.

In February 1958, the Magdalene Islands Transportation Co published some statistics. In the eight years from 1950, the Magdalen had burned 16,642 tons of Nova Scotia coal, enough to fill half a dozen or more canallers. She had steamed 158,992 miles, served 219,670 meals to crew and carried 33,097 passengers (who consumed 32,197 meals) and 88,914 tons of cargo. By this measure, she burned a ton of coal for every five tons of cargo and two passengers that were carried. For part of this time, her master was Jacques Chouinard, who was better known for his long association with the Novaport on the Montreal-St John’s run.

That March, before navigation opened, the icebreaker CGS N B McLean made a special voyage to the Magdalens, to transport fifty passengers who had been stranded by the closure of the Magdalen Islands airfield, where Maritime Central Airways usually carried the traffic.

The Magdalen operated a full season every year, from early April
through early December, for sixteen years, from 1945 until 1960. In the 1950s, she usually left Pictou for the Magdalens on Tuesday at 2 pm, then sailed to Charlottetown, which she left on Thursday at 6 pm for the islands again, returning to Pictou on Sunday. Passengers were also carried between the Magdalen Islands as schedules allowed, for moderate fares. Typically, the last sailing of the season to Grande-Entrée left in late November, for freight only. This would be followed by two or three more sailings from Pictou to Cap-aux-Meules and Havre-Aubert, for both passengers and cargo. These early December sailings usually left Pictou at midnight.

On July 6, 1959, in the Magdalen's second-last year of service, the Magdalen Islands Transportation Co lost everything it had except its safe, its ship and its bank account in another waterfront fire. The Magdalen was in port that day, loaded and ready to sail, but her crew assisted fire fighters where they could. A Canadian Press story reported the next day in an item entitled "Pictou Waterfront Hit - $4 Million Fire Damage": -

A heavy rain beat down on this town of 4,500 today, clearing the air of smoke from Monday's $4,000,000 waterfront fire. But while rain washed away debris, here and there a stubborn tongue of flame shot up from the highly combustible creosoted pilings of two burned piers. Firemen stood guard throughout the night to guard against further outbreaks.

The blaze apparently started in a transport department freight shed at the end of a 500-foot-long pier. Flames spread to adjacent wharves and buildings. Mayor Baillie set the loss at a "conservative" $4,000,000.

Destroyed were the two piers, the freight shed, the federal hydrographic office, three shipyard buildings owned by Ferguson Industries Limited, several small fishing boats and a barge. The ferry Prince Nova was heavily damaged.

Three men were badly burned trying to salvage equipment from the hydrographic office. Edward MacDonald, a local businessman, was reported in critical condition. William Pederson, of nearby Green Hill and 16-year-old William Martin of Pictou were less severely burned.

Black smoke that half-blinded firemen rose thousands of feet into the air. So dense was the smoke that the Prince Nova, moored at one of the wharves, was reported to have sunk after catching fire. The vessel was later found afloat.

The big blow was the loss of the berthing facilities at the height of the summer shipping season, through which is channeled freight to Prince Edward Island, the Magdalen Islands and Newfoundland.
The steamer *Magdalen*, owned by the Magdalen Islands Transportation Company, narrowly escaped the fate of the *Prince Nova*. Her crew managed to cast off and get the ship into the stream...

The fire was almost a duplicate of a 1946 outbreak that started in almost the same spot. Pictou's fire chief, Fred MacNeil, said he thought both caused about equal damage.

The *Magdalen* eventually departed, three hours behind schedule. The 451-ton *Prince Nova* (i), a former Great Lakes ferry, had been working for Northumberland Ferries Ltd since 1941, running between Caribou, near Pictou, and Wood Islands, Prince Edward Island. Laid up since being replaced by the 1,834-ton *Lord Selkirk* in 1958, she had been purchased by Stewart G MacDonald, president of Sydney Motors Ltd in early May but had to be written off as a total loss. Another MacDonald, Sydney-based shipowner W N MacDonald, who had briefly owned the *Farnorth* in the 1930s, was now also a director of Northumberland Ferries.

When the *Magdalen* arrived in Pictou on her very last voyage, on December 20, 1960, she had made seventy trips that year to Charlottetown and the Magdalen Islands, averaging six knots and burning 60 tons of coal per round voyage. One crew member, who had joined her when she was new in 1924, had spent thirty-seven years with her.

The old ship was sold in 1962, supposedly to be broken up at Pictou. But some reports say the remains of her wreck were not removed from a site on the Magdalen Islands until 1974, the original plans to break her up having apparently been abandoned. In 1961, Capt Roméo Bourgeois and most of the crew of the *Magdalen* moved over to the company's new ship, a twenty-three year old motorship, fourteen years younger than the *Magdalen*.

**The "North Gaspé" Comes to Pictou**

When the *North Gaspé* had entered service in 1938, replacing the *Gaspesia*, she had done so at the expense of the *Gaspesia*'s calls at Charlottetown and Pictou. These had been dropped in order to offer weekly service to Gaspé and a direct Montreal to the Magdalens service every second week. Now, however, the *North Gaspé* would be calling at both these ports quite regularly.

An obvious choice to replace the *Magdalen*, like her, the *North Gaspé* had been built to serve the islands. Being younger, streamlined and diesel-powered, she was a much more modern ship. Even if she had already seen more than two decades of service she was not an old-fashioned coal-burning steamship, and offered much better passenger accommodation. Although she no longer served the Gaspé coast, it was felt that there was no need to change her name as the ship was more than familiar to the islanders.
When she transferred to the Pictou-Magdalens service, the North Gaspé’s fares were about six per cent higher in first class and twelve per cent in second class but meal charges were unchanged except for second-class meals, which went from $1.25 to $1.35. With better accommodations, however, the berth charge went up over 40 per cent, from $3.50 to $5 a night. Second-class fares did not last long, as in her second season, 1962, they became tourist class.

The North Gaspé now left Pictou every Monday at 5 pm via Souris, for Havre-Aubert and Cap-aux-Meules. This replaced the Magdalen’s Tuesday sailing, which had been direct. She then left Souris on Wednesdays and Charlottetown on Thursdays. This replaced Magdalen’s Thursday departure from Charlottetown, although the schedule was soon changed again. The actual rotation differed over the years, but for all her time at Pictou the North Gaspé would sail at 5 pm on Monday to start her next rotation, usually returning to Pictou on Saturday.

The company began to experiment with its schedules in 1963. In that year, the North Gaspé introduced four trips a week in July and August, three in shoulder season and two in low season. When she did four trips her return to Pictou was delayed until Sunday. In 1964, she reinstated service to Grande-Entrée, which had been dropped when the Magdalen left the run, but cut back to three trips a week in high season and two in low season.

The North Gaspé also extended the usual Magdalen Islands season ending from about December 9 to about December 19, subject to ice, adding another week or two of operation. As with the Magdalen before her, these late season December voyages operated on approximately weekly intervals until the close of navigation.

"North Gaspé" Mini-Cruises

Clarke sought to take advantage of the higher quality accommodation in the North Gaspé, which had been used for so many years on "Vagabond Cruises" from Montreal. This it did by publishing a separate brochure for short cruises from Pictou and Charlottetown, which followed from the cruises that Clarke had sold in the Magdalen from the time it acquired her. The new brochure, headed "Enjoy a short cruise on the yacht-like m.v. North Gaspé," was printed in 8,500 copies and had this to say:

This splendid little cruise ship, with its gleaming white hull and chrome blue-banded funnel, looks like a miniature liner. Aboard you enjoy comfortable lounges and sightseeing decks, the delicious Clarke cuisine famous for two generations in Maritime waters, and a delightful informal atmosphere with congenial fellow travellers.
What a wonderful highlight of your holiday adventure is this cruise to the Magdalen Islands! Sailing past the pastoral beauties of the Prince Edward Island shore, you glide over calm historic waters to discover the extraordinarily green Magdalen Islands with their quaintly named "demoiselle" hills and emerald fields. You'll never forget the old-world streets of tiny ports, red roads, and amazing meadows greener than those of Ireland! Here is the last home of the Acadians whose speech and customs still linger from old Acadia.

You can plan your vacation to suit yourself by selecting your embarkation and arrival date in Pictou, NS, Charlottetown and Souris, PEI, and the Magdalen Islands from this ship schedule.

As opposed to an all-inclusive fare, as had been the case when she sailed from Montreal, cruise passengers on the North Gaspé now paid for berths and meals separately, as they had in the Magdalen. Nevertheless, she carried on, eventually becoming the last Clarke-owned ship of any kind to carry overnight cruise passengers.

"North Gaspé" Refit and Schedules

Five years after moving her to the Gulf, Clarke sent the North Gaspé to Ferguson Industries in Pictou for a refit, equipping her over the winter of 1966 with a larger hatch, a new crane on number one hold and additional refrigeration. The furniture in her main lounge was renewed at the same time.

After this, the schedule experimentation continued, with the number of high season sailings going back up to four a week in 1966, and then being raised to five by 1968. This was achieved by dropping Grande-Entrée except in the low season and delaying her arrival back at Pictou until Monday morning. The rotation continued to be a Monday departure from Pictou and a Wednesday one from Charlottetown, but then she made three weekend Souris-Cap-aux-Meules daytime sailings, on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. This eventually became the regular Magdalen Islands ferry route. Starting in 1966, she also ran three trips a week in low season.

In 1967, the Magdalen Islands Transportation Co opened an office in Charlottetown, taking over from Buntain Bell & Co Ltd, who had acted as agents. After several years of steady work from Pictou and Charlottetown, the in house magazine, "Clarke News," carried a report of her activities for a typical week in 1969: -

The North Gaspé on her present service caters to the many needs of our customers. From Pictou, NS, every Monday, we load express shipments, general cargo and passengers. Every Wednesday from Charlottetown we carry foodstuffs, fruits, vegetables and other
perishables in the reefer chambers. Later in the week, cars and passengers to and from Souris, PEI. The North Gaspé also serves as a tanker bringing fish oil in bulk to the mainland, where it is pumped into tank cars for onward movement by rail.

Our objective is to provide the best possible service to the Magdalen Islands and Capt Bourgeois and all his crew are making sure we will.

The nature of the cargoes moving to and from the islands had changed very little over the years, as the Magdalens were still dependent on their fisheries. But while this account mentioned fish oil, for some reason it did not mention the lobsters that had always been a big part of the cargo from the islands. By this time the annual subsidy paid to the Magdalen Islands Transportation Co by Ottawa was $389,900, where two years earlier it had been $278,000, an increase of 40 per cent over a relatively short period.

CTMA Takes From the "North Gaspé"

After ten full seasons, the North Gaspé was finally withdrawn, at the end of 1970, and sold to the North Star Shipping Co Ltd of Halifax, a company controlled by William J Sumarah, a former Magdalen Islands merchant. William and his brother George were involved in the sealing business in Halifax. Coming from the Magdalens, he was familiar with the ship he was buying, which he intended to add to his own fleet of sealers, now based at Dartmouth. North Star Shipping owned the 884-ton survey ship North Star VI and the slightly smaller and older Southern Star, once General Steam Navigations Fauvette. Another of his ships, the William S, had been Blue Peter's second Blue Peter II. Sumarah also had links with the Shaw Steamship Co, where he served as company secretary of its subsidiary Arctic Shipping Ltd.

Although Clarke made a proposal to use the modern 1,682-ton Swedish car ferry Absalon to replace of the North Gaspé, the new contract went to the Coopérative de Transport Maritime et Aérien. CTMA proposed the 2,356-ton Swedish-built car ferry Manic, acquired from Quebec owners under contract with the Canadian Government, to run between Souris and the Magdalens. As the service was interprovincial, the federal government awarded the contract.

The North Gaspé had served the Magdalen islands for thirty-three years, and the Magdalen for sixteen under Clarke ownership and thirty-seven years in all. Including early and late season voyages by Clarke ships to and from Clarke City, cruise calls by the New Northland in the 1930s and the cargo service by the Island Connector in the 1940s, Clarke had served the Magdalen Islands for close to half a century. But now it was the turn of CTMA.
The North Gaspé's last master, Capt Roméo Bourgeois, who had been master of the Magdalen before her, moved to Halifax to become port captain for Dart Containerline, one of Clarke's more recent enterprises. He remained ashore until about 1980, when he returned to sea once more on the Montreal-St John's run.

CTMAs 1,015-ton Madeleine (ii), which for a while took the name CTMA, and could carry twelve passengers, took up the North Gaspé's original run from Montreal to the Magdalens in 1970. She had replaced an earlier 539-ton Madeleine, a former Caribbean trader built by Canadian Vickers, which in 1962 had taken over from the Brion when she transferred to the Halifax route. In effect the North Gaspé had been replaced twice by CTMA, first on the Montreal run and now on the Magdalen Islands ferry service.

By 1972, the Manic proved too small for the peak season ferry service and ended up with long queues of intending travellers and their cars at both Souris and Cap-aux-Meules. A larger ship was not obtained, however, until April 1975, when CTMA took over the 4,245-ton French-built Lucy Maud Montgomery. This ship was transferred in from CN Marine's New Brunswick-Prince Edward Island ferry service. "The Globe & Mail" reported the change on June 5, 1975: -

The company that runs the ferry service between Souris, PEI, and Grindstone, in the Magdalen Islands has been provided with a larger ship by the Ministry of Transport.

The ministry has moved the 70-car Lucy Maud Montgomery to replace the 40-car Manic, which has been transferred to Northumberland Ferries Ltd of Charlottetown for use in its PEI-mainland route.

The main traffic to the Magdalen Islands is truck transport of necessities in, and outbound loads of fish and lobsters. On June 21, once-daily frequency will be supplemented by three extra sailings a week for the summer.

More and more tourists are reaching the remote Magdalen Islands, in the Gulf of St Lawrence, according to a spokesman for the ferry operator, Co-operative de Transport Maritime et Aérien.

The Lucy Maud Montgomery, named after the author of "Anne of Green Gables," would operate the Magdalens service under the management of CTMA for the next twenty-two years.

A Further Career for the "North Gaspé"

The North Gaspé spent much of her time with North Star Shipping laid up at Dartmouth, and was finally sold in 1972 to Metropolitan Touring of
Ecuador, an affiliate of Adventure Associates of Columbia, Missouri. Sailing from Halifax on July 11, she arrived at Guayaquil, Ecuador, on August 1.

Renamed *Iguana*, the *North Gaspé* was converted into a 76-passenger cruise ship with the addition of twenty new double cabins to her boat deck and an enlarged lounge on her upper deck. She began Galapagos Islands cruises for her new owners on December 11, 1972.

**The Lower St Lawrence Services**

At Rimouski, the services of the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co also underwent change. From the end of the war and throughout the 1950s, the fleet consisted of the three white-hulled pre-war motorships built in the late 1930s. Louis Garnier, in his "Dog Sled to Airplane," had written of these ships ten years later: -

Is it not interesting today for the section between Baie Comeau and Sept-Iles to see trim and seaworthy vessels, gleaming under their white paint, the *Rimouski*, the *Jean Brillant* and the *Matane*, crossing the river daily and giving the illusion of unimpeded commerce between the two shores.

This trio followed their usual routines, with minor changes. One was that the *Matane* added a call at Ile aux Oeufs between Baie-Trinité and Pentecôte. And in a scheduling trick for travellers from Matane, while the *Matane*'s Monday and Thursday trips went from Matane to Baie Comeau, Franquelin and Godbout only, passengers for points east of Godbout could transfer to the Rimouski-based *Jean Brillant* at Baie Comeau and proceed in her as far as Baie-Trinité, Pentecôte, Shelter Bay, Clarke City and Sept-Iles. The only discomfiting thing was that the Sept-Iles departure time for return voyages was 4 am, with the *Jean Brillant* sailing on Tuesdays and Fridays and the *Matane* on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Meanwhile, the *Rimouski* still made her shorter cross-river trips from Rimouski to Forestville, on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, and to Raguenseau on Tuesday and Friday. From Raguenseau, *Rimouski* passengers could travel to Baie Comeau by bus, making a connection possible on days when the *Jean Brillant* had no Rimouski departure because she was on her way to Sept-Iles. This meant that a Rimouski to Baie Comeau service could be offered every weekday. One American reporter, writing in "Steamboat Bill of Facts," later commented on these little ships: -

The most seaward crossings of the St Lawrence are made by the *Jean Brillant*, *Matane*and *Rimouski*, of La Compagnie de Transport du Bas St-Laurent. These are not so much ferries as seaworthy little passenger packets and supply ships.
One special event during this period was the 200th Anniversary of Tadoussac's little church, which took place over three days in August 1947. During the celebration the \textit{Jean Brillant}, operating together with the Tadoussac ferry \textit{Jacques Cartier}, offered special schedules to bring hundreds of people from both the south and north shores of the St Lawrence to Tadoussac for the occasion.

And just as on the North Shore service from Quebec, mails carried on the \textit{Jean Brillant} and \textit{Matane} continued to bear postmarks saying "Rimouski & Sept-Iles, Poste Fluviale" and "Matane & Sept-Iles, Poste Fluviale." A typical season's postal subsidy for the Lower St Lawrence service was about $45,000, the level paid in 1954. Thus did this trio spend their summers trading and their winters laid up at Quebec.

\textbf{Mini-Cruises from Rimouski}

By 1950, in the same way that the \textit{Magdalen} was offering short cruises to the Magdalen Islands, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co was now advertising "One and Two Day Cruises from Rimouski" in the "yacht-like motorships" \textit{Jean Brillant} and \textit{Rimouski}. The \textit{Jean Brillant} offered the 2-day overnight cruises, and the specially prepared cruise brochure announced: -

A real highlight of your vacation! Cross the St Lawrence from Rimouski on the splendid \textit{Jean Brillant} in miniature liner comfort. See the miracle pulp-and-paper city of Baie Comeau, cruise along picturesque shores, calling at five interesting ports of call - Franklin, Godbout, Trinity Bay, Pentecost, Shelter Bay - to Clarke City, situated in wild primitive grandeur; visit pretty Seven Islands with its amazing Indian Reservation. Here you touch the beginning of a pioneer trail, which, in a year or two, will open up the greatest iron field in North America.

Cruises were offered on the \textit{Jean Brillant}'s Monday and Thursday sailings, with fare set at $30 including meals and berth. The brochure also emphasised "ultra-modern comfort aboard ship, delightful state-rooms, smart lounges, excellent cuisine and service." Of course, the \textit{Jean Brillant} had briefly cruised from Miami to the Bahamas after the war, but the famous Clarke cuisine offered in these little ships was also a great attraction on the St Lawrence.

The \textit{Rimouski} took most of the day-cruise passengers, sailing over to Forestville at a fare of $13 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, staying from about Noon to 3 pm and returning the same evening. But the \textit{Jean Brillant} also took a few one-day passengers for $15 on her Wednesday sailings to Baie Comeau, where she stayed from about 1 pm to 4 pm. This meant two cruise departures from Rimouski every Wednesday.

Sailings left Rimouski at 9 am, and the \textit{Jean Brillant} was able to offer
"Deluxe accommodation ... at small additional cost." Even the day-cruises included both meals and berth, so cruise passengers were well looked after. On a day-long voyage of about twelve hours it was very handy indeed to have a cabin to retire to while enjoying the crossing of three or four hours in each direction on the wide expanse of the Lower St Lawrence, plus time ashore. It may have been a sign of the times that what would normally have been valuable passenger space was being sold for short cruises, but it was certainly a way of raising revenue on unused space.

The Rimouski Fire

Clarke ships on local routes had their share of fires at base ports after the war. On May 6, 1950, while the *Jean Brillant* was making an overnight passage from Baie Comeau to Rimouski under Capt Georges Chouinard, the radio brought news that a major fire was burning in Rimouski. The Price Brothers mill had caught fire and the *Jean Brillant*'s crew could see the fire burning as they approached. On arriving in port, the ship's crew volunteered and were assigned to protect the local cathedral. By the end of the night, about two hundred and thirty houses had burnt down and the fire had struck a hospital, two convents, the courthouse and the jail, razing a third of the town and leaving 2,000 people homeless. Also lost in the fire was l'Ecole de Marine de Rimouski, which later became l'Institut Maritime de Rimouski. It had to be completely rebuilt. Within days, Clarke ships were bringing in donated building materials from Montreal for the Salvation Army to rebuild the fire-ravaged town.

Later that summer, in order to raise money for fire relief and other local causes, the *Jean Brillant* also made a number of Sunday excursions from Rimouski to points such as Tadoussac, Baie Comeau, Forestville, Matane and the Bic Islands. The Tadoussac calls provided one of the very rare instances where Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co and Canada Steamship Lines vessels called at the same port. Canada Steamship Lines generally did not run east of the Saguenay, which was about sixty miles from the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's westerly limit at Forestville. Not long after the fire, in 1951, the company's gravel dock, where its freight sheds were located, was finally paved with three feet of asphalt.

Clarke's *North Coaster* also made the news on June 6, when, under command of Capt Georges Caron, she loaded the first waterborne shipment of aid from Montreal. Consisting of 50 tons of building supplies, food and clothing, this cargo, supplied courtesy of the Red Cross, was carried free of charge to Rimouski to help in rebuilding the town.

In August 1953, another fire, this time the worst forest fire on the North Shore in twenty-five years, struck Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper lands ten miles north of Forestville. The *Jean Brillant* and *Rimouski* stood by in case it was necessary to evacuate some of the local population, but instead, on
August 18, the *Rimouski* ended up taking 100 firefighters over to Forestville to help fight the blaze. The two fires, which burned over 165 acres, were suspected to have been caused by arsonists.

**In the Port of Baie Comeau**

Baie Comeau was the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's most important port in many ways, not least of which was the minority shareholding held in the Lower St Lawrence company by the Tribune Co, owners of the Quebec North Shore Paper Co.

While the *Rimouski* served Forestville, both the *Jean Brilliant* from Rimouski and the *Matane* from that port made frequent calls at Baie Comeau. Both ships were in port on Monday and Tuesday afternoons, the *Jean Brilliant* remaining for four hours while the *Matane* moved on elsewhere. Wednesday saw the *Jean Brilliant*, Thursday the *Matane*, Friday the *Jean Brilliant* and Saturday the *Matane* again.

Sidney Dean recounted an interesting exchange with these two Lower St Lawrence Transportation ships when he and his "mate" of a wife called at Baie Comeau in 1946. They were in the course of completing half a dozen St Lawrence voyages that he recorded in "All the Way by Water," published in 1954. The quest, recounted by Dean, was for ice for the icebox of their 30-foot cabin cruiser *Margot*:

Our most elusive quarry in Canadian waters, 75 pounds of nice square cakes of ice, at first seemed beyond reach. There was a new reason, though. So many residents, in this neck of the woods, have Frigidaires that the local iceman went out of business! But we got a refrigerator refill, thanks to the Mate's shameless wangling. First, she wheedled the obliging Clarke Line agent on the dock into helping her rob the icebox on the *Matane*. That was a hot afternoon - the only one we endured all that summer - and an hour later another Clarke boat, *Jean Brilliant*, docked. Unblushingly, the Mate asked for - and received - an even bigger piece of precious ice, with a cabin boy to carry it to the *Margot*. The dock superintendent caught her in the act of getting the treasure aboard. "I know the captain in the *Jean Brilliant*," she explained brightly.

While Lower St Lawrence company ships were in port every day except Sunday during the season, now is a good time to have a look at what else was going on in the port of Baie Comeau. Henry Lent gives us a picture of this in his book "From Trees to Paper," published in 1952, when he tells us of a tour he was given by Quebec North Shore Paper's Jack Lee:

Mr Lee says that he has arranged for us to leave for home on the ship which is sailing tonight with its cargo of newsprint for New York.
"They're loading her down at the wharf right now. I think she'll be sailing in about three hours. After you've packed your bags, I'll run you down to the wharf so we can watch the men finish loading, and I'll introduce you to the captain"...

The wharf is more than a mile from the paper mill and storage shed. A fine paved road has been built out to it, and a railroad track runs along beside the road all the way from the storage shed to the wharf. Halfway out to the wharf we pass a diesel locomotive with its train of five flatcars.

"The railroad track runs right into the storage shed," Mr Lee says. "An overhead crane in the shed lowers the rolls of newsprint onto the flatcars. The locomotive just keeps shuttling back and forth until the ship is loaded.

Now we can see the big ship ahead of us, tied up alongside the wharf. "She's a regular ocean freighter," our guide says. "About seven thousand tons." We park the car at the end of the wharf and walk over to the ship, just as the locomotive chugs alongside with its loaded flatcars. "It takes about thirty hours to load the ship," Mr Lee tells us. "The men work day and night until the job is finished."

The ship has three big cranes, operated by steam winches. Scarcely waiting for the flatcars to roll to a stop, the three cranes swing over the side of the ship. Quickly the men on the freight cars insert the special steel spindles by which the cranes hoist the big rolls of paper - and up they go, two rolls at a time.

In earlier days, when a ship was loading paper, the Jean Brillant or Matane might even tie up alongside the freighter if there was insufficient room at the wharf, and passengers went ashore across the freighter's decks. Eventually, by 1955, a new passenger and general cargo dock a little bit to the east of the paper loading dock accommodated both the Lower St Lawrence and the Clarke ships from Montreal and Quebec. And as Baie Comeau grew, cargoes of aluminum were added to the local exports in 1958, and grain in 1959, when an elevator was opened to take advantage of the large Great Lakes ships that could sail all the way down to Baie Comeau after the opening of the St Lawrence Seaway.

**The "Jean Brillant" in the 1950s**

In November 1953, the Jean Brillant was involved in another incident when she fouled a sunken dredge in the harbour at Rimouski while manoeuvring at night. The Brilliant was sufficiently damaged that she had to be towed to Quebec for repairs. The Rimouski substituted for her on the last
two voyages of the 1953 season, which finished on December 18.

The Sept-Iles newspaper "L'Avenir" commented on the 1954 season opening for the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co. Under date of April 4, it commented in a story headed "The Jean Brillant and Matane Begin Bi-Weekly Voyages Here": -

During our conversation with Mr Jules Ferland, who represents the Compagnie de Transport du Bas St-Laurent, we learned that two of his company's boats will be arriving weekly with mail, express, freight, in short with everything that the people of Sept-Iles require for their daily needs.

The Jean Brillant, under command of Capt Georges Chouinard, will make two trips per week from now until the end of the summer season, arriving in Sept-Iles on Tuesdays and Fridays. The Matane will arrive on Wednesdays and Saturdays of each week - she is captained by Joe Hovington...

Passengers are once more planning trips by boat now that old man winter is on his way out, and the airlines are changing their schedules accordingly.

Among the Jean Brillant's regular passengers were counted a young Brian Mulroney and his two sisters, as he travelled to school in Chatham, New Brunswick, and eventually to university in Antigonish, and his sisters to Alexandria, Ontario. All three would catch the Jean Brillant over to Rimouski to take the train to school at the beginning of term, the girls going west and Brian east. In 1955, meanwhile, after twenty years' service, the Jean Brillant had her entire boat deck renewed at Lauzon over the winter.

In 1957, Capt Gérard Legendre replaced Georges Chouinard as master of the Jean Brillant. Having originally served in the Manicouagan, he was quite familiar with this part of the river, although he had also moved back and forth at different times between the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co and Clarke's main line ships such as the North Coaster, North Pioneer, Novaport and Highliner.

Winter Extensions

An internal memorandum dated October 1, 1957, gives us some background as to how the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co began trying to extend its service at the end of the season: -

At the present time there is a service of six days per week between the South Shore ports of Matane and Rimouski and the North Shore ports from Baie Comeau to Sept-Iles.
Normally, these services operated to December 5th or 10th, but in 1955 an attempt was made to extend this service to December 31st giving about four trips per week during the latter part of December from Rimouski to the North Shore. Unfortunately, conditions caused this service to be terminated about December 19th. In the fall of 1956, this service was again carried out as late as possible and was terminated on December 21st.

During the remainder of the winter the residents of the North Shore had to rely on the service given from Pointe-au-Pic.

This was the start of a movement that would soon see more winter cargo sailings from Rimouski and eventually brought year-round ferry service to the Lower St Lawrence, although by other operators.

Chartered Tonnage

In addition to its own tonnage, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co chartered ships as required. Two good examples of this were the goélette Ivan C, built at nearby Bic in 1938, and Harney Brothers' small steel coaster St Yves, both of which worked from Rimouski.

The Ivan C had been built by her first owner, Gérard Côté, from whom Rimouski-based Valier Bouchard purchased her for $25,000. A typical goélette with a good carrying capacity, she was a handy ship for the company's purposes and a popular one. Unfortunately, she burned at Rimouski on December 8, 1958. With the loss of the Ivan C, the Lower Transportation Co sought a replacement and the St Yves, which had made nineteen North Shore voyages for Clarke in 1958, became a natural choice.

The St Yves had been used in the summer time on Clarke's Montreal - North Shore service, with winter sailings from Pointe-au-Pic or Rimouski. While she did not give up her winter work with Clarke, she now began to work increasingly for the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co in the summer months. Thus, in 1959 she made four winter voyages for Clarke from Rimouski to the North Shore, during February and March, and then transferred to the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co for its summer schedule.

The season of 1960 followed the same pattern as 1959, but thereafter, while the St Yves continued to work for the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, it made only occasional voyages for Clarke, usually winter voyages or late season runs.

The "Regina Polaris"
A third charter, the *Regina Polaris*, actually carried a few passengers as well. Mentioned in Ivan Brookes article as she had sailed by the *North Shore* when he was on the way to Sept-Iles in July 1955, the *Regina Polaris* had been launched at Sarnia, Ontario, in 1944 as the "Admiralty" Type "126-foot" (140-foot overall) wooden minesweeper *Fir Lake*. and completed at Sorel in 1947 as a Roman Catholic mission ship.

Her initial role had been as a supply ship, carrying up to 300 tons of cargo to outposts of the Hudson's Bay Co, for the Hudson Bay Vicariate of the Oblate Fathers. In this role, she had been equipped with accommodation for missionaries and voyaged out of both Montreal and Churchill. She made the news in September 1951 when, after suffering propeller damage, she had to be towed all the way back from Hudson Bay to Quebec by the CGS *C D Howe*. After that, she had been sold to a M Pinsonneault, who ran her as a supply ship between Gaspé and Port Menier on Anticosti.

By the time the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co chartered the *Regina Polaris* in 1955 she was owned by Gérard Côté. The Lower St Lawrence company had been looking for another ship with which to extend its own service beyond Sept-Iles to Havre-St-Pierre. But she was soon acquired by Valier Bouchard. As well as the *Ivan C*, Bouchard would later own the motorship *Bernier*, once Clarke's *Labrador*, after she left government service.

The *Regina Polaris* was interesting in that a steel superstructure had been added to her wooden hull. This superstructure was modern and, along with the new diesel engine that was installed at the same time, would end up being transferred to a new ship that would be built at Quebec in 1962.

Now the *Regina Polaris* sailed every Monday at 9 am on a longer voyage to Havre-St-Pierre and Thursdays and Saturdays at 9 am for Baie Comeau. The most interesting day of the week in Rimouski was now Monday. At 9 am every Monday morning a veritable flotilla sailed, with the *Jean Brillant* departing for Baie Comeau, the *Rimouski* for Forestville and the *Regina Polaris* for ports to Sept-Iles and Havre-St-Pierre.

**The 1958 Line-Up**

By 1958, the passenger line-up at Rimouski consisted of the three company ships and the chartered *Regina Polaris*.

The *Jean Brillant* ran the regular Rimouski-Baie Comeau ferry service at 9 am every Monday and Tuesday, and left at 9 am on Wednesdays and Fridays for Baie Comeau, Franquelin, Godbout, Baie-Trinité, Pentecôte, Shelter Bay and Sept-Iles, returning via Clarke City. Company brochures described her as having "4 De Luxe Cabins with private bath. 12 two-berth
chambrettes. Hot and cold running water in every cabin. Roomy smoking saloon. Wide deck space. Excellent cuisine." These were the same facilities that had been offered between Miami and Nassau during the war and that had evidently pleased the Duke of Windsor.

The Regina Polaris left Rimouski at 9 am on Mondays for Baie-Trinité, Pentecôte, Shelter Bay, Clarke City and Sept-Iles, then proceeded beyond to Rivière-au-Tonnerre, Mingan and Havre-St-Pierre before returning. She also operated the Rimouski-Baie Comeau ferry service at 9 am on Thursdays and Saturdays while the Jean Brillant was making the North Shore run to Sept-Iles.

The Rimouski operated a Rimouski-Forestville ferry service every morning at nine except Thursday, when she crossed at 7 am to Ragueneau, which by now was also the end of the line for the Charlevoix-Saguenay cargo service from Quebec. The brochure described the Rimouski and Matane with the words: - "Cosy forward lounge. Wide deck space. Excellent cuisine."

The Matane sailed from her namesake port at 10 am every Monday and Saturday for Baie Comeau, Franquelin, Godbout and Baie-Trinité. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, she proceeded the same way except that she also called at Pentecôte, Shelter Bay and Sept-Iles before returning via the same ports.

First and second-class passengers were carried on all services and inter-port fares varied. A berth cost from $3 up to $10, for single use of a de luxe cabin on the Jean Brillant, with a slight premium for longer voyages. Because the Regina Polaris was a chartered ship she operated on a slightly different basis, with the notice to "please ask Purser for price of meals and berths on Regina Polaris." Motor vehicles were also carried by reservation on all routes.

Lower St Lawrence Schedule Changes

In 1959, an extra Saturday voyage was added to the Matane's schedule, to Baie Comeau, Franquelin and Godbout only. The Regina Polaris meanwhile dropped her Saturday service on the Rimouski-Baie Comeau ferry.

In 1960, the Jean Brillant left the Rimouski-Baie Comeau ferry and began a three-times weekly schedule from Rimouski to Baie Comeau, Franquelin, Godbout, Baie-Trinité and Sept-Iles, leaving Rimouski on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. One of her passengers that autumn, Ben Burman, recorded his impressions in his book "It's A Big Continent," published the following year: -

In the morning I boarded the trim little steamer Jean Brillant, bound for the North Shore of the river and the Gulf into which it emptied.
"You are going to a desolate land," said the Frenchman on the dock. "In a few months it will be nothing but wind and ice. We call it the Land of Cain." The whistle blew and the visitors hurried ashore. The boat began to move from the wharf. Until past noon we voyaged across the blue water.

Meanwhile, the Regina Polaris dropped her wayport schedule in favour of direct sailings every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday to Forestville, every Tuesday to Baie Comeau, and every Thursday to Sept-Iles.

The Matane then took up Regina Polaris's Rimouski-Havre-St-Pierre service via Sept-Iles and wayports, with a sailing every Sunday. Her service from Matane was reduced from four to two sailings a week, on Wednesdays and Fridays to Baie-Trinité, Pentecôte and Sept-Iles.

In exchange, the Rimouski was transferred from Rimouski to Matane to run a ferry service to Godbout, returning via Franquelin and Baie Comeau. This service operated every day except Sunday. The Rimouski was sometimes replaced in this service by the 199-ton Ungava, a former "Admiralty" Type minesweeper owned by affiliate Ungava Transports Ltée.

In that same year, the Geo T Davie Transportation Co Ltd had been offering its 420-ton former "Saint" class salvage tug Ocean Eagle for sale, and Clarke took a look at converting her to a ferry for the 28-mile Matane-Godbout run. They calculated that with a crew of fifteen, including chief and second cook, mess boy and two waiters, she could do two round trips a day, with a total time of 8 hours 40 minutes per round voyage and two hours in port at each end. As they looked at operating her as a coaster as well, it seems they were just seeing what they might be able to do with her but the Rimouski ended up on the route that season. Nonetheless, it was an early investigation of what could be done on this route, even if it was with a lift-on lift-off ship.

1961 Service Reductions

With the opening of Highway 15 (later restyled 138) between Quebec and Sept-Iles in October 1960, changes were about to arrive to the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co. While Charlevoix-Saguenay could build new ferries, the requirement for the Lower St Lawrence ships would diminish as more traffic found its way over the Saguenay crossing and up the North Shore highway. Both the Federal and Quebec Governments reduced their subsidies quite significantly when the highway arrived, especially as it was Quebec that had funded the highway's completion.

Clarke also bought out the minority shareholders, taking over full ownership of the company. When the time came, this allowed it to use the Jean Brillant to back up its own services from Montreal and Quebec, without
having to refer to minority shareholders. Once the highway had arrived, in any case, the Quebec North Shore Paper Co no longer needed to keep its interest.

The Lower St Lawrence passenger schedule for 1961 was reduced to three ships. The Jean Brllant carried on her Rimouski-Sept-Iles schedule, while the Matane continued in the Rimouski-Havre-St-Pierre service. The Matane then took a Rimouski-Forestville ferry crossing every Saturday, while the Ungava performed this service on Wednesdays.

The Matane carried on the Matane-Sept-Iles schedule, but added a ferry crossing to Forestville every Wednesday, while the Ungava ran the Matane-Godbout service every day except Sunday and Wednesday.

The Ungava had now been transferred to the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co from Ungava Transports. Her original route between Ste-Anne-des-Monts and Sept-Iles having been taken up by the larger 837-ton Gaspésien, this freed her up for service elsewhere. While these ships will be discussed elsewhere, suffice it so say that the Ungava, although a smaller vessel than either the Rimouski or Matane, could still handle about 50 passengers and three cars.

The "Rimouski" Serves the Bahamas

The Rimouski had been laid up at the end of the 1960 season, with the November 18 issue of the "Journal de La Côte-Nord" announcing the news under the heading "Rimouski Suspends Operation." The arrival of the North Shore highway meant that her services were no longer required. She was not unemployed for long however. For reasons unknown now, Capt Henri Piuze, owner of the goélette Jean-Eudes, became part owner of the Rimouski for eight days in 1961 during her sale to new owners.

The handsome little ship was sold to the Pomeroy Shipping Co Ltd of Nassau and renamed Bahama Venture, but still registered in Montreal. Under the ownership of a local Floridian, she went into service in territory that had been familiar to a number of Clarke ships, particularly the New Northland, Jean Brllant, North Gaspé and North Shore. At first, she carried just cargo between Palm Beach, Florida, and the Bahamas but soon her new owner had decided to exploit her potential to carry a few passengers as well.

It had been a dozen years since the North Shore had worked from West Palm Beach to Nassau and Havana for West India Fruit but there was still a demand for passenger space. The "Palm Beach Post" reported the beginning of this service on February 23, 1962, under the heading "Ship Shaped For Bahama Passengers": -

The Bahama Venture, a 118-foot ship brought here from Canada, is
being readied for passenger service to the Bahama Islands. John C Pomeroy, business manager, said he would have the ship in condition to sale some time next Wednesday.

He was hopeful the 348-ton vessel might have a full complement of passengers (12) for the run. The manager said the first stop would be Nassau, followed by Governor's Harbour and other points, with the return to the Port of Palm Beach on Monday.

The Bahama Venture was brought here at the first of the year and has been operating a cargo service to the islands. Up until now, Pomeroy has made no great effort to organize passenger service. But a crew now is busy cleaning and painting the ship to get ready for passengers.

Five days later, on February 28, the same newspaper reported on her first passenger voyage, under the heading "Venture Loaded": -

Twice as many passengers as the twelve she can accommodate comfortably could have been booked on the Bahama Venture for her trip to the Bahamas Wednesday night, according to John C Pomeroy, the ship's business manager.

The ship, recently repainted and decorated for the start of passenger service, also can carry 150 tons of cargo. Sailing from the Port of Palm Beach, she will stop first at Nassau, then at several other island ports before returning Monday.

Within a few months, the Bahama Venture's cargo capacity had been significantly increased and she had also started trading to Antigua, according to a report under "Port of Palm Beach" that appeared in the September 9 "Palm Beach Post": -

Over at Slip No 2, the Bahama Venture is thriving in its tramp steamer operations. Capt Jack Van Erven and John C Pomeroy, business manager, say things are looking very rosy indeed for their freight and passenger service.

The ship, which can berth 12 passengers, nearly always is booked solidly with passengers out for a pleasure cruise. Business fell off in the Bahamas early in the summer, Pomeroy said, and the ship made several trips to Antigua BWI, delivering 200 tons of concrete building blocks and other materials.

"But the Bahama trade is picking up again," Pomeroy said, "Persons wanting to make the trip with us should book passage as far in advance as possible."

The ship can haul 350 tons of cargo, and Pomeroy said some
passengers have taken cars with them to the Bahamas. "On one trip we had three cars and two trucks," he said.

The ship right now is on a voyage to Antigua. On her last return trip from there, she carried an unusual cargo as far as Nassau - 12 race horses. "The horses were stranded at Antigua for more than a year waiting for a ship able to haul them away," Pomeroy said.

This was not the first time this ship had handled horses of course, as she had done so in the St Lawrence when she took on gangs headed for the lumber camps.

In April 1963, the ship was sued by a woman who claimed to have been hit on the head by a falling porthole cover, and a couple of years later the Bahama Venture found a different type of employment, this time working for treasure hunters. The "Palm Beach Post" reported on this on October 17, 1964, under the heading "$3 Million In Gold Lures These Divers":

The eastern end of Pier 2 at the Port of Palm Beach was strewn with pipes, hoses, compressors, underwater metal detectors, air tanks, spear-guns, empty plastic bleach bottles, outboard motors, a two-man open submarine, a large metal raft, a glass-bottom boat and other paraphernalia.

Coastguardsmen were standing alongside the 110-foot freighter, the Bahama Venture, giving a sight inspection to her hull and superstructure. US Customs had looked over the gear. Huge mooring lines strained as the vessel's engines throbbed away in pre-sailing tests.

The 16 men and four young women scrubbing down equipment and moving supplies aboard were in a hurry Friday afternoon. At the end of their trip, destination 107 miles southwest of Jamaica in the warm emerald Caribbean waters, lay the end of their rainbow - $3 million in Spanish gold.

Sixteen men, many of them divers, others experts in the history of the Spanish galleon, the Genovesa, that went down south of Jamaica in 1730 with some 300 persons and gold now valued at $3 million aboard, are taking part in the first major expedition of Expedition Unlimited Inc.

The Miami firm, backed financially by F Kirk Johnson Jr of Fort Worth, Tex, has been working for 18 months to get ready for the sailing, according to Sam Tucker, a leader in the expedition.

The Bahama Venture was to sail last night out of the Port of Palm Beach. It will reach the treasure site Oct 23 and will remain there for
37 days.

The treasure ship did not get away after all that Friday night but sailed at noon on Saturday. The idea was to find the wreck and then dredge the sand from the sea bottom to search for gold and silver. Kirk Johnson Jr, well known as a big game hunter, had also spent a fortune searching for the yeti, the so-called abominable snowman of Tibet, but ultimately this mission was unsuccessful. The search for the 54-gun galleon *Genovesa*, which had been en route from Cartagena to Havana when she went down on the Pedro Banks on September 4, 1730, still goes on today, but her cargo is now said to be worth more like $600 million.

In 1965, the *Bahama Venture* passed to General Dynamics' Electric Boat Division, who placed her into service that June as the survey ship *Sea Surveyor*, now registered at New London, Connecticut. After a refit, the little ship had a range of 4,000 miles and was equipped with a new 12-ton crane and a two-man deep-diving research submarine. Her master was Capt Adrian Lane of Groton, Connecticut, a former Wood's Hole skipper who had been the first master of the Mystic Seaport training schooner *Brilliant*. After thirty years afloat, and three and a half with General Dynamics, however, the *Sea Surveyor* would finally meet her end.

After sailing from Groton on January 5, 1969, she sank quite suddenly in the small hours of January 7, about half an hour after her crew heard a loud metallic crash, about 275 miles southeast of New York. Reported missing after failing to report on her way to rendez-vous with the US Navy nuclear attack submarine *Greenling*, her crew of twelve, three of whom came from the US Navy's Underwater Sound Laboratory, spent 26 hours in an inflatable life raft in the open ocean. Rescued by the 41,809-ton Norwegian bulk carrier *Essi Kristine*, they were taken on to Rotterdam. No identifiable cause has ever been found for the loss of the *Sea Surveyor*, but the survival of her crew was put down to the good seamanship of her master.

**The "Matane" Goes Too**

When the *Matane* was laid up at the end of the 1961 season, the "Journal de La Côte-Nord" in its November 29 issue carried the even more dramatic headline "The *Matane* finished: fewer Clarke boats in the region." Her federal subsidy having been withdrawn, she followed the *Rimouski* onto the sales lists but would remain laid up for longer.

Finally, in early 1964, the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Company of Virginia bought the ship, renaming her *Prospector* for a new venture into the field of oceanographic research. The *New York Times* announced the details of her new service in its May 30, 1964, edition:

The Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, one of the
country's largest shipbuilding establishments, sailed this week into a new area of diversification - oceanography.

The company's 152-foot motor ship Prospector headed out to sea Tuesday for an oceanographic voyage of about a year's duration. After a call at Miami, she will sail into the Pacific and will be based at Honolulu.

A spokesman said that the Prospector would be used to further the company's knowledge in marine acoustics, oceanography and ocean bottom topography and materials. The company hopes the study will yield information to improve its products and extend its diversification program.

Previously the shipyard has gone into such other areas as production of hydraulic turbines, rocket motor cases, paper machinery and gyrostabilizers, processing iron ore and making refining equipment.

The oceanographic venture is understood to represent an investment of several hundred thousand dollars.

The vessel is the former Matane of La Compagnie du Bas St-Laurent, a 470-gross-ton, 11-knot motorship built in 1938. While in service for the Canadian company, she operated as a cargo-passenger craft on the lower St Lawrence between Rimouski and Sept-Iles.

She was acquired by Newport News earlier this year and was equipped with radar, loran, sonar, underwater television, underwater cameras, high-speed winches and air conditioning.

The Prospector is manned by a total crew of 14, all shipyard employees, headed by Capt George Bennett.

Thus did the Matane enter a new career. By February 12, 1965, she had made it as far south as Auckland, New Zealand, where she was reported taking on stores and sheltering from a hurricane in Fiji. This was about as far south as any Clarke ship had made it from the St Lawrence, especially one as small as the Matane. Later owned by Deepsea Ventures Inc of Gloucester Point, Virginia, she would see continued service into the 1980s, operating out of San Diego. Deepsea Ventures, the ocean mining subsidiary of Tenneco, itself later became part of Ocean Mining Associates (OMA).

The Matanes last master in the St Lawrence was Capt Joseph Hovington, who had commanded her since 1938. With her sale, Capt Hovington left the company to supervise the construction in Scotland of the new 1,417-ton Matane-Godbout ferry N A Comeau, of which he became first master. Her alternate master was Capt Henri Piuze, late of the Jean-Eudes and another former Lower St Lawrence company employee.
The "Jean Brillant" to Havre-St-Pierre and Natashquan

The Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's 1962 schedule was now left to just the Jean Brillant and Ungava, and the chartered St Yves. With the Matane having been withdrawn because of the cessation of the federal subsidy, a revised schedule appeared in the Sept-Iles newspaper "L'Avenir" on May 10, 1962:

Express Passenger, Refrigerated and General Cargo Service

m.v. Jean Brillant from Rimouski every Monday to Baie Comeau, Seven Islands and intermediate ports to Havre-St-Pierre, and every Thursday from Rimouski to the same ports as far as Natashquan.

m.v. Ungava daily except Sunday from Matane to Baie Comeau.

m.v. St Yves twice weekly from Rimouski to North Shore ports.

To make up for a reduction in Clarke's passenger capacity from Montreal with the withdrawal of the North Shore in 1961, the Jean Brillant extended her sailings to Havre-St-Pierre and Natashquan. She would now offer only two sailings a week from Rimouski, as opposed to the three or even four that she had operated in the past, but these would now sail beyond Sept-Iles. The Monday sailing saw her leave Rimouski for Sept-Iles, Rivière-au-Tonnerre, Mingan and Havre-St-Pierre, and Thursday for the same ports plus Baie-Johan-Beetz and Natashquan.

Natashquan was new to both the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co and the Jean Brillant, and had previously been served only by Clarke from Montreal. Havre-St-Pierre, on then other hand, was already served by the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, with the Matane's weekly sailings from Rimouski. The Jean Brillant's new twice-weekly service to Havre-St-Pierre doubled frequency to that port, thus replacing some of the capacity that had been lost with the withdrawal of the North Shore. As the North Shore highway encroached upon passenger service from Montreal and Quebec, Rimouski was becoming increasingly more important as a staging point for passengers destined for points on the Lower North Shore that still had no highway link to the outside world.

Meanwhile, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co services from Matane were now assigned to the Ungava, which operated a daily ferry service, except Sundays, to Godbout, Franquelin and Baie Comeau. But this would also be the Ungavas last season.

The Highway Takes Over
For three years in a row, with the highway carrying increasing traffic to the North Shore, the Lower St Lawrence company had had to retire another ship, starting with the *Rimouski* in 1960, then the *Matane* in 1961 and now the *Ungava* in 1962.

Even though the road was not paved all the way, the through route to Sept-Iles was now taking up much of the trade from Quebec and beyond. On April 19, 1963, a travel piece in the "Christian Science Monitor" outlined conditions on the new North Shore route between Quebec and Sept-Iles:

If a motorist is looking for a trip "off the beaten path," he might get the latest map of the Canadian province of Quebec and find "Sept-Iles" - or Seven Islands. The highway map of a year or more ago probably won't show a road to this town, which is situated as far east as a motorist can drive before reaching Labrador. He just can't drive his car to Labrador as there is no road going there now - but, perhaps in the future!

The motorist can drive all the way from Quebec City to this most distant point on the north side of the St Lawrence. Actually, the road extends for nearly 425 miles to the quaint French village of Moisie, some 14 to 16 miles beyond Seven Islands ("Sept-Iles" in French)...

With the highway now stretching nearly 425 miles down (northeastward) the St Lawrence from Quebec, the town of Baie Comeau, about 260 miles from Quebec City, is a good stopping place after an easy day's motoring...

The motorist, of course, will want to know how good - or bad - the road is from Quebec City eastward along the north shore of the St Lawrence.

From the city of Quebec to the ferry across the Saguenay River at Tadoussac, 138 miles - the road is mostly paved. Good time can be made ...

From Tadoussac to Baie Comeau, 125 miles - over half of the road is paved - the rest is gravel (and it can be dusty).

From Baie Comeau to Seven Island, 145 miles - much of the highway is gravel. Most of it is fairly good, but there are some unexpected holes in the road. The road is constantly being improved - and it is now paved for about the last 60 miles into Seven Islands.

By 1963, only the *Jean Brillant* was still operating in the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's passenger service, serving areas that the highway had not yet reached, carrying on the same Rimouski-Havre-St-Pierre
and Rimouski-Natashquan services that she had introduced the year previous.

This left just one other ship, the little St Yves, to carry on in the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co cargo trade between Rimouski and the North Shore. The remaining subsidy for this service, $161,500 a year from Ottawa, with a smaller contribution from Quebec, would be paid until 1964, but then it too would end.

**The "Copaco"**

Another post-war contemporary of the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, the 121-ton wooden coaster *Copaco*, owned and commanded by Capt Louis Cormier of Havre-St-Pierre, was also withdrawn about this time, ending a career of some twenty years. Clarke had occasionally chartered the *Copaco*, which had taken its name from the Consolidated Paper Corp, which had built her.

Cormier was well known to Clarke. He had sailed with them for ten years before the war, before leaving to join the Royal Canadian Navy. After the war, he bought the *Copaco* from the Anticosti Shipping Co and began service in 1946 between South Shore ports and the Lower North Shore. More recently, he had operated mainly between Sept-Iles and Natashquan, with the occasional voyage by inducement to Blanc-Sablon.

After twenty years in command of the *Copaco*, and one final season using Agence Maritime subsidiary Maritime Terminals Inc as his Sept-Iles agent, Cormier decided to sell his ship in 1966 and another coaster disappeared from the scene.

**Ungava Transports and the "Ungava"**

Ungava Transports was another local company in which Clarke became involved. Founded at Cap Chat by Capt Edgar Jourdain as Ungava Transport Inc, the company had begun its cross-river operation in 1949 between Ste-Anne-des-Monts on the Gaspé coast and the North Shore at Sept-Iles. At first it used Jourdain's *Sept-Iles Trader*, built at Cap Chat in 1935, but she was sold at the end of 1951 and replaced by the 199-ton *Ungava*, a ship that could also carry passengers. Jourdain, who was also now involved with the Gaspé Construction Co and Ungava Trading Inc, was the president of Ungava Transports, a position he would hold for fifteen years. Clarke meanwhile took a small interest in his company.

The *Ungava* was an "Admiralty" Type minesweeper, completed by Herd & MacKenzie Ltd at Buckie, Scotland, in 1942 as the Royal Navy's *MS.192*. She measured 119 feet overall by 23 feet, and when acquired in 1952 had
been fitted with new General Motors diesels giving a speed of 11 knots. Carrying 50 passengers and up to 300 tons of cargo, she operated a daily service, taking about six hours in each direction.

Although she had been built in Scotland, the MS.192 had found her way into the Norwegian Navy, and had a short commission there. She had then been acquired by private owners and gone to Malmo, Sweden, in 1949, where, named Parnu, after the Estonian town, she took on board 154 Estonian refugees, 49 children among them, for a daring Transatlantic voyage to Canada. With so many passengers in such a small ship it must have been uncomfortable, but she brought these people to a new life when she arrived in Halifax on August 2, 1949. Nineteen months later, on March 14, 1951, she departed Halifax for Lunenburg to be rebuilt as the passenger and cargo ship Ungava for Capt Edgar Jourdain.

Back on the St Lawrence, a dispute had continued to brew in the early 1950s about the ideal route for a cross-river ferry service to serve the new industrial area of Sept-Iles. In 1955, the federal Minister of Transport, George Marler, intervened to suggest that Clarke and Capt Jourdain should pool their resources to provide an improved service on the route from Ste-Anne-des-Monts.

Ste-Anne-des-Monts was well known to Clarke. Until 1937, it had been the first port of call after Quebec on cruises of the New Northland and the Gaspesia. The New Northland had started to call at Mont-Louis instead in 1938, but Ste-Anne-des-Monts gained the benefit of a regular weekly service by the brand-new North Gaspé, a service that had now been in place for seventeen years.

In the autumn of 1958, the Ungava made the news in a story in "L'Avenir" in Sept-Iles. Dated October 13, it did not appear until Friday the 16th: -

The m.v. Ungava, running a ferry service between Ste-Anne-des-Monts and Sept-Iles, was unable to dock at Ste Anne on Sunday morning due to the high wind and rough sea. The vessel returned to the North Shore and put in at Trinity Ba.

After leaving Sept-Iles as usual at eleven o'clock on Saturday night, the Ungava reached Ste-Anne-des-Monts about 6:00 am Sunday but found it impossible to tie up at the wharf. As the weather was too rough to remain at sea, the small vessel crossed over to Trinity Bay where it spent the day and departed around four on Sunday afternoon, reaching Ste-Anne-des-Monts in the early evening.

The vessel was in no way disabled and the passengers withstood the lengthy voyage in good condition. The Ungava is back to its regular schedule.
Once Clarke became involved, Ungava Transport Inc was reorganized as Ungava Transports Ltée, still operating the Ungava and with Jourdain as president, but with Clarke now holding majority control. Edgar's son Claude was also actively engaged.

**Early Plans for a Cross-River Car Ferry**

Being involved with both the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co and Ungava Transports, Clarke took an active interest in potential new ferry services in the St Lawrence below Tadoussac. In a speech to the Baie Comeau Chamber of Commerce on December 4, 1957, for example, Stanley Clarke had outlined plans for a new ship for the cross-river services, which was indicative of the company's thinking on these matters:

The Lower St Lawrence Transportation Company is now studying the problems involved in placing an automobile and passenger car ferry in service between Rimouski and Baie Comeau, and possibly Forestville. In this regard, we are asking the co-operation of the Chambers of Commerce of the region, first of all in developing estimates of the traffic requirements and also in pressing demands for suitable wharf facilities at Rimouski, Baie Comeau and Forestville for the establishment of the necessary service. Should the wharf facilities in the Rimouski area be constructed at a suitable winter location, such as Pointe au Père, there is no reason why this future vessel should not be able to give an all-year round transportation service and it is certainly the intention of the company to build such a vessel for winter navigation.

Although reported in the local press the following April, nothing ever came of this idea, although it was obvious that with a new highway being built along the North Shore, more vehicle capacity would soon be needed in the cross-river services. This would soon develop into a sort of "War of the Ferries."

**The "Gaspésien" at Sept-Iles**

With the impending completion of this North Shore highway, several groups wanted to open a car ferry service across the Lower St Lawrence. The first actually to do so was Ungava Transports, which acquired a new steel-hulled vessel, the 829-ton Roc, a former fleet air arm lighter and coastal aircraft transport built for the Royal Navy in 1945 by the Blyth Dry Dock & Shipbuilding Co Ltd. Brought to Canada by Capt Raymond Duvals North Shipping & Transportation Ltd in 1959, she made one voyage from Quebec to Forestville for Clarke on June 29, before being delivered to Ungava Transports and renamed Gaspésien.
The plan for the new ship was first revealed in "L'Avenir" on March 5, in a story that was datelined Sept-Iles, February 24, 1959. Headed "Four Hour Ferry Service To South Shore Begins In July," it announced the new ship: -

Mr Claude Jourdain of the Ungava Transport and the Ungava Trading Company announced last night that a new ferry service would commence from Sept-Iles this summer.

He said a new boat was being purchased to replace the m.v. Ungava on the run between Sept-Iles and Ste-Anne-des-Monts...

Speaking before members of the city council and the Chamber of Commerce, Mr Jourdain described the new ferry as a boat "180 feet long with a beam of 30 feet. It will have 25 double cabins, a dining salon and a bar. The boat will be capable of handling 18 automobiles at a time plus 500 tons of freight..."

Mr Jourdain said that last year the little m.v. Ungava brought no less than 1,500 tourists to Sept-Iles. "We did this without advertising of any kind. We feel we can easily build our tourist traffic until it becomes of major importance economically."

With dimensions of 173 feet overall by 30 feet, and fitted with a diesel engine by Crossley Brothers Ltd of Manchester, the Gaspésien was converted into an 837-ton car ferry to carry passengers and many more automobiles than the Ungava, which she replaced. Company literature introduced the new ferry as follows: -

Greatly increased facilities for carrying 100 passengers is a feature of the newly-designed m.v. Gaspésien. There is also space for 18 automobiles, instead of three as formerly. A new cafeteria offers excellent catering and cuisine. The main lounge is fitted with aircraft-type reclining seats, and passengers' day rooms and wash room have also been equipped for greater comfort and convenience. The tariff is based on tourist class only, to meet popular demand.

The Gaspésiens open tourist class replaced the old first- and second-class system that had been used on the Ungava. Although the initial plans had been to run the Ungava between Sept-Iles and Havre-St-Pierre, she was transferred in 1960 to the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co.

Whilst a significant advance on the Ungava, the Gaspésien was still a lift on-lift off type ship when compared to the drive-on ferries at Rivière-du-Loup and Tadoussac. A large boom that in an earlier existence had been used to lift aircraft was now used to lift automobiles on and off on either side of the river, but it saved the cost of having to install drive-on ramps on both
sides. While the *Gaspésien*’s car capacity was given as 18 in 1960, this was upped to 35 in 1961. Ungava Transports had been able to double the *Gaspésiens* automobile capacity by making better use of the cargo capacity, which was also utilised for a freight service to Sept-Iles.

The *Gaspésien* sailed every day except Sunday on a crossing that lasted six hours, leaving Ste-Anne-des-Monts at noon and arriving at Sept-Iles at 6 pm. Because there were no ramps, either on the ship or ashore, it took time to lift her traffic of cars on and off. A turn-around time of five and a half hours meant that she didn’t leave Sept-Iles again until 11:30 pm, on a night crossing to Ste-Anne-des-Monts, where she would arrive at 5:30 am. Fares were originally $8.50 one-way or $15.30 return and $8.50 for a stateroom, while children paid half fare, but by 1962 had been reduced to $6 per adult and $3 for children, while the stateroom charge remained $8.50.

The same 1963 article in the "Christian Science Monitor" that had reported on the new North Shore highway to Sept-Iles also mentioned the *Gaspésien*'s cross-river ferry service: -

To avoid retracing 400 miles over the same highway, the motorist might wish to vary this route by using the ferry which operates a round trip each day except Sunday from Seven Islands on the north shore to Ste-Anne-des-Monts on the south shore. Then the traveler can go either west or east around the famous Gaspé peninsula.

The ferry cost for the car each way is $12 - for a small car it is $10. There is also a $1 wharf charge for the car. Passenger fare is $6 each way. A stateroom for two people costs $8.50 - not needed for the day trip. Comfortable airplane type seats are used by those who don't take a stateroom. The crossing each way takes six hours - the St Lawrence is approximately 75 miles wide at this point.

The ferry leaves Seven Islands at 11:30 each evening (except Sundays, when it doesn't operate). From the south shore it leaves Ste-Anne-des-Monts at noon. Meals are served aboard from a counter in the lounge...

The $8.50 staterooms are not deluxe by any means. The bunks are narrow and the sheet and blanket more narrow. However, as there are only four or five staterooms on board, it would be well to make reservations for the ferry trip.

The return via the south shore was similar to what had been done earlier at the Rivière-du-Loup crossing, but travelling in the *Gaspésien* involved an overnight trip from Sept-Iles and then a wait for the car to be unloaded on the other side, rather than just driving off.

The *Gaspésien* would last for seven seasons in all, until 1965. That
August, her crew, although agreeing to working hours and other conditions, had now taken on representation by the Seafarers International Union instead of the United Mine Workers, and held out for the same hourly wage that had just been agreed in an SIU contract with the much newer ferry *N A Comeau* between Matane and Godbout.

Despite a $50,000 annual subsidy, Ungava Transports could no longer operate competitively and it decided to close down the service on November 30. The ship was returned to North Shipping & Transportation, who had brought her to Canada in the first place, and she was laid up at Quebec pending further employment.

Soon, the *Gaspésien* would find herself trading between Charlottetown and St John's via Pictou, on part of the route that Clarke had once operated with the *Island Connector*. In this service, she took over from Blue Peter Steamships and Gulf & Northern Shipping's *Fergus*, the old *Sable I*.

**A New Ship for Lower St Lawrence Transportation?**

Meanwhile, Clarke had been seeking other ways to start a modern ferry service across the Lower St Lawrence with the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co as operator. Léo Chouinard picked up the story in his book "Capitaine Silence":

The Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, Clarke's affiliate, debated with the Rimouski Chamber of Commerce and ministers, bureaucrats and Conservative Party organizers over the subject of a new ferry to connect Pointe au Père with Baie Comeau year-round.

Clarke proposed to build a new ship. It had acquired land in order to build a ferry terminal with waiting rooms for passengers as well as offices. For its part, the Federal Government had built a new dock at Pointe au Père.

To bring its project into being the company asked for a subsidy spread out over ten years in order to cover winter operating losses.

The company's competitors ... and the Federal Government argued that the tariffs proposed by the company would make the project profitable.

Although it never went ahead, in 1963 the Clarke Steamship Co applied for a federal subsidy to operate such a service between Pointe au Père and Pointe à Michel, at the mouth of the Bersimis River, about twenty-eight miles from Baie Comeau. Had it been granted, the subsidy would have been worth $9,460,280 over ten years and rates would have been $19 per car, $6 per passenger and $15 per ton of freight.
It was not the fares that caused the most concern among the public, but the amount of the subsidy, at close to $10 million over a decade. Jean-Pierre Bélanger, in an article entitled "The Clarkes and the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co. 1921-1970," appearing in the December 1990 issue of "Revue d'histoire du Bas St-Laurent," neatly summed up the sensitivity toward earlier subsidies:

As for the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, it also benefited from generous contributions; thus, from 1950 to 1958, while the Federal Government granted $4,532,000 to Clarke, and the Provincial Government $1,140,000, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co collected $1,000,000 and $600,000 respectively from the two levels of government. The bottom line: in twenty years from 1939 to 1959, it had collected no less than the "modest" sum of $1,879,500 from the federal level alone, without taking into account provincial contributions.

Even if the sum of $1,879,500 was only the federal contribution to the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, there was public suspicion of subsidies, especially when quoted in large sums over several years. This effectively meant that Clarke's request for $9,460,280 to run a new service, when it was made, attracted a lot of opposition. Nevertheless, it had not stopped Ottawa from granting what became an even higher subsidy to another operator over a term of five years.

**La Compagnie de Navigation Nord-Sud Ltée**

La Compagnie de Navigation Nord-Sud Ltée had been formed in 1961 by a group of Rimouski businessmen and was headed by Charles Aristide Girardin and Roméo Crevier. This company had promptly taken up Stanley's suggestion of operating a ferry service from Pointe au Père by opening a year-round service to Baie Comeau. Crevier, the backer, and local Caterpillar dealer, became president and supplied the finance, while Girardin, a new car salesman, became vice-president and prime promoter of the service.

The new company paid $1.2 million for the 4,877-ton former Great Lakes car ferry *Père Nouvel*, which would not have been able to come down from the lakes before the opening of the St Lawrence Seaway in 1959. Nord-Sud requested a subsidy of $1.5 million per year in order to operate the service, with rates of $10 per car, $4 per passenger and $4 per ton of cargo. While the rates were lower than what Clarke would later ask for a very similar route, the subsidy was 50 per cent higher.

After undergoing modifications, first at Port Weller Dry Docks and then at Davie Shipbuilding in Lauzon, this double-ended drive-on ice-breaking ferry, made redundant by the opening of the famous Mackinac Bridge, was
greeted by a huge crowd on her arrival at Rimouski on November 5, 1961. Measuring 360 by 75 feet, she was licensed to carry 464 passengers, plus 145 cars in the eight lanes of her car deck. Nord-Sud added a bar and restaurant in her forward lounge. Although Canadian National's 6,694-ton ice-breaking ferry *Abegweit*, built at Sorel in 1947 for Prince Edward Island service, was larger, Nord-Suds brochures took to describing the *Père Nouvel* as "the largest roll on-roll off ice-breaking ferry in the world."

On November 10, the *Père Nouvel* made her maiden crossing from Pointe au Père to Baie Comeau, taking three hours and ten minutes. Léo Chouinard succinctly gives us his opinion in "Capitaine Silence": -

Clarke's competitors bought a large ferry, the *Père Nouvel*, named after the first Jesuit missionary to visit Rimouski in 1662. This boat remained in service ... accumulating loss after loss. She was sold and replaced by the smaller *Manic*, which proved no more profitable. Meanwhile, the businessmen of Matane had organized a ferry service to Godbout, on a shorter crossing. As they had attracted away their clientele, the Rimouski people were forced to sell their boat and lost the market.

The *Père Nouvel* was not perfect. She tended to pound in an oncoming sea, roll in a beam sea and was difficult to berth in high winds at Pointe au Père, at which times she had to take shelter behind Bic Island. But, overall, she provided a satisfactory service. Meanwhile, the federal subsidy, which was $600,000 in 1962-63, had reached $1,463,650 by 1963-64. In March 1963, when the *Père Nouvel* went onto drydock for two weeks, Nord-Sud managed to obtain the *N A Comeau*, which came out of winter lay-up at Matane to maintain the Baie Comeau service in the *Père Nouvel*'s absence.

The federal subsidy agreement was terminated at the end of its five-year term, and the service could not continue. Although she had often carried good loads, she was not economical without the subsidy and the *Père Nouvel* was laid up. Nord-Sud managed to sell her to British Columbia Ferries for $1.69 million, $490,000 more than they had paid for her, and she left Baie Comeau for the last time on July 26, 1967, headed west via Panama, there to become the *Sunshine Coast Queen*.

**La Traverse Nord-Sud Ltée**

The company then reorganized as La Traverse Nord-Sud Ltée, and in September 1967 acquired the much smaller *Manic* for $1.425 million, and placed her into service to Forestville instead of Baie Comeau. The *Manic* could accommodate 250 passengers and 45 cars and fares were the same as they had been on the *Père Nouvel*, $4 one-way, $2 for children and $10 for a car. This had remained the case for several years, except that when the *Manic* arrived a special "cruise" fare of $4 was introduced: -
Four hours on the St Lawrence. Superb bar and cafeteria service. Last round trip in summer time from Forestville at 2:45 pm and from Pointe au Père at 5:00 pm. Special $4.00 per person cruise fare does not permit stopover or disembarkation at other shore.

This text was lifted almost verbatim from Clarke's own cruise promotions at Rivière-du-Loup, and it is to be wondered why La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup did not object.

Meanwhile, about fifty miles downstream, a group of businessmen at Matane had started another ferry service, some of the officers and men for which were recruited from the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co.

**La Traverse Matane-Godbout Ltée**

Only six months after the introduction of the *Père Nouvel*, in 1962, La Traverse Matane-Godbout Ltée opened a second new drive-on ferry service, this time between Matane and Godbout. The newly-built *N A Comeau* would compete with the much larger *Père Nouvel* upstream at Pointe au Père, but would cross in just two and a half hours, or almost a quarter less time. Louis Blanchette recounted the story in his book *"La tradition maritime de Matane":*

> The company had built for the sum of $800,000, at the shipyards of George Brown Ltd in Greenock, Scotland, a ship of 188 feet and of a gross tonnage of 1,400 tons, capable of accommodating 100 passengers and 36 automobiles.

> This ship, named *N A Comeau*, proudly entered the port of Matane towards 17:00 hours on Tuesday, June 12, before a crowd of several thousand who had come to admire this much-anticipated ferry. The ferry crossing opened shortly thereafter.

> While La Traverse Matane-Godbout opened its service in 1962, the company itself had been formed back in August 1959 by a group of Matane businessmen. And its subsidy was much less than that paid to La Compagnie de Navigation Nord-Sud.

> The competition between Rimouski and Matane, both of which ports the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co had served for so many years, was now heating up. Although two new ferry services had opened in 1961 and 1962, the 1963 edition of the Canadian Government Travel Bureau's "Automobile Ferries, Bridges and Tunnels" mentioned neither. Instead, it listed ferry crossings for Matane-Baie Comeau, Rimouski-Forestville and Rimouski-Baie Comeau, all by the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co. But the Matane-Baie Comeau (33 miles) and Rimouski-Forestville (15 miles)
routes had been closed at the end of 1962. And the Lower St Lawrence listing indicated "automobile reservations necessary" while neither the Père Nouvel nor N A Comeau needed them.

Although, to be fair, the guide indicated that the Lower St Lawrence listings were "based on 1962 information," the Ottawa bureaucracy had not kept up with events in the St Lawrence. The owners of the Père Nouvel and N A Comeau quickly made sure that their services appeared in future issues, but only the Matane crossing gained any immediate benefit in the meantime. Anyone driving there to catch the non-existent ferry to Baie Comeau could still catch the N A Comeau to Forestville. But anyone driving to Rimouski would find not a ferry, but the coaster Jean Brillant, sailing twice a week to Baie Comeau and the North Shore. At least Pointe au Père, where the Père Nouvel was based, was only a few miles' drive from Rimouski.

Clarke's reaction to the introduction of the Père Nouvel and the N A Comeau was interesting. Instead of printing the usual 15,000 timetables for the Gaspésien service between Ste-Anne-des-Monts and Sept-Iles, as it had in 1961, it flooded the market with 40,000 copies in 1962. By now, however, it was already planning a large new ferry for the crossing at Rivière-du-Loup.

The "Sieur d'Amours"

Blanchette followed his earlier comments on the Matane-Godbout service with what happened next: -

Customers flowed in at such a rate that the company announced an order for a second ferry at the end of the 1964 season. This ship, more imposing than her predecessor, at 2,500 gross tons and 255 feet long, would be able to accommodate 300 passengers and 55 automobiles. Built at the Geo T Davie shipyard, at Lauzon, at a cost of $2,400,000, the ship had an ice-reinforced hull. Entering service from Matane in late June 1966, the Sieur d'Amours again pulled in such a large number of customers that the Père Nouvel, a ferry running between Pointe au Père and Baie Comeau, ceased operations in the spring of 1967.

The 2,558-ton Sieur d'Amours was even more successful than the N A Comeau. Both Matane-Godbout ferries were stern door ships and, unlike the Gaspésien and the Lower St Lawrence ships with their lift-on lift-off service, were designed for ease and convenience in driving on and off.

With two ships, Traverse Matane-Godbouts timetables began to read almost like the earlier Lower St Lawrence Transportation schedules, with four departures a day from Matane, at 8 am and 1:30 pm for Godbout and 11 am and 5 pm for Baie Comeau. The Baie Comeau calls of course competed with the service from Pointe au Père. In the summertime, an extra Godbout
sailing was also added, when required, at 6:30 pm. Fares were the same as its competitors at Pointe au Père, $4 per adult, $2 for children and $10 per car.

The Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co had operated the first ferry service between Matane and Godbout, but for one reason or another it had chosen not to emulate its sister operations at Rivière-du-Loup and Tadoussac by utilising drive-on drive-off ships. And Clarke had not ordered the new ferry it had once proposed. Thus, Capt Gérard Legendre, formerly of the Jean Brilliant, soon followed Capt Hovington over to La Traverse Matane-Godbout Ltée. Many former Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co employees made this move when the Matane and Rimouski were sold and the company's fleet was reduced to the Jean Brilliant.

In effect, just as the N A Comeau had displaced the Ungava at Matane in 1962, the Sieur d'Amours arrival saw off the Gaspésien, whose last season of operation was 1966. The SIU demand for parity with the Traverse Matane-Godbout, operating a different type of ship meant that the operation of the Gaspésien, with its lifting on and off of cars, had become uneconomical.

A few years later, the success of the Matane-Godbout service would also put paid to its drive on-drive off competitors at Pointe au Père, when La Traverse Nord-Sud finally abandoned operations in 1970 and the federal Ministry of Transport purchased the Manic, which, as recounted earlier, would move to the Magdalen Islands.

The N A Comeau and Sieur d'Amours had emerged victorious in the "War of the Ferries" in the Lower St Lawrence. Eventually, one at a time, each of these two was sold to the Pudister Trading Co of St John's for its pioneering Strait of Belle Isle ferry service between St Barbe, Newfoundland, and Blanc-Sablon.

La Société des Traversiers

While Clarke had sought a subsidy for a service in the lower river and had not built a new ship, it was probably right not to do so in the end. While private operators had successfully opened new ferry services, La Traverse Nord-Sud had gone out of business after suffering heavy losses and La Traverse Matane-Godbout would end up being nationalized by the Quebec Government. In the process, Clarke had cut its Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co back to one ship and closed its Ungava Transports operation, for now to concentrate on its services at Rivière-du-Loup and Tadoussac.

The most important ferry service in the Lower St Lawrence below the Saguenay was eventually the provincially-owned Société des Traversiers du Québec, which nationalized La Traverse Matane-Godbout in March 1976,
when it bought out the private shareholders in Matane. The Société already owned the 6,122-ton *Camille Marcoux*, which had been added in 1974 to accommodate 600 passengers and 110 cars. At first, the fares remained the same except that a $2.50 student fare replaced the $2 childrens fare, but by 1978 fares were $5 per adult and $10 per automobile.

The *Camille Marcoux* was named for a native of Tête-à-la-Baleine, the first physician to come from the Lower North Shore. He had been killed in a helicopter accident at St-Augustine the year before. Marcoux, had first left the Lower North Shore in the *Sable I* in the late summer of 1939, and been educated at Rimouski and then at Laval University in Quebec. With his medical posting at Lourdes de Blanc-Sablon, he had been a frequent traveller not only in the *Sable I* but also in the *North Voyageur* (ii) and *North Pioneer*. His namesake now operated year-round, while the *Sieur d'Amours* remained as a summer ferry until sold.

A long-time Matane-Godbout master who commanded all of the *N A Comeau*, *Sieur d'Amours* and *Camille Marcoux* was Capt Jean-Eudes Bouchard. Starting as master of the goélette *Jean-Eudes*, which his father had owned before Henri Piuze, he had also been master of the *Regina Polaris* when she worked from Rimouski for the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co. Many local Matane-Godbout ferry hands came from the Lower St Lawrence company and a few had also served with Clarke.

**The Trois Pistoles Ferry**

Elsewhere in this part of the river, there had been a small ferry service connecting Trois Pistoles to Les Escoumins as far back as 1930, when the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co first opened, but this service had closed not long after that.

In the modern ferry contest of the 1960s, a new company, La Traverse Trois Pistoles-Escoumins Ltée, was formed and operated various vessels between the two ports over the years. This company got its start in 1962 as La Compagnie de Navigation de Trois Pistoles Ltée, with the 261-ton *Razade*, which had been included in the Canadian Government Travel Bureau's 1963 ferry guide where others had not. Although small, this vessel was a drive-on type vessel.

The *Razade* was followed successively by the 387-ton *Fleur de Lys II* in 1969, the 386-ton *Le Gobelet d'Argent* in 1973, and the 736-ton *Le Gobelet d'Argent* (ii) in 1978. This service lasted through 1988, after which the latest *Le Gobelet d'Argent*, the former Isle of Wight ferry *Osborne Castle* from England, wet to Montreal and become the heavily rebuilt excursion ship *Cavalier Maxim*.

In 1989, the Trois Pistoles operation became a whale watching cruise
service with the acquisition of the former 502-ton Bermuda cruise ship tender *Canima* (ii), renamed *Le Gobelet d'Argent* (iii), although she was not in service for long before she too was sold, to owners in New Brunswick.

The Trois Pistoles-Escoumins ferry service was revived in May 1992 by La Compagnie de Navigation des Basques Inc, with the 436-ton *L'Héritage I*, a former Grand Manan ferry from New Brunswick that had been built in Les Méchins and was capable of carrying 200 passengers and 42 vehicles across the St Lawrence in 90 minutes. But the service ended once more in 2005.

In October 2007, the Trois Pistoles-Escoumins Port Infrastructure Board, a body formed by municipalities on both shores of the St Lawrence took over the ferry terminals at either end as part of a federal port divestiture program, and received a grant of $15 million in the process.

In August 2008, this board paid $400,000 for a 51 per cent interest in La Compagnie de Navigation des Basques and placed *L'Héritage I* back into service. The chairman, Jean-Pierre Rioux, as well as being mayor of Trois Pistoles was related to the family that had once operated the original La Traverse Trois Pistoles-Escoumins.

**The "Jean Brillant" to Blanc-Sablon**

In 1964, the *Jean Brillant*'s schedule was once again modified, this time to encompass all the Lower North Shore ports between Sept-Iles and Blanc-Sablon. For this, an annual subsidy of $290,000 was granted by Ottawa and a smaller amount by Quebec. This now gave Clarke two passenger services to the area, with the *North Pioneer* running fortnightly from Montreal and Quebec and the *Jean Brillant* weekly from Rimouski. This service extension had been discussed the year before with the Lower North Shore Economic Council, and on February 18, 1963, "L'Avenir's" report of a conference that was held in Harrington Harbour had given the first hint while discussing the services of the Clarke Steamship Co: -

> It appears it might be possible to have a service for package freight and passengers by a ship that would leave from Rimouski, stop at Sept-Iles, and then call at all the lower north shore ports from Havre-St-Pierre to Blanc-Sablon on a regular weekly basis. Such a ship could also carry perishables.

With the rest of the Lower St Lawrence passenger fleet gone and the highway from Quebec now extended through to Sept-Iles and Moisie, this type of employment was a natural for the *Jean Brillant*. The newly-extended Rimouski service also meant Lower North Shore residents now had regular access to fresh fruit, vegetables and milk from the South Shore. Previous to this, many settlements had had to rely on "Carnation" condensed milk.
Léo Chouinard, who knew the lower coast but was now master of the Novaport on the Montreal-St John's run, was chosen to command the Jean Brillant in her new weekly service. He recounted his story in "Capitaine Silence":

While the Novaport was at St John's, I received a message from Paul Preville, fleet manager, to call him back at head office. He asked me to take command of the Jean Brillant. After Captains Caron and Bélanger had retired, there were only Capt Joseph Giasson and myself who knew the Lower North Shore and Capt Giasson was already master of the North Pioneer. As for me, I had acquired a solid knowledge of the coast when I had navigated on the Gaspesia and Sable I as an officer.

I went aboard the Jean Brillant in March 1964. The ship was already weary after thirty years service. I would be the first captain to establish a weekly service between Rimouski and Blanc-Sablon. Her officers that first season were ... all good men, but with no experience of the Lower North Shore. We cast off on April 1, 1964, for Blanc-Sablon. But two-thirds of the way into the voyage, after reaching Kegashka, we had to turn back because of heavy ice that prevented us from going any further.

My first season as master of the Jean Brillant was exhausting. In one voyage, we made sixteen landings on the way out and as many again on the return. The least demanding part of the itinerary was the journey from Sept-Iles to Harrington Harbour. Outports were separated by four or five hours steaming and we sailed offshore. This allowed me two or three hours sleep between each call, weather permitting.

But between Harrington Harbour and Blanc-Sablon it was another story. Ports were much closer together and we were constantly sailing between islands. What's more, due to the inexperience of my officers, I had to remain in the wheelhouse most of the day... But bit by bit, the officers familiarised themselves with the coast that we sailed so close to, scattered with shallows, reefs and rigolets (deep and narrow passages between islands and cliffs), where many ships had been wrecked. We skirted by menacing rocks and a simple mistake could have caused a grounding or a sinking.

The weather didn't always co-operate, especially at the end of July into August, when thick fogs resulted from the effect of warm air on the cold waters of the Labrador Current that rolled up the coastline. When the fog lasted throughout a voyage, not being able to leave the wheelhouse and spending two or three nights without sleep was exhausting. Several times, I had to drop anchor between islands, reefs or narrow passages. I was so exhausted that I trembled. I considered that it was more prudent to do this than to compromise the safety of the passengers, the crew or the ship by undertaking manoeuvres in a
state of extreme fatigue. These stops of two or three hours allowed me to sleep and recuperate a bit. Our schedule was tight, with only about ten hours leeway per voyage if we wanted to maintain it.

On board the Jean Brillant, we had a Decca radar and an old Marconi radar dating from the Second World War and acquired from the Canadian navy. The reliability of these instruments left much to be desired. We couldn't keep them working for more than twenty-four hours at a time. Very often they were out of service.

Five Clarke ships had preceded the Jean Brillant to the Lower North Shore and Strait of Belle Isle - the Labrador, North Shore (i), Sable I (later North Trader) and North Voyageur (ii) and, since 1950, the North Pioneer. But the Jean Brillant had to make the round voyage in a week where the Quebec ships had done so in a fortnight. While earlier ships had worked a more relaxed schedule of eleven days from Quebec to Quebec, the Jean Brillant had to return to Rimouski in only seven. The difference in steaming time between Quebec and Rimouski is less than a day in each direction. Admittedly the Jean Brillant was faster than the earlier steamers, but heavy fog had no respect for speed or man-made schedules.

The New Lower Coast Ship Settles In

Once into the routine, things became easier, although one always had to be on one's guard along this treacherous coast. The seasons took on a character of their own, as recounted by Chouinard:

The beginning of September meant the return to classes for students and the end of the vacations for the city dwellers who came to visit their relatives on the North Shore...

After the beginning of school, we could always count on several school inspectors among the passengers. They visited all the schools in all the villages on the Lower North Shore...

The weeks and the months passed by very quickly. I could hardly pass time as I was so often in the wheelhouse. We always had lots of passengers aboard, of whom some were regulars, such as the North Shore priests who caught the boat to move from one village to another. This was how they practised their ministry. Every Sunday, one of the fathers celebrated mass on board in the officers' dining room. When weather conditions allowed me to leave the wheelhouse, I attended mass.

The North Pioneer now also included calls at Baie Comeau and Sept-Iles on her way to the Lower North Shore, so her service supplemented the Jean Brillant's.
Finally, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co ran the chartered St Yves in twice-weekly cargo service between Rimouski, Baie Comeau and Sept-Iles. The St Yves was now all that remained where once a fleet of three little white passenger ships had served these communities.

The Floating Bank

When the Jean Brillant entered the Lower North Shore run in 1964 she introduced something rather novel, an on-board branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC). The story of this floating bank appeared some little time later in a CIBC newsletter under the heading "The m.v. Jean Brillant, The main link with the outside world for 5,000 Canadians:

For 5,000 Canadians in the remote villages and hamlets along the North Shore of the St Lawrence River the bank comes by boat. The boat is the motor vessel Jean Brillant aboard which the bank operates the only floating bank in Canada.

The bank considers that its boat branch symbolizes the versatility and variety of its branch network and had featured it on a television commercial.

On its round trip of 1,200 miles from Sept-Iles to Blanc-Sablon and back, the ship provides the main link with the outside world for 5,000 people who are inaccessible by road...

The 640-ton Jean Brillant has long plied the waters of the North Shore for Clarke, ... bringing in food, supplies, mail and visitors. There is one round trip weekly from May to November, as long as the shipping lanes are ice-free.

Banking was introduced as a service of the Jean Brillant in 1964 when Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce arranged to open and staff an office on board.

The service was sorely needed. Provincial Government Warrants, issued in credit notes for Winter Works projects and honoured for purchases of goods and services, had piled up in merchants' tills, leaving them desperately short of cash...

New as well as established bank-by-mail customers began to pour aboard, some bringing money stored for years in mattresses...

A typical port call begins with an unmusical blast of the ship's horn bringing village people crowding to the docks. Men line wharves waiting to cash cheques to feed their families or make deposits. At
Baie-Johan-Beetz, no docks exist so customers head out in dories and power schooners to anchor points off the village.

While cargo booms swing dockside, the Bank Officer-in-Charge aboard the Jean Brillant greets customers at the teller's window in the upper deck cabin that serves as bank and bedroom. With the exception of loans, all the banks normal services are provided on the boat. Loan applications are taken on board, approved at Sept-Îles and disbursed on the following trip.

A nurse deposits $5,000, savings of a long winter, and boards ship for a vacation. An outfitter talks over financing inventories until his business clients from Montreal, New York and Toronto arrive in summer for salmon and trout fishing inland.

Business done, customers put ashore or go below to cabins. If it has been a midnight or 3:00 am stop, the seagoing banker boards up the counter window, pulls down the fold-up bunk and goes to sleep...

Fishing and fish processing are the main industries served by the bank along the coast and, to a lesser extent, lumber and fur trapping...

Customers bank by mail in winter and special arrangements must be settled before the villages go into isolation. Quebecair takes over winter cargo and passenger service from the Jean Brillant for the December-April period.

As it happened, Clarke's head office had just moved into the new Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce Tower in Montreal in 1963, the year before this floating bank branch made its first appearance.

In 1965, the Jean Brillant, now with bank on board, strayed from her usual route when she made a special voyage to Havre-Aubert in the Magdalen Islands. While unusual for the Jean Brillant, it was not unusual for a Clarke ship, as the North Gaspé had served the islands for many years from Montreal, and the North Shore, and the New Northland before her, had made special trips to or from Sept-Îles. Even the Sable I had made a voyage to the Magdalens at the end of 1938.

For the winter seasons of 1965, 1966 and 1967, the Jean Brillant was kept in commission to operate a winter cargo service from Rimouski to North Shore ports. After three winters, however, as voyages were not scheduled and calls were sporadic it was decided that the service was uneconomical and with the arrival of the winter of 1968, she returned to winter lay-up, to return for the summer season in April.

Transport Blanc-Sablon Ltée
The Jean Brillant did not always operate alone on the Lower North Shore to Blanc-Sablon. For part of this time, she had competition from Jules Jourdain, son of Edgar, the former president of Ungava Transports. Jourdain formed Transport Blanc-Sablon Ltée in the mid 1960s to operate a competitive service between Sept-Iles and Blanc-Sablon.

Jules had been master of the Sept-Iles Trader in 1950-51 and then moved on to other ships. He had later gone east to work out of Nova Scotia, where his last ship had been North Star Shipping's 874-ton North Star IV, working James Bay for the Canadian Hydrographic Service in 1960. She was lost on an uncharted reef in August 1961 but Jourdain had decided to return to Quebec in November 1960 first as first officer and then as master of the Père Nouvel.

Transport Blanc-Sablon started with Jules' 69-ton Maris Stella, a small Nova Scotia-built schooner he had acquired from the Oblates in Gaspé after leaving the Père Nouvel in 1965. With her, Jourdain had run a supply operation, carrying mails and a doctor and a dentist along the coast between Sept-Iles and Natashquan.

As Transport Blanc-Sablon, he acquired the much larger 316-ton steel-hulled Cap Diamant, which he ran from Sept-Iles to points along the lower coast as far as Blanc-Sablon. Formerly the Quebec Government training ship Le St Barnabé, she had arrived at Halifax from Scotland on February 11, 1959, and spent much time undergoing work at St-Laurent, Ile-d'Orléans, before being delivered to the Institut Maritime de Rimouski in 1960. Although she had replaced a similar vessel that had been in use since 1945, Jourdain managed to buy her after a new government decided it no longer needed a dedicated training ship.

Jourdain ran the Cap Diamant, which could carry fifteen passengers, for two seasons until losing the mail subsidy in 1966, when she caught fire and sank off Cape Whittle, near Harrington Harbour, on November 9. The Maris Stella was also lost to fire when she burned off Forestville on September 2, 1967. Capt Jourdain then returned to working for others.

Nationalism and Subsidies

In 1966, the Montreal weekly "La Patrie" raised the subsidy question once more in a clearly one-sided analysis of Clarke's business on the river. Its title was "Ottawa Has Given The St Lawrence To The English: The Clarke Steamship Co Reigns as Lord and Master." Although the Clarkes were Irish Catholics, the article referred to their language. The report's author, Danielle L'Heureux, made an August voyage in the Jean Brillant and interviewed various people, largely anti-Clarke nationalists, before writing her reportage, which appeared in the September 4 and 11 issues.
In part of the piece headed "Chalk and Cheese," she laid out the subsidies paid for various shipping services in the St Lawrence River, saying that "to judge by the opinions expressed in the last few weeks, government subsidies play an enormous role in opinions about the Clarke Steamship Co and how it is perceived":

In 1965, the Federal Government granted to Clarke:
- The Tadoussac ferry: $48,000
- La Compagnie Bas St-Laurent: $75,000
- Clarke Steamship: $190,000

Other companies received:
- Compagnie Nord-Sud: $50,000
- Traverse Matane-Godbout: $20,000

In 1966, Clarke will receive:
- $430,000 for the Quebec-Natashquan-Blanc-Sablon service
- $290,000 for the Rimouski-Blanc-Sablon service
- $21,000 for the Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon ferry

From the province will come $330,000 for all these services
And the Postmaster General will pay $60,000 for the mail service provided by each of the three ships on the North Shore service

L'Heureux did not even add up all these sums but she commented that the postal subsidy previously paid to Jourdain's Cap Diamant had been withdrawn for "contradictory reasons." But the Nord-Sud and Matane-Godbout companies together now received almost as much as the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, once the dominant force in the region, and indeed Nord-Sud's subsidy, instead of being the huge $1,500,000 that it had reached at one stage, was now a much more modest $50,000.

Between 1929 and 1945, Clarke had invested heavily in opening up local services in the Gulf of St Lawrence and it had built half a dozen new ships for these services between 1935 and 1963, all but one of them in Quebec. But more and more, the type of attitude demonstrated by "La Patrie" prevailed. Despite all its crews and the majority of those employed by Clarke and its various subsidies being French-Canadian, Quebec's nationalists preferred not to recognise this.

A nationalism based on language began to see other firms favoured for new business and subsidy contracts awarded or even influenced by the Quebec Government began to go to companies other than Clarke, specifically to companies with French-speaking shareholders. Companies like CTMA and La Traverse Matane-Godbout were among the beneficiaries, and while they gained from taking in many Clarke-trained crews and personnel, it must also be said that they exhibited a good deal of entrepreneurial spirit of their own. In order to try to counter this trend, Clarke decided to engage Willie Douville,
former purser of the *New Northland* and fleet manager, as its lobbyist in the Quebec Legislature.

**An Aborted Voyage to the Lower North Shore**

L'Heureux's nationalistic view might have annoyed long-term Clarke employees who had devoted their careers to serving the coast, but she did leave us a partial account of her voyage to the Lower North Shore: -

I arrive on a misty morning at Rimouski quay, where the *Jean Brillant*, a small Clarke Steamship vessel of 640 tons, is moored. I am embarking to go and see what is happening in the kingdom of the North Shore. Who is Clarke Steamship? What are they doing among us? Have they exploited us or helped us? This is what this voyage is going to tell me.

It's 6:30 pm as we leave the dock. In the wheelhouse, while the sailors talk of rain, I examine the navigational instruments: "That's the radar ... this is the Decca navigator ... we are here on the chart, etc." I familiarise myself with this North Shore "bus." The ship is old, and has been around for 31 years, 28 on the coast, three in the present service from Rimouski to Blanc-Sablon...

"Starboard." A response from the mate on the bridge: "Starboard, Sir."

The river flows. It's night. The *Jean Brillant*, supply ship of the North Shore has just left the dock of a small settlement. It's black. I can hardly see the silhouette of the captain as he leaves the wheelhouse windows. It's as quiet as it is black. You can hear yourself breathe. Lips open and issue a command as a voice says:

"Midship" "Midship, Sir."

The wheel starts, turns on its own, rolls to the point where it turns back again, then rests, softly, softly, ready for work again. We run on at speed, the radar, the Decca, the charts, for the moment, the domain of the captain.

It's black and hard on the eyes, but one can sense images, words, sensation, these Gaspésian eyes, these Magdalen accents, these calloused hands of the North Shore folk. The ships are Clarke's, the men are ours.

Below in the lounge, in the corridors, in every corner, passengers can be found. Some sleep at their posts. Others don't sleep for the whole night, seasick. But there is no choice...
These people are returning home after holidays in another small coastal village, returning from business trips, going to the North Shore to take postings, replacing others, moving about for the same reasons as everyone else in the world, but by only one means - by Clarke.

Through the thin cabin walls, we hear the cries of babies, the discussions of fishermen, the sounds of beer cans being opened...

If you can't afford an air ticket, you buy a ticket on the old Jean. It's the only way. From Sept-Iles to Blanc-Sablon, passing by Rivière-au-Tonnerre, Mingan, Havre-St-Pierre, Baie-Johan-Beetz, Natashquan, Kegashka, La Romaine, Harrington, Tête-à-la-Baleine, Mutton Bay, La Tabatière, Vieux-Fort, St-Augustin, Rivièr-St-Paul.

The old Jean Brilliant replaces the highway, a highway owned by Clarke. And the Clarke publicity pamphlet proclaims: "this isolated coast depends on Clarke ships for its supplies, its communications, its goods and its commerce"...

When three blows of the ship's whistle announce the arrival of the ship with the orange hull, the village residents gather on the quay to see her. It's not for satisfaction, it's not by choice. They need her. And she's the only way out...

And if something should happen to Clarke's Jean Brilliant? One morning, at dawn, we hear a noise. The engine has stopped. I go to the wheelhouse. The old ship's machinery has quite simply just decided to stop working.

"Ste Foy, Ste Foy, Jean Brilliant calling Ste Foy."

We're drifting in the middle of the river and trying to contact another Clarke ship, obviously to come and give us a tow. The Ste Foy is at Natashquan but no one is attending her radio. At 8:28 am someone should turn on the radio and listen. Finally, a fisherman who has heard our message goes to alert the Ste Foy. It will take her five hours to reach us, off Ile Ste Geneviève, then longer to tow us into Havre-St-Pierre.

It's raining in torrents on the decks of both ships as they attach a towing cable to the Jean Brilliant... The captain is nervous. Visibly, my presence upsets him. It could be Chinese this ship, but it would change nothing...

The moral of the story: Clarke will build a ship to replace the Brilliant, twice the tonnage of her predecessor.

The date was August 13. Whether the premature end to L'Heureux's
voyage with the *Ste Foy* taking the *Jean Brillant* in tow for Havre-St-Pierre had any influence on her reportage we don't know, but she personally must have been disappointed.

Meanwhile, a 236-ton tug, the *Foundation Vibert*, was despatched from Sept-Iles to assist her in berthing at Havre-St-Pierre. After disembarking her 47 passengers, who were flown on, along with 63 bags of mail and twelve tons of general cargo, the *Foundation Vibert* was to tow the *Jean Brillant* to Sept-Iles. But before reaching Sept-Iles it was realized that she would have to go to Quebec for permanent repairs. As she turned around, the 470-ton salvage tug *Foundation Venture* left Quebec to take over the tow from Godbout.

While the *Jean Brillant*'s engine was under repair, two ships filled in for her from Rimouski. While the *North Voyageur* picked up her cargo on Wednesdays the *North Pioneer* collected her passengers on the Friday. The *Jean Brillant* would be out for ten days, returning to service on August 23.

As to L'Heureux's comment about a replacement for the *Jean Brillant*, Clarke did have plans to build a new ship that would be able to serve the Lower North Shore to Blanc-Sablon year round. But it was never built.

**The Lower St Lawrence Cruise**

Three years later, as the *Jean Brillant* prepared for what would be her last season, the service was being advertised as a six-day cruise, one of the last Clarke would offer, and a rudimentary one at that. A 1969 travel guide listed it as follows: -

Lower St Lawrence Cruise - Lower St. Lawrence Transportation Company, Rimouski, Quebec. From April to November this six-day cruise takes the adventurous to fifteen tiny Quebec fishing ports on the north shore, all the way from Sept-Iles to the Labrador border. Most of them can only be reached by water.

And as for one-way tourists, in 1969, Wayne O'Neil of Cambridge, Massachusetts, wrote to the "New York Times." He and his family had driven across Newfoundland and made it to Blanc-Sablon by crossing the Strait of Belle Isle, and wrote about catching the *Jean Brillant* for his trip back to civilisation: -

It is a long way back to Port aux Basques, Newfoundland, and, although the Newfoundland coast once seen is great, twice seen would drag; besides, it is economically depressed and depressing. So instead of catching the *Avalon Coaster* back from Blanc-Sablon (and Labrador), we boarded the *Jean Brillant*, which plies the north coast of the Gulf of St Lawrence out of Rimouski, Quebec, and serves isolated fishing
(sometimes island) communities whither no roads reach.

It takes two and one-half days to go from Blanc-Sablon to Sept-Iles, where the highway to the city of Quebec begins in earnest; but, fortunately for us, a great storm came up in the gulf, and the Jean Brillant, being round-bottomed in order to get into narrow and shallow harbors and, therefore, unable to weather rough waters, was forced into Harrington Harbour for two days to wait out the storm.

For these two days the ship lived in Harrington Harbour and the town lived on board - a welcome break for everybody involved and a chance for us to get to know this island community that Newfoundlanders had come to 100 years before, seeking a better life.

I am sure that the owners of the Jean Brillant cannot guarantee a storm on every run, but only to pass quickly through the Indian, French and English settlements eaked out of the north coast is an exciting experience.

Despite O'Neil's claims about being round-bottomed the Jean Brillant had been sufficiently robust to serve the Miami-Nassau route for five winter seasons, but that was his version. He made his voyage in the summer of 1968 when the 324-ton Avalon Coaster had been the Strait of Belle Isle ferry, crossing between Blanc-Sablon and St Barbe, Newfoundland. A side-loading wooden coaster built at Clarenville in 1945, as the Burin for the Newfoundland Railway, she had been acquired in 1965 and the Strait of Belle Isle ferry service opened in 1966.

The Puddister Trading Co of St John's had started this service. Somewhat like the first wooden ferries across the Saguenay, cars were either driven on over the side across an opening in the bulwarks or lifted on and off. After the Avalon Coaster was wrecked at St Anthony in December 1968, the 337-ton Avalon Trader replaced her for 1969 and the service attracted a subsidy.

In 1971, the first steel-hulled ship, the 488-ton motorship Marine Coaster, still a sideloader, was introduced. Puddister Trading then went on to acquire two stern-loading ferries from Matane, first the N A Comeau, renamed Northern Cruiser in 1977, and later the Sieur d'Amours, which became the Northern Princess in 1984.

The "Jean Brillant" is Sold

By 1969, the Jean Brillant had been operating the Rimouski to Sept-Iles and Lower North Shore passenger service for five years, on her own since 1966 when the North Pioneer had been retired. By now, Ottawa's subsidy for service to Blanc-Sablon, including the freight service provided
from Montreal and Quebec, but not the Quebec share, was $770,000.

Finally, the end came for the Jean Brillant when the subsidies that covered these services were awarded to Agence Maritime Inc of Quebec. After thirty-five seasons, the Jean Brillant had come to the end of the line. Carrying 6,000 passengers and various cargoes during her final season on the North Shore, she was sold on December 8, 1969, to one A Langlais for conversion to a floating restaurant. This plan never came about however and the old ship remained beached at Lévis for another year and a half before being sold on.

After forty years of continuous service, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co became a dormant shell. Not even the St Yves remained in 1969. As to the Jean Brillant, she found her way to Florida waters in 1971, where she underwent a refit at Fort Lauderdale to become the private yacht Lizza K, with a white hull once more and a white funnel with gold band and black top. As a yacht, she looked very little changed from her original days on the St Lawrence except that she was now registered in Panama and minus one of her 22-foot lifeboats, which had been donated in 1970 to Sept-Iles Sea Cadet corps RCSCC "Jacques Cartier."

Within a few years, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co was revived under the new name of Clarke International Ltd, to undertake international freight forwarding and customs brokerage operations in Montreal. Meanwhile, Jules Brillant, who had founded the company with Desmond Clarke in 1929, died at Mont-Joli on May 11, 1973, at the age of 84.

**Longest-Serving Clarke Ship To Date**

When she was retired, the Jean Brillant had served longer than any other Clarke ship to date, having sailed 1,207,500 nautical miles, consumed almost 5,000,000 gallons of fuel, and spent 4,375 days at sea and 8,400 days in port including winter lay-ups. Beginning in the St Lawrence cross-river trades, she had maintained the Miami-Nassau service during five winters and one summer in wartime and had spent her last five years fulfilling Clarke's responsibilities to the Lower North Shore as far as the Strait of Belle Isle. Only the North Gaspé so far had approached her record, with thirty-three seasons to the Jean Brillant's thirty-five.

Six masters had commanded the Jean Brillant but she had only two chief engineers. Gérard Girard, her final chief from 1946 on, had served in her from her maiden voyage in May 1935 to her final lay-up at the end of the 1969 season. Last to leave the ship, he took his own retirement at the same time.

Of her masters, Capt Georges Chouinard (1946-1957) had joined the
fleet as a sailor aboard the *Gaspesia* in 1936 and risen to become manager of the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co and later La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon. Georges' brother, Léo Chouinard, her last master, subsequently returned to the Newfoundland trade to become master of Clarke ships in the 1970s, and container ships with successor lines in the 1980s.

**Famous Passengers**

The *Jean Brillant*’s passengers had at various times included the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, press baron Lord Camrose, publisher of the "Daily Telegraph" and two-thirds owner of the Gulf Pulp & Paper Co through Amalgamated Press, who had visited Canada a number of times in the 1940s, and of course Col Robert R McCormick of "Chicago Tribune" and Ontario Paper fame. Famous Canadian passengers included Quebec premier Adélard Godbout in September 1940, chansonnier and Natashquan native Gilles Vigneault and future prime minister Brian Mulroney, who had crossed from Baie Comeau to Rimouski to attend boarding school in New Brunswick. At other times, she had carried cardinals, archbishops and bishops serving their congregations along the North Shore.

During her final years, from 1964 to 1969, she had even become the first Canadian merchant ship to carry a fully-fledged bank branch on board. With her branch of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, the *Jean Brilliant* also featured in one of that bank's television commercials in the late 1960s, sailing across colour screens with the orange hull that all Clarke ships had adopted in the late 1960s.

**Agence Maritime and the "Fort Mingan"**

The *Jean Brillant*’s place in the Rimouski-Sept-Iles-Lower North Shore service was taken in 1970 by the 1,084-ton Norwegian-built coaster *Oslo*, acquired by Agence Maritime in 1969 from Arendals Dampskibsselskap of Arendal, Norway, for whom she had operated between Oslo and Bergen. The newly-acquired ship could carry 42 passengers in berths, and had an overall license for 123, for roughly the same passenger capacity as the *Jean Brilliant*, but more than triple the cargo capacity, with 50,475 cubic feet of hold space compared to 15,300 cubic feet on the *Jean Brilliant*.

During the course of deciding the award of a new Lower North Shore contract, the Sept-Iles newspaper "L'Avenir" had revealed some details of what has been taking place in Sept-Iles. In a story headed "Sept-Iles Becomes Passenger Terminus For Maritime Traffic," that appeared on October 29, 1969, it told of an expectation by the Sept-Iles Chamber of Commerce that it would obtain the turnaround of a new passenger ship: -
President P J Cloutier of the Sept-Iles Chamber of Commerce announced during the course of the last general meeting of the Chamber that a project that has been a major goal of the local chamber has been crowned with success and that the terminus for all passenger traffic to the Lower North Shore will be established in Sept-Iles with the letting of a new contract towards the end of November.

The terminus has been moved from Rimouski to Sept-Iles as a result of studies made by the Chamber which showed that the overwhelming majority of the 6,000 passengers that travelled on the Jean Brillant to the Lower North Shore embarked at Sept-Iles.

This will mean that it will be possible to schedule two passenger trips to Havre-St-Pierre each week instead of the one a week that has been in effect over the summer season in the past. The passenger ship, which will replace the Jean Brillant on the service with the new contract, will make one regular trip from Sept-Iles to all ports on the Lower North Shore and will still have the time to turn around in Sept-Iles for an additional trip to Havre-St-Pierre in the same week.

The general freight terminus will continue to be at Rimouski but the service will be improved with an additional trip from Montreal and Quebec every week. Presently a ship leaves Montreal and Quebec City on alternate weeks making a trip from either centre once every two weeks. Under the new agreement a ship will leave from both centres every week...

Lower North Shore business men have long maintained the policy of purchasing their perishables, meat etc, from Rimouski based primarily on lower costs. A spokesman for the local business fraternity advises that there has been little effort on the part of Sept-Iles merchants to encroach on the south shore market. Lamontagnes Stores have entered this field and have made considerable progress over the last year and a half. It is possible, however, that with two passenger trips to the Lower North Shore every week, that this market could prove to be more inviting to local merchants.

There has been enormous pressure exerted on Mr Gustave Blouin, MP Manicouagan County (L), to retain the general terminal on the South Shore because of long established business practice and lower costs which the Lower North Shore residents want to maintain.

Speaking to Mr Blouin in Ottawa by telephone, ”L'Avenir" was advised that a new contract had not been approved as yet by the Canadian Board of Transport Commissioners. It is expected that this will be done towards the end of November.

Two firms are applying for the franchise. Maritime Agencies were
approved by the Provincial Government for subsidies, but it has been suggested that this firm does not have the necessary ships to meet the strict specifications of the new contract. This would require the holder of the new contract to have sufficient ships to provide the passenger service as well as refrigerated cargo vessels capable of carrying up to 400 tons to the Lower North Shore, including perishables, frozen meats and general cargo.

The other firm in competition for the contract is Clarke Traffic Services, which presently holds the contract and operates the Jean Brillant. There is no question of the latter ship remaining in service next season unless it is retained as an auxiliary ship. The passenger service will be undertaken by a new vessel.

Clarke Traffic Services in their submission for the contract mentioned a special through service from Montreal which would allow cargo to be shipped directly to Sept-Iles without transfer charges at this point. This will allow a lower tariff for cargo destined to the Lower North Shore via Sept-Iles.

Mr Blouin has advised that despite the concern expressed by the Lower North Shore residents in several letters he has received recently, that there is no question of changing the general terminal from Rimouski to Sept-Iles and that it is only the passenger terminal that will be in Sept-Iles.

The odd thing about this story was that it had been announced even before the new Lower North Shore contract had even been awarded. In any case, Agence Maritime chose the new name of Nordbec for the Oslo, but over the winter changed its mind and decided on Fort Mingan, renaming her again in early 1970. At least this name conformed to the company's existing naming scheme.

Agence Maritime won the contract, but because of pressures from the actual customers of the Lower North Shore service, the passenger service was not moved from Rimouski to Sept-Iles. It all seemed slightly too complicated. Details of this were carried in another story that appeared in "L'Avenir" on April 7, 1970, headed "Fort Mingan Will Not Be Based Here": -

Despite a contract signed with the Federal Department of Transport, which indicated that the Fort Mingan, which will replace the Jean Brillant on the passenger service linking this community with the Lower North Shore, would be based in Sept-Iles, it has been confirmed that the former Norwegian vessel will be based in Rimouski.

Last week, Maritime Agencies, which owns the vessel, obtained authority from the provincial government to allow the ship to be based at Rimouski rather than Sept-Iles. In fact, Mr Paul Gourdeau, president
of Maritime Agencies, announced officially that the base port of the ship would be Rimouski and will be the point of departure for the craft on its runs along the North Shore.

This newly acquired vessel is capable of carrying 50 passengers in functional cabins as well as general cargo and express freight.

It appears that considerable pressure was exerted by the Rimouski Chamber of Commerce...

The *Fort Mingan* will commence her voyages within the next few days and Mr Gourdeau confirmed this, despite the fact that the federal government had not yet rendered a decision in connection with the home port question. ...

A report originating in Rimouski indicates that the citizens of the Lower North Shore are unanimous in their preference of having the vessel based at Rimouski rather than Sept-Iles.

In the end, the move by Sept-Iles to become the turnaround port for the new ship was unsuccessful. There was talk at one point of Sept-Iles' population gaining another sixty persons as the new ship's crew would have to be based there. But largely because of the lower prices of produce and foodstuffs in Rimouski, either because it was grown locally or because it arrived by rail instead of by the more expensive road transport on which Sept-Iles had to rely, the *Fort Mingan* continued the same pattern that the *Jean Brillant* had before her. Agence Maritime itself was acquired by stevedoring company Logistec Corporation in late 1972 and became Logistec Navigation in 1979.

**Capt Lionel Poitras**

As usual, and as had been the case with the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, the change in contractor lead to Clarke losing a number of personnel to the new operator. Included in this number was one of its veteran captains, a man with thirty-four years service in at least a dozen Clarke ships, from the *Sable I* through to the *Jean Brillant*. As related by Jean-Pierre Charest:

Capt Lionel Poitras was ... born in Rimouski December 29, 1908, and began his career at 16, working on some coasters before joining the Clarke Steamship Co. When the North Shore service was taken over by Agence Maritime, this company was looking for a skilled captain who knew this part of the Gulf. They first asked Capt Léo Chouinard, but he turned them down. However, Capt Poitras accepted their offer, left Clarke and worked on the *Fort Mingan*. He retired in 1978, but worked three more years in the summer time as a substitute captain during
holidays.

On a typical voyage in July 1976, one of Capt Poitras' passengers was Québec chansonnier and poet Gilles Vigneault, who frequently travelled by ship to and from his native Natashquan. Both men had sailed many times in Clarke ships, Poitras as a sailor, officer and master, and Vigneault as a passenger during his years at school in Rimouski and then at Laval University in Quebec. Over the years, Vigneault had made almost seventy voyages in Clarke ships.

The "Rivière-du-Loup" is Repowered

Meanwhile, above the Saguenay, the seasonal ferry service between Rivière-du-Loup and St-Siméon and the year-round crossing at Tadoussac carried on as usual. La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon had operated the second Rivière-du-Loup through the war, running four crossings a day during the summer season.

Since the war the only real story of note had been a mooted charter of the Rivière-du-Loup to the City of Trois Rivières in October 1945, to replace one of its own cross-river ferries that had been out of service, at an agreed charter rate of $100 a day. But when the Trois Rivières City Council realized that the proposed contract meant they would have to pay seven days extra hire at each end to remove the ship from lay-up in Quebec, deliver her to Trois Rivières, redeliver her to Quebec and prepare for lay-up again the deal was called off and she remained in winter lay-up at Quebec.

The Rivière-du-Loup was mentioned in the "New York Times" once again on June 6, 1952, in an article entitled "Relaxing on a Ferry" by Eunice Telfer Juckett, that dealt with ferry routes across North America: -

The ferry’s biggest selling point is the opportunity it gives to turn off the motor and relax. At first we had to be prodded ... to leave the car once the wheels had been blocked. Then we discovered how much more rested we felt getting out of the car...

The St Lawrence River trip from Rivière-du-Loup to St-Siméon, with the possibility of spying a school of porpoise, is always included in our itinerary whenever we travel in upper Quebec.

In 1958, after almost two decades on the run, the Rivière-du-Loup was taken in hand for repowering, and received a war surplus Sulzer diesel that had been produced in 1943 by Dominion Engineering Works Ltd of Montreal. Twenty 1,000 horse power units of this Swiss engine had been installed in pairs in ten "Bangor" class minesweepers built at Lauzon and Sorel in 1941/42. Clarke maintained a high regard for Sulzers, having had good experience with them in the Matane and Rimouski. In the process of the
conversion, the *Rivière-du-Loup*’s gross tonnage rose to 1,491 tons and she appeared with a more streamlined funnel as a motorship.

Near the end of the season, however, on September 22, the *Rivière-du-Loup* had to be withdrawn after suffering severe damage to her stern and rudder on hitting a submerged object. On October 1, not having been able to find a suitable replacement, the company suspended service for the rest of the 1958 season.

Traffic volumes reached 65,098 passengers and 21,446 vehicles by 1960, almost eight times as many passengers and six times as many vehicles as in 1940. Such was the demand that in the early 1960s, the Saguenay ferry *Jacques Cartier* was also moved to *Rivière-du-Loup* to assist at peak periods. She was not a comfortable vessel in rough weather, however, and the crew would sometimes have to tell passengers to stay in their cars while the little ferry took the seas over her bows and the waves splashed onto cars parked on her open vehicle deck.

In 1965 the little *Jacques Cartier* would be sold to La Compagnie de Navigation Cartier Ltée, which operated the ferry service between St-Joseph-de-la-Rive and Ile-aux-Coudres. She was later rebuilt for use as an excursion ship at Trois Rivières.

**The Lévis Trading Co Ltd**

The Lévis Trading Co Ltd of Quebec was founded in 1952 and owned by Captains Roger Sirois and Jean Claude Tremblay, who had once owned the *Mont-Blanc*. Lévis Trading opened a new ferry service on the North Shore of the St Lawrence on July 7, 1959, when it placed the 468-ton wooden-hulled *Carlisle Bay* into operation between Baie Comeau and Godbout. As the highway then stopped at Baie Comeau, she was used to link two different strips of highway on the North Shore. Sirois had been operating this Nova Scotia-built ship on charter to Canadian National on the North Sydney-Port aux Basques run since 1955. Now she made three trips a day carrying passengers and 18 cars in a service that lasted two seasons. On December 3, 1960, while undergoing refit, the *Carlisle Bay* burned out at the G T Davie shipyard in Lauzon.

Planning another new service between Cacouna and Tadoussac to compete with both the *Rivière-du-Loup* and Clarke’s Saguenay crossing, Lévis Trading bought the 567-ton steel-hulled *Chapparal* in 1960, forming the St Lawrence Transportation Co Ltd to operate her. Completed in 1925 as the Detroit River ferry *Halcyon*, she had been converted into a US Coast Guard cutter in 1942. St Lawrence Transportation had her midships superstructure removed at Kingston, Ontario, and rebuilt her as a machinery-aft side-loading car ferry, restoring her original car deck.
However, as St Lawrence Transportation failed to obtain the required provincial permit, the service never opened. Lévis Trading then converted the Chapparal into a motor coaster at St-Laurent, Ile-d'Orléans, renaming her Newfoundland Cruiser and operated her on charter to Canadian National for its Newfoundland coastal trade. She served only two or three years, however, before being lost in a storm at Cape Dorset, Baffin Island, on September 15, 1963, while on a northern supply voyage.

The "Trans-St-Laurent"

Only five years after her rebuilding, La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon replaced the Rivière-du-Loup when it took delivery of the 2,173-ton Lloyd's Ice Class 1 end-loading car ferry Trans-St-Laurent, completed in 1963 by Geo T Davie & Sons. The new drive-on ferry was launched on April 24 by Mrs Jean Lesage, wife of the premier of Quebec, who at a reception after the main ceremony rather unusually announced on behalf of her husband that the province would no longer be charging sales tax on the sale of coastal vessels built in Quebec. The "Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph" described the new ship in its April 25 issue:

The 262-foot ferry will begin operating in the lower St Lawrence region sometime in June. When in service, its owners the Travers Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon will make three hour and a half trips daily between the north and south shores. Designed to operate year round, the Trans-St-Laurent can accommodate any vehicle legally permitted on the province's highways. It will have normal capacity for 70 vehicles.

Up to 450 passengers will enjoy luxurious facilities never before available on ferries crossing the St Lawrence. A spacious lounge, complete restaurant facilities and a bar, similar to that usually found in passenger liners, will cover the entire deck.

A crew of 34 will have stateroom type living quarters with their own dining and recreation facilities aboard.

Besides every modern navigation and safety device required, the captain controls the vessel from a dual master control console. Aided by an unusual combination of variable pitch twin propellers and a bow thrust steering system, he can move the vessel at extremely low speed, or sideways.

The all white vessel, which is 60-feet wide, has twin engines giving her a speed of 13.5 knots. Vehicles can be driven on at one end and off at the other. Her unique bow and stern shape, combined with her large side-to-side superstructure, give a sleek liner appearance.

Each launching represents the net result of many years of dreams,
extensive studies, detailed designs and careful construction with the hope that the new vessel will truly fulfill all the hopes and expectations, S D Clarke, president of Clarke Steamship Co Ltd, told a number of guests participating at the launching.

"Even the naval architect and the shipyard will hold their breaths to see that she actually floats in spite of so many calculations made prior to her launching."

A vessel such as the *Trans-St-Laurent*, he said, represents a substantial investment of $2,800,000.

The *Trans-St-Laurent* was the seventh Clarke ship to be built in Quebec since the *North Gaspé* of 1938. Taking her name from the original ferry company of 1909, the new ferry joined the Rivière-du-Loup route a year after the *Père Nouvel* and *N A Comeau* had entered service downstream. This meant there were now three new ferry services competing for the cross-river business below Quebec.

The new ferry measured 262 feet by 62 feet overall and her twin Burmeister & Wain diesels gave her her speed of 13½ knots through twin controllable pitch propellers. This type of propeller had first been tried in fishing boats but it meant that the *Trans-St-Laurent* could reverse simply by changing the pitch of her propellers so they worked in the opposite direction. Controllable pitch propellers also offer better fuel efficiency than fixed pitch propellers, which are not efficient at all speeds.

In order to pay for the *Trans-St-Laurent*, Clarke borrowed the money. Her financing was through private placing of a $3 million twenty-year bond issue, the first financial instrument that Clarke had ever issued. At first, the new ship was registered to the Gulf Ports Steamship Co and operated by La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon, but she was later owned directly by La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon. When the *Trans-St-Laurent* went into service, the federal Ministry of Transport modified the wharf, which now had dimensions of 580 feet by 100 feet wide and a new end-loading ramp, while a similar facility was installed across the river in St-Siméon, at a total cost of about $1.5 million.

The *Rivière-du-Loup* opened the 1963 season until the *Trans-St-Laurent* could be placed onto the route in June. An advertisement placed in "The Gazette" on May 18, 1963, announced the new season opening as follows:

Ferry Service Across the St Lawrence. m.v. *Rivière-du-Loup*. Shortest Route Fastest Crossing between Rivière-du-Loup & St-Siméon. 3 Crossings Daily till the new *Trans-St-Laurent* comes into service. Accommodation for 30 Motor Cars. 250 Day Passengers. Connecting at St-Siméon with bus to Chicoutimi. Meals served on board.
Passage rates on the Rivière-du-Loup in 1962 had been $2.10 per passenger and $5 per automobile, but with the introduction of the new Trans-St-Laurent the standard passage fare was reduced to $2 while cars were held at $5. There was also a round-trip excursion fare, with no stopover or disembarkation, at $2 per person. Due to the Trans-St-Laurent's higher capacity the number of crossings was reduced from four to three per day by delaying departures an hour and cancelling the previous night-time crossings.

The company continued to sell the crossing as a way of getting to the "internationally celebrated Murray Bay and Pointe-au-Pic resort area," a big advantage it had over its competitors at Pointe au Père, Matane and Rimouski, which crossed to the other side of the Saguenay River. As well there were bus connections to Chicoutimi and to the Charlevoix-Saguenay crossing to Tadoussac. The Trans-St-Laurents "modern comfortable lounge and bar" replaced the Rivière-du-Loup "lunch counter on board," but she did not offer overnight accommodation as had the first Rivière-du-Loup.

Although the Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon route offers a crossing between the North and South Shores of the St Lawrence, when looked at on the map it actually has an east-west orientation, connecting many motorists from Quebec and Murray Bay to the Maritime Provinces and vice versa. The introduction of a modern new ferry thus boosted opportunities for this traffic by providing additional capacity for growth.

Meanwhile, the Rivière-du-Loup was laid up, and through the hands of a gentleman by the name of C Poulin she found a buyer in 1964 in Navigation Voyageur Inc of Montreal, who, starting in June 1965, ran an excursion business in the Port of Montreal. Renamed La Madelon II, she became a familiar sight in the river at Montreal, especially during the Expo '67 World's Fair, but she sank at her winter dock at Bickerdike Basin in November 1968 and had to be scrapped.

**Cross-River Mini-Cruises**

By 1965, four crossings per day were back, with no change in fares, and the former "excursion" had now become a "cruise", with the timetables containing the following note:-

Spend a glorious three hours on the majestic St Lawrence with a superb bar and cafeteria service at hand whenever desired. Last round trip from St-Siméon at 5:15 pm and from Rivière-du-Loup at 7:00 pm. Special $2.00 per person cruise fare does not permit stopover or disembarkation at other shore.

The company obviously thought that this would be an excellent way to boost
revenues as the same brochure went on to extol this option on its back cover:

See the beautiful St Lawrence on the magnificent ferry liner m.v. *Trans-St-Laurent*. Three sailings daily from Rivièr-du-Loup and St-Siméon, in the new, ultra-modern, most beautifully equipped ship on the river. You can relax and enjoy the superb lounge bar and dining facilities and spend a pleasant leisurely three hours cruising across one of the most beautiful and historic rivers in the world - the mighty St Lawrence. You'll find the crew courteous, considerate and helpful; the food and drinks up to the highest standard, and full three-course meals are available. This inexpensive and memorable excursion will be a highlight of your holiday - an unforgettable experience.

The company's continual efforts at publicising the leisure side of the Rivièr-du-Loup crossing, were soon evidenced in an article in the January-February 1966 issue of "Shipping Register & Shipbuilder":

The sleek, new ship is the *Trans-St-Laurent*, a double-decked all-white ferry capable of carrying 70 automobiles and 450 passengers... It plies the 15 miles of river between this picturesque Gaspé peninsula community and St-Siméon on the North Shore.

During the 75-minute voyage, passengers enjoy comforts that include a plush cocktail lounge, a spacious cafeteria, pleasant rest rooms and several passenger lounges with a spectacular view of the Gulf of St Lawrence.

Clarke was proud of its new ferry and the public was quite happy to be able to get out onto the open expanses of the St Lawrence River, even if only for a few hours in the summer time.

**Season Extension**

In 1969, the company scheduled an extended season for the *Trans-St-Laurent*, from April 13 to January 8, 1970. This compared to May 1 to November 30 in 1968. While the offering was still three crossings a day, and four crossings from mid-June to early September, this was almost eight weeks longer than the previous year, or a 30 per cent season extension.

Meanwhile, another senior Clarke master retired at the end of the 1970 season when Capt Emile Bélanger docked the *Trans-St-Laurent* on his last voyage. Capt Bélanger had served in at least fourteen different ships during his forty-six years with the company, including the *Empire Gangway* before she became the *Novaport*. 
Expanded Capacity and a Subsidy Contract

In 1971 and 1972, the Trans-St-Laurent's car capacity was increased by over 40 per cent, to 100 vehicles, with the addition of mezzanine decks that could be folded away when not in use.

The October 1972 issue of "Clarke News," in an item headed "Our Rivière-du-Loup Ferry Service" talked about this expanded capacity, but also mentioned an interesting difference that this ship had from all the others in the fleet: -

The vessel is probably one of the most comfortable ferries afloat, boasting a bar and restaurant, and a crew of 44. The only Clarke ship to employ ladies, the m.v. Trans-St-Laurent has a total of 26 barmaids, stewardesses and cooks to serve customers.

In 1973, Clarke reached an agreement with the Quebec Government whereby La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup - St-Siméon would continue to operate the service privately, but under a subsidy contract negotiated with the Government. This agreement preceded by three years the Quebec Government's take-over of La Traverse Matane-Godbout and put Clarke into a position where they would be able to operate the Rivière-du-Loup crossing for decades to come, as well as to increase service on this route in the following year. In all the years since 1930, the Rivière-du-Loup ferry service had maintained impeccable labour relations and its only strike occurred in August 1974, when sixty employees imitated a strike by forty-two more employees at the Charlevoix-Saguenay crossing seeking to have their wages indexed to the cost of living.

The "Radisson"

In 1974, a second ferry was once again added to the route, when the company agreed with the Société des Traversiers to staff and operate the latter's 1,149-ton Radisson, a former Trois Rivières ferry that had also been used between Quebec and Lévis. The June 27, 1974, issue of "The Globe & Mail" confirmed this: -

Two Clarke Transportation Canada Ltd ferry subsidiaries are assuming operation of ferries from the Quebec Government.

To add summer capacity on its lower St Lawrence River crossing between Rivière-du-Loup and [St-Siméon], La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon has chartered the ferry Radisson from June 29 to Sept 7.

Built by Davie Shipbuilding Ltd at Lauzon in 1954, the Radisson had dimensions of 176 feet overall by 72 feet and could accommodate 250
passengers and 55 cars. With the addition of a second ship, the frequency was raised to seven crossings daily, and the service remained a two-ship operation for several years, except 1983, when because of economic recession the Radisson remained in lay-up.

In 1993, however, the Radisson was needed to replace one of the Île-aux-Coudres ferries that had suffered an engine breakdown and the route once more returned to a one-ship operation. The Radisson subsequently became the Sociétés spare ferry and was often used on the Quebec-Lévis service.

Saguenay Ferries

Clarke’s final local operation was La Compagnie de Navigation Charlevoix-Saguenay. This company had been carrying on a year-round ferry service across the mouth of the Saguenay with the little Jacques Cartier, as well as its freight service between Quebec and Forestville/Raguenéau. In 1947, as far as the ferry service was concerned, the company’s name had taken on a more apposite meaning when county lines were redrawn, resulting in Baie-Ste-Catherine now being in Charlevoix County while Tadoussac, on the opposite side of the river, remained in Saguenay County.

The ferry terminal at Baie-Ste-Catherine benefited from $393,670 of wharf construction in a contract that was awarded by the Department of Public Works to the affiliated North Shore Construction Co in 1950. But there had been little change up to then in the traffic patterns across the Saguenay, with the ferry serving as it did the Hotel Tadoussac, also served by daily steamer from Quebec, the east side of the Saguenay River and the partly paved partly gravel highway beyond Tadoussac that passed through Forestville and then came to an end at Baie Comeau.

Winter Service on the Saguenay

Until 1954, the winter ferry service was provided by the specially modified chartered goélette Malbaie Transport. According to an internal memo on winter service dated October 1, 1957: -

The traffic was very light and consisted of only snowmobiles and some passengers. The number of trips performed daily varied from two trips in 1940 up to three or four trips in 1952-53.

In 1953 it was decided that the highway running along the North Shore would be kept open for vehicular traffic in winter. It was then decided to use the summer ferry to give service in the winter. The vessel was strengthened for ice, equipped with steel propellers and has been used on this service since.
The first two winters of this new service, that is, 1953-54 and 1954-55, only four trips were made daily. In the winter of 1955-56 the trips were augmented to six per day and in 1956-57 they were again augmented to eight per day.

The regular ferry *Jacques Cartier* was repowered with new diesel engines in 1955, and operated the ferry service alone until 1956.

**The Back-up Ferry "Le Sorelois"**

In 1956, as traffic started to develop, the 157-ton Sorel ferry *Le Sorelois* was acquired as back-up ship. Built in Montreal in 1899, originally for the Harbour Commissioners of Montreal, and later converted to a drive-on ferry, *Le Sorelois* had dimensions of 88 by 27 feet. She had had a varied career and would only serve Charlevoix-Saguenay until a new ferry could be built.

For what must have been tax reasons, *Le Sorelois* was registered first with the Inter Island Steamship Co, which had once owned the *Island Connector*, but soon transferred directly to Charlevoix-Saguenay ownership.

**Conversion to End-Loading**

In his Baie Comeau speech on December 4, 1957, Stanley Clarke recounted how the conversion to end-loading ferries had come about:

The Saguenay River crossing ... connects the road systems of the province with the communities from Tadoussac to Baie Comeau and soon to be extended as far as Seven Islands. As far back as 1954 a study of vehicle statistics showed that the m.v. *Jacques Cartier* would soon be unable to take care of this increasing vehicle traffic. Exhaustive studies were made and it was determined by the company that a mere increase in the size of the replacement vessel would not long satisfy the needs of this traffic. Not only would the vehicles become more numerous, but also with the advent of good roads, the service would have to handle quickly and economically large semi-trailers such as are found on the other highways in the province.

Our studies showed that only by radical improvement could these future requirements be met. A new end-loading ferry would have to be built by the company and new wharf facilities provided at l'Anse-à-l'Eau and l'Anse-au-Portage. This would require the construction of more than a mile of road through difficult terrain by the Provincial Government. I might mention in passing that these new locations were selected because they are relatively ice-free, thus making possible a
better service during the winter.

In the latter part of 1955, these proposals were discussed and put before the government bodies concerned and the company commenced work on the design of a suitable ship to perform this proposed service. It was not until the fall of 1956 that all parties could be convinced of the practicability of these proposals.

I'll add to the familiar cliché and say that time, tide and traffic wait for no man. Thus it was that at the beginning of 1956 the company was faced with ever-increasing traffic and no possibility of the new facilities being provided in time. A temporary solution of the problem was found by placing a second vessel, the m.v. Sorelois on the run so as to give as good a service as was possible under the existing conditions. Incidentally, the number of trips per day was increased from 22 in 1953 to 64 in 1957.

The first new ferry had now been ordered.

The "Saguenay"

In the same Baie Comeau speech, Stanley imparted some information on the new ferry that was soon to enter service:

You might be interested in knowing that the new vessel is 150 feet long, end loading and capable of taking three lines of automobiles or the largest trucks permitted to travel on our highways. It has two engines, one at each end, driving a variable pitch propeller fully controllable from the wheelhouse. Thirty-two different engine and propeller combinations were studied before arriving at this final solution. The vessel is also strengthened for navigation in ice to give a satisfactory year-round performance.

The new double-ended ferry, the 429-ton Saguenay, was built at a cost of $474,950 by Davie Shipbuilding at Lauzon, and launched on April 23, 1958, nine days before the North Voyageur. When she was introduced that summer, Stanley Clarke and T R McLagan, president of Canada Steamship Lines, Davie's parent company, shared a commemorative trip across the Saguenay River on the bridge of the new ferry. Once she entered service the Saguenay operated two round-trips an hour between Baie-Ste-Catherine and Tadoussac, with an additional late night service.

A drive-on ferry with dimensions of 151 feet overall by 38 feet, the Saguenay was powered by twin Burmeister & Wain diesels with Kort steering nozzles and controllable pitch propellers fore and aft, and was strengthened for navigation in ice. The steering nozzles protected the screws from ice damage, while controllable pitch propellers allowed the blade angle to be
changed from the wheelhouse so that the direction of the screws could be reversed without having to reverse the main engines. Both allowed for much more manoeuvrability than conventional screw and rudder arrangements. On top of that, she was a faster ship than her predecessors.

Able to carry 200 passengers and 25 cars with a small three-man crew, compared to seven in the *Jacques Cartier*, the *Saguenay* ran year-round, and, a major improvement for the development of trucking services to the North Shore, was capable of handling highway semi-trailers for the first time.

The *Saguenay* charged 35 cents per passenger and $1.25 per car, including driver, the same fares which had been in effect since 1939. With the new ferry, new docks and modifications were effected on both sides of the Saguenay in ice-free locations, at L'Anse-à-l'Eau and L'Anse-au-Portage, a move which cut the crossing time in half from the leisurely half-hour cruise that had been offered previously.

In the same year that the *Saguenay* was introduced a bridge was also opened over the Bersimis River, clearing the road through to Baie Comeau. Previously, the Quebec Department of Roads had operated a small ferry across the Bersimis River. The fact that the 35-ton *Père Charles Arnaud*, built in 1947 at St-Laurent, Ile-d'Orléans, had a similar name to the *Père Arnaud* that had run to the North Shore before the war, lead some people to believe that she too was operated by Clarke. But she was not.

On the subject of ships' names, never are two ships on the Canadian or British registers allowed to carry identical names at the same time. Even Cunard had had to ask the owner of a Scottish coastal steamer to change the name of one of its ships in order to be able to use the name *Queen Mary*. In the case of Charlevoix-Saguenay's *Saguenay*, however, which was registered at Quebec, Canada Steamship Lines wanted to give one of its ships the same name, and somehow managed to enrol a *Saguenay* at Montreal in 1964. Although the CSL ship took a name that had been carried by several passenger ships, she herself was an 18,058-ton bulk carrier. Both the Charlevoix-Saguenay and the CSL ships even came from the same shipyard, Davie Shipbuilding. When asked years later why this had been allowed, the Canadian Government could only respond that it must have been an oversight.

**The Freight Service**

Meanwhile, the freight service which La Compagnie de Navigation Charlevoix-Saguenay operated from Quebec, had been maintained using chartered tonnage - the company's *Louis Hébert* having been sold to F L Fraser's Maple Leaf Steamship Co during the war.
Charlevoix-Saguenay used the 1937-built *Malbaie Transport* post-war, until she finished out the 1953 season with thirty voyages, the first leaving Quebec on April 26 and the last on November 15. Having been Charlevoix-Saguenay's winter ferry at Tadoussac until only the previous winter, the *Malbaie Transport* may have ended up been the only goélette ever to have been employed year-round. But she was not used after 1954, other than for rare voyages on charter to Clarke.

The 1942-built *Jean-Eudes* took over the Quebec-Ragueneau run in 1954, completing thirty cargo voyages for Charlevoix-Saguenay. In 1955, however, she performed only fifteen, sharing the service with the *Ivan C*, which did fourteen. Clarke had decided to experiment, and in that year, the two vessels sailed from Montreal with Clarke cargo for Sept-Iles, then took on cargo at Quebec under Charlevoix-Saguenay waybills. With sailings about seven or eight days apart they were able to offer a total of twenty-nine sailings in 1955.

This joint carriage of Clarke and Charlevoix-Saguenay cargoes on the same ship might have proven too complicated, however, for in 1956, the *Jean-Eudes* returned to performing the Charlevoix-Saguenay cargo service on her own, with twenty-nine sailings from Quebec between April 24 and November 23. Although Clarke offered many Quebec departures with its own ships as well as other chartered vessels, some Clarke cargo continued to be loaded on each Charlevoix-Saguenay sailing. But the split service with Montreal was gone.

In 1957, the Charlevoix-Saguenay freight ship was *L'Emerillon*, which provided thirty sailings from Quebec, followed by another twenty-nine in 1958. Unlike the *Jean-Eudes* before her, *L'Emerillon* reverted to being a dedicated Charlevoix-Saguenay ship. Other than five special sailings from Quebec to Baie Comeau over these two years when she loaded some Clarke cargo, she loaded exclusively for Charlevoix-Saguenay.

The split ship was back in 1959, however, when the Clarke-chartered steel coaster *Fort Lévis* took up the Charlevoix-Saguenay cargo service, with thirty-two sailings. This was followed in 1960 by thirty voyages by the *Guard Mavoline*, another Clarke charter. These two ships loaded cargo under both Clarke and Charlevoix-Saguenay billings.

During the last freight season in 1961, Charlevoix-Saguenay had no dedicated ship. Instead, four chartered coasters employed in Clarke's own services loaded cargo at Quebec under Charlevoix-Saguenay bills, providing thirty-three departures over the season. Included in these was still the *Guard Mavoline*, which took thirteen of these departures. But this would also be the last year for Charlevoix-Saguenay's cargo service.

The decision for Charlevoix-Saguenay to withdraw from freighting came in 1962, with the news that Hydro-Quebec had awarded a three-year
contract for the transport of its goods and supplies to the North Shore to Agence Maritime of Quebec. The part of the North Shore that Charlevoix-Saguenay had been serving was full of rivers and waterfalls that were now being developed as a source of power. La Compagnie de Navigation Charlevoix-Saguenay, with its wonderful French style, as compared to the blatantly English Clarke Steamship Co, had up to now been successful in obtaining the bulk of this business from the Quebec Government. But without Hydro-Quebec there was not enough traffic to warrant continuing a separate service.

Although Clarke had maintained the Charlevoix-Saguenay cargo service ever since acquiring it over twenty years earlier, it had no other contracted cargo. Thus, it was decided that the Clarke Steamship Co would now handle the freight business and Charlevoix-Saguenay would attend to the modernisation and management of the expanding cross-Saguenay ferry service. This had become even more important after the opening of the through highway all the way to Sept-Iles in October 1960.

Under a contract signed with the Québec Government in 1961, Charlevoix-Saguenay promised an increase in service with a second new ferry, in return for an annual subsidy of $48,000, payable for twelve years.

The "Charlevoix"

Thus, in 1962 a new running mate joined the Saguenay. Two modern ice-strengthened steel ferries would now connect the two counties for which the operating company had been named. On March 29, 1962, in anticipation of the new ferry that would connect with the new North Shore highway, "L'Avenir" of Sept-Iles carried an item headed "Charlevoix Ready In May": -

The Clarke Steamship Company has announced that the car ferry Charlevoix now under construction at the Filion yards on the Isle of Orleans will be ready for launching in May. The vessel will augment the present ferry service provided by the m.v. Saguenay, built in 1958, across the mouth of the Saguenay. She will cost another half million dollars and will be the first steel vessel ever constructed by the Filion yard, which hitherto has concentrated on wooden ships for Gulf service.

The 535-ton Lloyd's Ice Class 2 car ferry Charlevoix, was completed by Chantier Maritime de St-Laurent Ltée of St-Laurent at a very reasonable cost of $495,000. If we include the Manicouagan of 1924, she was the second company ship to have been built in that yard, founded by Ovide Filion in October 1911 and now headed by Roméo Filion. With dimensions of 181 feet overall by 38 feet and twin Burmeister & Wain diesels like the Saguenay, the Charlevoix had a speed of 10 knots, and a capacity for 200 passengers and 30 cars. And, like the Saguenay, the Charlevoix had controllable pitch
With the introduction of a second ship, the service was now well equipped to look after the expanding transport and tourist needs generated by the new highway on the North Shore. As it happened, the Charlevoix was being added to the fleet to take more road business not only after Charlevoix-Saguenay had closed its own freight service, but also just a few months after the parent company's North Shore had closed out its all-water alternative for both cargo and passengers. Passengers who had previously travelled as far as Sept-Iles in the North Shore could now travel in buses that crossed the mouth of the Saguenay in either the Charlevoix or Saguenay, while those heading for points beyond Sept-Iles could sail from Rimouski in the Jean Brillant. Or, if they had the time, they could be one of the 24 passengers that still sailed in the parent company's North Pioneer from Montreal and Quebec every two weeks.

**Tolls Abolished**

On April 9, 1970, an agreement was reached with the Quebec Government whereby the Saguenay crossing became an integral part of the provincial highway system and all tolls were abolished.

From the opening of the service 30 years earlier to the abolition of tolls, the fares charged by Charlevoix-Saguenay had never been increased, a remarkable feat which was due mainly to adapting new technology and the growth in the traffic over this period. Clarke now signed a contract to perform the service for an agreed sum per year.

With fares for both passengers and vehicles abolished, the Quebec Government agreed to pay Charlevoix-Saguenay an annual grant of $675,000, an amount that was increased to $743 000 in 1971-1972, $790 000 in 1972-1973 and $839 000 in 1973-1974, amounts that were also increased as traffic on the service grew.

**The "Pierre de Saurel"**

In 1974, frequency was increased from every half-hour to every 15 minutes with the addition of the 538-ton end loading ferry Pierre de Saurel. This had been the second ferry mentioned in "The Globe & Mail" article on June 27, 1974, which had gone on to add that:

For the free service across the Saguenay River, operated under contract with the Quebec Government, La Compagnie de Navigation Charlevoix-Saguenay Ltée will add the ferry Pierre de Saurel to the two it already has.
The Pierre de Saurel, now undergoing repairs at Sorel, Que, is to be available about the middle of next month.

Stanley Clarke in the October 1974 issue of "Clarke News" recounted the interesting background to this story:

In late 1973 when it became evident that improvements in the service were essential, it was suggested by the Provincial Government that the government-owned m.v. Radisson be put into service. This vessel, however, was a large side-loading ship, which could not use existing end-loading facilities even if modified and therefore have to use the old dock. The vessel could not take all forms and types of road vehicles, and it would be difficult to co-ordinate with the rest of the service in addition to increasing crossing distance.

In Ontario, the company located an end-loading vessel the Pierre de Saurel which could fit in with the existing operations. It suggested the Government purchase this vessel. In 1974, the Provincial Government acquired the ship and advised the company on May 6, 1974, to operate it on its behalf. Total capacity was now increased to 336 vehicles per hour.

The third ship, after being purchased by the Quebec Government, was staffed and operated by a Clarke crew, as was the Radisson, which was assigned instead to the Rivière-du-Loup service.

Like the earlier Le Sorelois, the Pierre de Saurel was a former Sorel ferry but had been built in 1957 by Marine Industries at Sorel. She had dimensions of 176 feet overall by 40 feet and could carry up to 320 passengers and 36 cars.

In 1978, the Quebec Government also began construction of new piers at both Tadoussac and Baie-Ste-Catherine, work that would cost $9 million by the time it was completed in 1981.

The Saguenay Service is Sold

Meanwhile, in 1980, the service was nationalized and the Quebec Government purchased La Compagnie de Navigation Charlevoix-Saguenay and its two ferries Charlevoix and Saguenay. It had done something similar four years earlier when it bought out the Matane-Godbout route. But Clarke had been operating the Saguenay crossing for four decades, much longer than the more recent Matane-Godbout service.

Société des Traversiers now took over direct operation, having already ordered two new ferries, the 1,287-ton Armand Imbeau and Jos Deschênes, which were built at a cost of $9,543,740 and named in a joint ceremony at
the provincially owned MIL shipyard in Sorel on April 12, 1980. Although they
took their design from the Clarke ferries they replaced, the new Ice Class 1
vessels were quite a bit bigger, measuring 205 feet overall by 70 feet and
carrying 400 passengers and 60 cars.

The new ships took their names from local personalities. Armand
Imbeau had operated a small shipyard at the mouth of the Saguenay as well
as having been the captain of the little Mahone when she came to the rescue
of the grounded Rivière-du-Loup-Tadoussac ferry Pilot in January 1916. And
Capt Deschênes had provided the first cross-Saguenay ferry service with the
Bixie B, and after selling to the Clarkes in 1940 had continued in command of
the Jacques Cartier and then the Saguenay, until his retirement in 1959.
Other members of the Deschênes family had served as relief master on the
Saguenay ferries and manager of the Clarke Steamship Co in Baie Comeau.

With the introduction of the new ferries, the Charlevoix and Saguenay
were sold to the Ontario Government in 1982, for use as back-up ferries for
its GO Marine services around Kingston.

The sale of the Charlevoix-Saguenay ferry service left only the Trans-
St-Laurent in the hands of Clarke and this service would continue under
contract with the Quebec Government for many years to come. The Trans-
St-Laurent would eventually become the last ship to run under Clarke
colours, which she still does today.

The Trans-St-Laurent would exceed the Jean Brillant's thirty-four years
by a wide margin as she would become the only Clarke ship ever to have
served for the company for more than half a century. But unlike the Jean
Brillant, which had been built in England and served between Miami and
Nassau during the war, the Trans-St-Laurent spent her entire career in the St
Lawrence River without ever leaving it.

The "Trans-St-Laurent"

Built to carry 450 passengers, this ship had her passenger license
amended to carry up to 500 passengers, but this was later reduced again to
409. Between 1989 and 2003, annual traffic on this route varied between
70,000 and 90,000 vehicles and 170,000 to 220,000 passengers, of which 52
per cent were southbound and 48 per cent northbound.

An effort was made in late 1982 to sell the Rivière-du-Loup operation
as no longer fitting into Clarke's long-haul transport operations, and a buyer
was found in Roger Rioux, owner of La Traverse Trois Pistoles-Escoumins. An
agreement was reached in early 1983, but owing to Rioux's ownership of the
competing Trois Pistoles ferry 28 miles downstream from Rivière-du-Loup,
the Quebec government overruled the sale and the Rivière-du-Loup ferry
service stayed with Clarke.
With the 1984 season, the service was returned to a two-ship operation when the *Radisson* was brought out of lay-up at Quebec to rejoin the *Trans-St-Laurent*, arriving at Rivière-du-Loup on July 26. And as an indication of how Clarke had managed to lengthen the season, the *Trans-St-Laurent*’s service in 1986 started on March 24. Not so many years previously, the season had not opened until June.

Meanwhile, in what turned out to be her longest crossing ever, the *Trans-St-Laurent* left Rivière-du-Loup on January 2, 1987, with 100 passengers and their cars for St-Siméon, and ran into such foul weather that her usual 75-minute St Lawrence crossing took 20 hours. She finally reached St-Joseph-de-la-Rive, 44 miles upstream, where she berthed on January 3. At other times when the weather was foul, crossings had to be cancelled, but this did not happen very often. On one occasion though, in the spring of 2006, the *Trans-St-Laurent* had to remain tied up at Rivière-du-Loup for two days in a row, having already cancelled nine crossings in the previous four weeks. When this sort of weather happened, it also affected Matane and Rimouski further downstream.

Over the course of the years, the *Trans-St-Laurent* lost the blue riband that originally encircled her hull about mid-way up, leaving her with a white hull and the orange undersides that had been introduced in the mid-1960s. Although she had an all-white hull when first introduced in 1963, the darker bottom colour was more practical. Her hull colour was then changed from orange to black in 2012.

The *Trans-St-Laurent* also took a leaf from the old Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co ships and introduced occasional weekend day cruises to Tadoussac to see the whales, when her schedule of up to five crossings a day allowed. On five-sailing days, she departed Rivière-du-Loup at 7 am on her first crossing and made her last trip from St-Siméon at 9:45 pm. Her crossing time of 65 minutes put her back in Rivière-du-Loup not long before 10 pm. On a three-sailing day she left Rivière-du-Loup at 8 am and was back from her last crossing to St-Siméon at about 6:35 pm.

To further the ship’s fame, she even had a song written about her. Local country singer Edouard Castonguay, born in 1929, just a few months before the ferry company was formed, wrote "A Bord du *Trans-St-Laurent*" in 1975. This song was re-released in the album "Jolie Fleur des Bois" in 2006, the year Castonguay died in Rivière-du-Loup.

With a annual fare revenue of about $5 million, the service is about 85 to 90% self-financing, or about 75% so after taking into account the costs of the terminals on either side of the river, with the loss made up under the terms of the operating contract with the Province of Quebec. The subsidy allows the service to be operated outside the peak tourist season. By way of comparison, the Matane-Baie Comeau-Godbout service is only about 65%
self-financing, or about 55% so after paying for the terminals, and carries about 90,000 vehicles and 225,000 passengers annually, marginally more than the Rivière-du-Loup service but with a larger ship. But unlike the Rivière-du-Loup service, the Matane routes are operated year-round.

In describing drives around Charlevoix County on November 20, 2006, the "New York Times" had this to say about the Trans-St-Laurent crossing:

In St-Siméon, signs direct cars and trucks down to the ferry terminal. Boarding is on a first-come, first-served basis, and ferries leave on a carefully observed schedule, weather permitting, from April to early January. Departure times of the two to five daily sailings vary substantially from month to month, however, so get in touch with the company, Clarke Transport Canada ... to obtain a copy of the schedule... MasterCard and Visa are accepted. Arrive at least 30 minutes before departure, 1 hour ahead in summer. Voyages take 65 to 75 minutes.

From late June to September, passengers may enjoy a bonus on the ferry trip. Those are the months when the whales are most active. They are estimated at more than 500 in number when pelagic (migratory) species join the resident minke and beluga whales. They prefer the northern side of the estuary, roughly from La Malbaie to Baie-Ste-Catherine, at the mouth of the Saguenay River. Because that is the area the ferry steams through, sightings are an ever-present possibility, especially in summer.

On July 12, 2010, a new contract was agreed with the Société des Traversiers, and was announced the next day in "InfoDimanche," in a story headed "New Seven-Year Contract For La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon":

The contract

The president and general manager of the Société des Traversiers du Québec, Georges Farrah, and the president of La Traverse Rivière-du-Loup, Stephen Denton, announced the contract renewal yesterday in the course of a crossing between Rivière-du-Loup and St-Siméon.

Messrs Farrah and Denton, accompanied by Captain Marc Harvey, manager of the ferry service, took advantage of a crossing in the m.v. Trans-St-Laurent to meet both crew and customers.

The Rivière-du-Loup-St-Siméon ferry service makes close to 1,800 crossings a year and employs some 100 personnel.

Messrs Denton and Harvey also took advantage of the occasion to announce that modernization work will be effected on the m.v. Trans-
St-Laurent starting this winter.

Mr Farrah underlined the corporation's efforts to assure clientele a high quality service as well as its efforts to encourage development of the tourist industry in the Lower St Lawrence, Charlevoix and North Shore regions.

Dock ay, the STQ announced an investment of $28 million to modernize and revitalize the docking facility at Rivière-du-Loup.

As Clarke's main line routes had begun to close with the arrival of new highway systems, or in the case of Newfoundland be operated in conjunction with other operators, the Rivière-du-Loup ferry service was now the only route remaining of the once-numerous shipping services of the Clarke Steamship Co.

The Lower North Shore

On the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's old route from Rimouski to the Lower North Shore and Blanc-Sablon, Logistec Navigation's 123-passenger Fort Mingan continued in service until the end of 1986. During 1986, however, the Quebec Ministry of Transport called for new tenders and bids were received from Logistec Navigation, Groupe Desgagnés and a newcomer, Relais Nordik Inc. Relais Nordik's proposal to operate the service with 20-foot containers, using one ship instead of two, won the competition and a new contract was awarded for them to start in 1987.

The Rimouski-Blanc-Sablon service was to pass to Relais Nordik's 1,748-ton Nordik Express, a ship with dimensions of 228 feet by 44 feet, and a capacity for 200 passengers, with 64 of them in berths (later increased to 268, with 72 in berths) and 68 containers. The new ship was formerly the Tartan Sea, an Ice Class 1 offshore supply ship with 7,200 brake horsepower. A product of Todd Shipyards Inc in Seattle, she was taken under long-term charter from her owners, Secunda Marine Inc of Dartmouth, NS. Most of Relais Nordik's employees, including ship's crew, dock office staff and stevedores, had worked in the service previously with Logistec.

As the Nordik Express was not ready in April, Relais Nordik had to charter her 2,341-ton sister ship Sable Sea for the first month, but the Nordik Express finally departed Halifax for Rimouski on June 5, 1987, after a three-month conversion. She started a new schedule of 6-day sailings with a departures from Rimouski every Tuesday, and would make forty-one round voyages per year. Although in her last year of service the Jean Brillant had sailed on Wednesdays, Tuesday had been the usual sailing day for both the Jean Brillant and the Fort Mingan. On her arrival, the Nordik Express also added a call at Port Menier, Anticosti.
Despite the start-up problems of the *Nordik Express* during her first season in 1987, she still turned over $7 million. Nevertheless, it was announced on January 8, 1988, that Relais Nordik had reached an agreement with Groupe Desgagnés whereby Desgagnés would take an 88 per cent shareholding in the new venture. Thus, Desgagnés was now involved in operating scheduled passenger and cargo services for the first time in its long history in the St Lawrence.

Meanwhile, Agence Maritime sold the *Fort Mingan* in 1989 to a consortium of owners in St Pierre et Miquelon called SPM Tours, who intended to use her as a cruise and casino ship sailing from St John’s on 3- and 4-day cruises to Fortune, on Newfoundland’s Burin Peninsula, and St Pierre et Miquelon. This idea did not meet with success, however, and she eventually went under Honduran flag, becoming first *Amstel* in 1994 and then *Dida* in 1998. As *Dida*, she is managed by Titan Foods Inc of Miami, who operate a marine terminal on the Miami Canal, which drains into the Miami River.

In 1994, six years after the introduction of the *Nordik Express*, Relais Nordik acquired another cross-river vessel, the 2,371-ton *Nordik Passeur*. The ex-Prince Edward Island ferry *Confederation*, she was placed into service three times a week between Rivière-au-Renard on the Gaspé coast, Anticosti Island and Havre-St-Pierre and Baie-Johan-Beetz on the North Shore. But after three years of heavy losses she was laid up at the end of 1996 in the Louise Basin at Quebec, where she lay until being sold for scrap in 2007.

**The Strait of Belle Isle**

Clarke had served the Strait of Belle Isle to Bradore Bay and Blanc-Sablon from 1921 through 1969. When the company first arrived, the area had been called "the Canadian Labrador" but over the years, especially after Newfoundland joined the union, it had come to be known instead as the Lower North Shore. From the mid 1920s until the Second World War, Clarke ships had also linked Newfoundland with the North Shore, at Corner Brook and later Bonne Bay, and its cruise ships had not only called on both sides of the Gulf, but also sailed beyond the Strait of Belle Isle to St Anthony and Battle Harbour.

Strong ties between the two areas had been indicated by the Grenfell Mission, headquartered in St Anthony and with outposts in both Labrador and the Lower North Shore. Before the war, passengers could travel back and forth on Clarke ships between Godbout, Shelter Bay, Clarke City, Sept-Iles, Havre-St-Pierre, Natashquan and Corner Brook and take the same route home in the *Nayarit*, later *North Voyageur*, and the *Gaspesia*, later *North Voyageur* (ii).

Later, roads had begun to appear on the Lower North Shore and the Strait of Belle Isle. Albert Whiteley recounted this in an article entitled
"Communications on the Lower North Shore" in the August-September 1977 issue of "Canadian Geographical Journal": -

In the 1960s the Quebec Government began to link fishing posts by road along the Lower North Shore while the Newfoundland Government was doing likewise north of Blanc-Sablon. The federal government's winter works program paid for the initial construction and in succeeding years more roads were built. Two projects completed are a 64-km road linking Blanc-Sablon to Rivière-St-Paul and an 11-km extension to Vieux-Fort.

The road was completed to Salmon Bay, about two-thirds of the distance by 1969, where a stream was bridged and the road continued to Rivière-St-Paul. It was not until 1975 that a crew bridged that river by constructing a causeway and steel span.

[The] St Barbe ... ferry allows a Lower North Shore resident to visit Newfoundland and visitors from the island to drive 64 km north to Red Bay, Labrador, or west to Vieux Port.

The first St Barbe to Blanc-Sablon ferry was a wooden motor coaster owned by the Puddister Trading Co of St John's. The press followed development of the Strait of Belle Isle ferry and excerpts over the years indicated a huge increase in the annual subsidy that this operation required. From $187,000 in 1973-74 it had reached half a million dollars in 1977 and a million dollars by 1984.

An item appeared in "The Globe & Mail" on February 17, 1977, under the heading "Puddister purchase": -

Puddister Trading Co Ltd of St John's has bought the former ferry N A Comeau from the Quebec Government as a replacement for its subsidized passenger and motor vehicle ferry between Blanc-Sablon and St Barbe, Nfld.

Renamed the Northern Cruiser, the 1,500-ton ship will replace the company's Marine Coaster, which was built in 1902.

The N A Comeau, having become surplus on the Matane-Godbout route, had been laid up in Quebec's Louise Basin since 1975. Another story, headed "Northern Cruiser granted increased annual subsidy," was carried in "The Globe & Mail" on May 19, 1977, and gave some further details: -

The Department of Transport has granted an increased annual subsidy, $525,000 for the operation of an improved ferry service across the Gulf of St Lawrence between St Barbe, Nfld, and Blanc-Sablon, Que.

The subsidy goes to Northern Cruiser Ltd, unit of the previous
operator, Puddister Trading Co Ltd of St John's, which has acquired an end-loading ferry, built in 1962, capable of carrying 100 passengers and 30 cars.

And within seven years, a story appeared in "Canadian Sailings" on May 21, 1984, confirming a "Million dollar subsidy for ferry": -

The federal Department of Transport has awarded a $1.08 million subsidy to Northern Cruiser Ltd of St John's to help pay the cost of improving a ferry service between St Barbe on the province's northwest coast and the St Lawrence North Shore community of Blanc-Sablon, Quebec in the Strait of Belle Isle.

Northern Cruiser Ltd, owned by Puddister Trading Co Ltd, St John's, will replace an older 40 car ferry, the Northern Cruiser, with the Sieur d'Amours, which will be renamed Northern Princess.

Puddister Trading bought the Sieur d'Amours last year from the Quebec Government owned La Société des Traversiers du Québec, which had used it between Matane and Godbout until 1981...

The ferry, built by George T Davie Ltd, Lauzon, Quebec, in 1966, will carry fifty-five cars and will be rated for 250 passengers on its two-hour run from St Barbe to Blanc-Sablon.

The Northern Princess held the contract to provide the Strait of Belle Isle crossing until the end of 1999.

In January 2000, a new company, Labrador Marine Ltd, won the contract to supply the Strait of Belle Isle ferry service Controlled by the Woodward Group of Goose Bay, Labrador Marine brought the 6,840-ton ex-Baltic ferry Apollo to the route, the second ex-Baltic ferry of this name to operate in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Under a four-year contract worth $17.8 million, the service was to operate from the end of April through to the beginning of January and was subsidized by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. From a little wooden coaster, the Labrador ferries had just kept getting bigger.

While the subsidy had increased substantially, the Strait of Belle Isle ferry was now an integral part of the development of Labrador, opening up the coast to highway traffic for the first time. Where once Clarke cruise ships had called at isolated Forteau Bay with curious tourists, today people can drive there in their own cars along the Labrador Coastal Drive from Blanc-Sablon. Equally, visitors to Battle Harbour can drive along a gravel highway to Mary's Harbour and take the half-hour boat ride across to Battle Island, where Battle Harbour's waterfront has now been restored.

In the winter of 2011, another change arrived when winter service was
provided by the larger 11,197-ton Newfoundland winter terminal was switched to Corner Brook. When service ended that March, the then returned to the Blanc-Sablon-St Barbe crossing. That year, however, the damaged a propeller and shaft and had to go to St John's for drydocking. Until she could return, the Woodward-owned 1,746-ton ro-ro vessel stood in for her, but had to be assisted by aircraft as she could carry only 12 passengers.

In subsequent winters, the *Sir Robert Bond* has returned, operating twice-weekly 12-hour crossings in each direction between Blanc-Sablon and Corner Brook, when conditions allow. In many instances however the winter schedule is determined by ice conditions and delays are not uncommon.

**St Lawrence and Saguenay Ferries**

One of the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's ferry routes was revived in 1998 when the new 30-knot 142-foot 591-ton catamaran ferry *CNM Evolution* began service carrying up to 150 passengers and 30 cars between Rimouski and Forestville for Chantier Naval Matane, under the name Traverse Rimouski-Forestville. The crossing time is 55 minutes, compared to three hours when the *Rimouski* made this crossing.

The ferry services started by the Lower St Lawrence company and Ungava Transports were succeeded by La Traverse Matane Godbout, and then Société des Traversiers, whose 600-passenger *Camille Marcoux* serves both Baie Comeau and Godbout from the South Shore at Matane under the new name Traverse Matane-Baie Comeau-Godbout. Eventual replacement plans for the *Camille Marcoux* have included a fast ferry service using a 35-knot vessel capable of carrying 300 passengers and 60 cars between Rimouski, Baie Comeau and Matane, but in the end the solution was more conventional.

In July 2012, the Société des Traversiers placed a $148 million order with Fincantieri in Italy for a new 426-foot replacement for the Camille Marcoux. The new diesel-electric ferry will take 800 passengers and 180 cars and will be able to burn either diesel fuel or liquid natural gas. The design for the new ferry was awarded to the Finnish-Canadian partnership of Deltamarin/Navtec. She will be used for multiple services on the year-round Matane-Baie-Comeau-Godbout route and with 1,600 sailings a year, will allow for more than 200,000 passengers and over 116,000 vehicles annually. Delivery is scheduled for late 2014.

Meanwhile on the Saguenay, the Société des Traversiers now operated the Baie-Ste-Catherine-Tadoussac service, purchased from Clarke in 1980. Its new ferries *Armand Imbeau* and *Jos Deschênes* were joined by a third, the 2,489-ton *Félix Antonie Savard*, in 1997. The *Savard* also acts as a back-up ferry for other routes.
The Armand Imbeau and Jos Deschénes were lengthened to 269 feet overall in 1997 in order to be able to accommodate 75 cars, a process that increased their gross tonnage to 1,702 in each case

The traffic handled over this service, offered free of charge as an integral part of the North Shore highway, built up to over 828,000 vehicles and 1.5 million passengers by 2004, at a cost of about $12-13 million annually.

In May 2013, the Société des Traversiers placed an order for two new 302-foot 115-vehicle ferries with the Davie Shipyard at Lauzon, at a cost of $62.5 million each, for the Saguenay crossing. The new ships, for delivery in 2015, have been designed by Concept Naval of Quebec City and STX Canada to replace existing vessels. They will possess the ice class required to navigate the harsh winter conditions at the mouth of the Saguenay, and will also be dual-fuelled, able to burn both liquefied natural gas and diesel oil.

The "Jacques Cartier"

An earlier ship that survived, much changed, although still with her original name, was the Saguenay ferry Jacques Cartier. She was acquired by Capt Luc Harvey from La Compagnie de Navigation Cartier Ltée in 1970. After being rebuilt for excursion work from Trois Rivières, Harvey built a large cabin on her former car deck, with wheelhouse still aft, and a passenger capacity of 150.

Rebuilt in 1977 and again in 1985, Harvey converted her into a two-deck day cruiser accommodating 380 passengers and running two services daily from May through September, and up to four on summer Saturdays, on the St Lawrence and Lac St Pierre. During her 1985 rebuilding, she was equipped with a modern wheelhouse forward and two full-length passenger decks, with her engines still aft.

In 1987, the Jacques Cartier received two new diesel engines giving her a total of 1,400 horsepower, which increased her speed and thus allowed her to make longer trips to Montreal, Quebec and the Richelieu River. At the same time, a third deck expanded her passenger capacity to 400.

The Jacques Cartier is now the oldest surviving active member of the Clarke fleet. Built in 1924, although not actually acquired by Clarke until 1940, she now sails regularly from her long-time home port of Trois-Rivières.

The "Jean Brillant"

The Jean Brillant, on the other hand, became a bit of a phantom ship,
still surviving somewhere between the Florida coast and the Bahamas. She even featured as a seagoing prop in one or two television movies during the 1980s.

In 1971, she was purchased by Richard Kritzer of Chicago, who gave her the name *Lizza K* and registered her as a yacht. Once again she wore the white hull with which she had been launched at Swan Hunter in 1935, and once again she was back in Florida waters, where she had spent her winters and one summer during the war and just thereafter.

**The "Matane"**

Built for a Clarke company, and last heard of laid up in the Columbia River, was Deepsea Ventures' 298-ton *R/V Prospector*, as she had become known. The former *Matane* of the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co was converted into an ocean research and survey ship by the Newport News Shipbuilding & Dry Dock Co in 1964, to undertake oceanographic work and research into ship behaviour at sea.

After five years working for Newport News, she was sold to Deepsea Ventures and repowered with a Caterpillar diesel in 1969. Deepsea Ventures was involved in deep ocean mining for manganese nodules, which contain copper, nickel and cobalt, and for this purpose, they operated two experimental deep-sea mining ships. An article by William Siapno, who joined Deepsea Ventures as chief geologist not long after they acquired the *Prospector*, appearing in the Fall 2002 issue of the newsletter of the Virginia Polytechnic Department of Geological Sciences, carried further news of the former *Matane*: -

Early in 1969 *R/V Prospector* made a port call in Washington DC to announce the start of an international consortium to explore and mine manganese modules. Dignitaries from government and industry were invited to lunch and the opportunity to inspect the vessel and its scientific equipment. It was a huge success and Deepsea was on its way.

In January the *Prospector* began mapping the Blake Plateau in the Atlantic preparing for mining tests. A World War II cargo vessel was designed and converted to the *Deepsea Miner*, the world's first ocean mining ship. Tests were completed in 1970 and surveying was moved to the Pacific where higher-grade ores were known.

In short order, Japanese and German companies came to Deepsea to study nodule deposits and exploration techniques, and the Deepsea consortium was formed with US Steel, Sun Oil, Simim of Italy and Union Minière of Belgium. Surveys were conducted out of San Diego, Hawaii and Panama, that resulted in the filing of the world's first deep
ocean mining claim in the late 1970s.

While based at San Diego, the R/V Prospector transited the Panama Canal about seven times and held a record for setting a two-ton buoy 1,100 miles at sea in 15,000 feet of water. She was equipped with a deep-submergence television system with a depth capacity of 25,000 feet. Crewed by a team of thirteen, she logged well over 300,000 miles in her first eleven years with Deepsea Ventures, in addition to 40,000 miles in her time with Newport News.

By 1975, the R/V Prospector had completed forty exploratory cruises in the Pacific Ocean, with extensive seafloor photography and bottom sampling, and had recovered 300 tons of nodules. The first of the actual mining ships, from 1969 to 1974, was the Deepsea Miner, once Cunard Line's 3,841-ton cargo liner Brescia, and the second was Deepsea Miner II, the former 8,208-ton ore carrier Weser Ore, converted at Galveston over the winter of 1976-77. Both were equipped with large centre wells for mining and a huge derrick.

Although deep sea mining has not developed due to its very high costs, metallic deposits in the Pacific Ocean alone are adequate to cover the world's needs for thousands of years. After extensive use that always saw her on the go, the R/V Prospector was advertised by Deepsea Ventures for hire at San Diego, but she was sent into lay up in the freshwater of the Columbia River in the 1980s. More than twenty years after being laid up, she was once again offered for sale, in 2007, at first for $125,000, then for $99,000, but was finally broken up at Longview, Washington, in 2010.

The "Charlevoix" and "Saguenay"

The former Clarke ferries Charlevoix and Saguenay remained at Kingston for some time as back-up ships for the services operated by GO Marine, principally between Kingston and Wolfe Island and between Adolphustown and Glenora, on the Quinte Peninsula, on eastern Lake Ontario.

The Saguenay was sold and moved first to Sarnia, Ontario, as the Ferry Princess. In 1990, she sailed from Windsor for Bonne Bay, Newfoundland, passing down the Welland Canal on May 3. On her way east, she survived a severe storm off Anticosti, during which, on May 11, her entire crew of eleven had to be evacuated by helicopter in 60-knot winds. Salvaged later, she finally arrived at Norris Point, Newfoundland, on May 25 for delivery to her new owners, BL Holdings Ltd.

As the car ferry Tessa Kathleen, the former Saguenay was now in waters once familiar to Clarke ships, for she was in Bonne Bay, where the cruise ships had called in the 1930s. Here, her intended run was between
Norris Point and Woody Point, on the south side of the fjord, but the service, although based on an old route, was not successful. It lasted only a few years before she was sold abroad and not replaced.

The Charlevoix, meanwhile, assumed the Amherst Island service at Millhaven under the new name of Frontenac II. Occasionally, this vessel also stands in for the larger 968-ton Wolfe Islander III on the Wolfe Island run as both ferry services are near Kingston. As she did in her Saguenay River days, the Frontenac II provides the Amherst Island ferry service year-round, now carrying up to 281 passengers and 40 cars on her twenty-minute crossings to the Ontario mainland.

Meanwhile, over the years, traffic between Baie-Ste-Catherine and Tadoussac built up to the extent that by 2012 the 24-hour Saguenay crossings handled 1.2 million vehicles and more than 1.5 million passengers a year.

The "North Gaspé"

Meanwhile, the North Gaspé, last operating in the Galapagos Islands as Metropolitan Touring's 1,312-ton cruise ship Iguana, disappeared from the cruise schedules on her arrival at Guayaquil on New Year's Eve 1979, after more than forty years of service.

In 1980, the 1,603-ton Santa Cruz, a 90-passenger cruise ship, purpose-built in Spain for the Galapagos, replaced the Iguana, which was sold to Capt Fausto Aguilera, who operated the cargo service between Guayaquil and the Galapagos Islands. As the Iguana, she remained classed at Lloyd's until December 1981 and was still listed in "Lloyd's Register" for 1991-92, under the ownership of Maritima de Turismo of Guayaquil. Thereafter, her career of fifty-four years ends abruptly with the note "deleted 1992."

These were the small ships that operated Clarke's local services. From the Jean Brillant, that had operated the Miami-Nassau winter service for five years during the war and immediately thereafter, to the Trans-St-Laurent that never left the St Lawrence in half a century of service, to the Matane that had sailed far and wide across the globe, and the North Gaspé that had started in Clarke's main line services, served Bermuda and Newfoundland during the war and then the Magdalen Islands and the Galapagos, all ships built for the company, each with its own story to tell.

Only one ship, the Trans-St-Laurent, survives in the service for which she was built, transporting some 77,000 vehicles and 161,000 passengers during 2009. Indeed, in 2013 she went to the Verreault shipyard at Les Méchins and spent the period from January 11 to February 10 in drydock there undergoing her winter refit. She then laid up at Rivière-du-Loup until
re-entering service on March 28, one of the very few times she had not wintered at Quebec, where there one could have almost always found a Clarke ship wintering every year since 1921.