CHAPTER 8

CLARKE SHIPS GO TO WAR - AND WAR COMES TO THE ST LAWRENCE

On Friday, September 1, 1939, the *North Star*, was in the middle of her final cruise of the summer, from New York to Montreal, at Bonne Bay, Newfoundland. The *New Northland*, on her sixth cruise of the season, was in the "Kingdom of the Saguenay." Both are places of great beauty. Passengers looked forward to a calm and peaceful day, but the news from Europe was anything but that. Germany had just invaded Poland. Two days later, on Sunday, September 3, with Germany having ignored a deadline set by the United Kingdom and France to withdraw from Poland, the world would be at war.

On the day that war was declared, Donaldson Line's *Athenia* was a day out from Liverpool, en route from Glasgow to Montreal by way of the Strait of Belle Isle. But she would never reach Canada. Instead, she was torpedoed by the German submarine *U-30*, whose captain supposedly mistook her for a warship. Some 118 lives were lost in this, the first Allied merchant ship loss of the war. Luckily, conditions allowed 1,300 survivors to be rescued by two cargo ships, one American and one Norwegian, the Swedish yacht *Southern Cross* and the British destroyers HMS *Electra*, *Escort* and *Fame*. The 5,749-ton *Knute Nelson* landed 449 survivors at Galway Bay in Ireland, while the *Southern Cross* rescued 376 and transferred 236 of them to the 4,963-ton *City of Flint*, which took them on to Halifax. The remaining 140 she took with her to Miami. The British destroyers meanwhile rescued the remaining survivors. Having sailed from Sweden in late August after an ill-starred European peace mission, Axel Wenner-Gren and his *Southern Cross* just happened to be nearby as she was returning to Nassau, where Wenner-Gren had purchased a home on what is today called Paradise Island.

The sinking of this Montreal-bound ship of course shocked the
Canadian public. Of her record 1,102 passengers, 469 were Canadian and 316 American. When the *Athenia* was struck, the *North Star* was in the Strait of Belle Isle, en route from Forteau Bay to Havre-St-Pierre, and the *New Northland* had just arrived back in Montreal. News of the sinking was everywhere and the mood on board Clarke ships can only be imagined. For fifteen years, the *Athenia* and *Letitia* had been familiar sights as they passed on their voyages to and from Quebec and Montreal. In fact, not long after leaving Quebec on the afternoon of September 2, the inbound *New Northland* had passed an outbound *Letitia*, which had just left Montreal that morning. The *Père Arnaud* had then brought out her Quebec-joining passengers, just as she had for the *Athenia* two weeks earlier. The next day, however, as war broke out, the *Letitia* was sent to anchor in the Lower St Lawrence to await further instructions. Finally, ordered back to Montreal to disembark her passengers and ready herself for conversion to an armed merchant cruiser, the *Letitia* would pass the *New Northland* once more, heading out on her last summer cruise of 1939.

Among the *New Northland*’s inward passengers when she reached Montreal on September 3 was Sir Wilfred Grenfell, who had joined her at St Anthony on August 29. He was returning from his last visit to Newfoundland and when he died a little over a year later his own ashes would be brought back to St Anthony to be buried alongside those of Lady Grenfell on the hillside overlooking the town.

In Newfoundland, meanwhile, on Monday, September 4, the 3,751-ton German ship *Christoph van Doornum*, lying at Botwood, was taken as a war prize by the Newfoundland Constabulary. Newfoundland fell under the jurisdiction of the United Kingdom in these matters, so was already at war. The first enemy ship to be seized during the war, she was one of several that Hamburg owner Fisser & van Doornum had been using to carry zinc concentrates from the mine at Buchans to Europe. Becoming the Furness Withy-managed *Empire Commerce*, she would not last long under that name, as on June 9, 1940, she would hit a mine and be beached off Margate, Kent.

As the *New Northland* left Montreal at 8 pm on the same day, September 4, on her next voyage, Canada was not yet at war. On Tuesday she met the inbound *North Star* at Murray Bay, their third rendezvous that season. The *New Northland* arrived at 3:30 pm and the *North Star* half an hour later, and for three hours the two white cruise ships lay alongside at Murray Bay before the *New Northland* cast off at 7 pm. The *North Star* would stay behind until 1 am so her passengers could enjoy dining and dancing at the Manoir Richelieu. Sailing in the early morning, she would carry on to Quebec for a Wednesday call, and then to Montreal, for arrival on Thursday morning September 7. That Tuesday was the last time the two Clarke ships met in their accustomed roles.

**New York Cruises Cancelled**
The Miami schedules that had already been announced for the North Star and the New Northland for the winter of 1939-40 had all of a sudden been rendered academic. Whatever expectations people may have had, the world was now at war. Meanwhile, there was the question of the cruises the North Star was meant to operate from New York that autumn.

On September 8, while the North Star was still at Montreal, and a week before her first intended New York departure, Eric Wharton, passenger traffic manager in New York, announced the cancellation of her autumn program in a letter to travel agents:

It is with regret that we have to inform you of the cancellation of our series of "Treasure Chest Cruises" to the West Indies.

The response of the travelling public and the fine support given by yourselves to these interesting fall vacation cruises was very gratifying and it is with the greatest reluctance that our decision in this matter has been reached, but present conditions, with their attendant uncertainties and difficulties have forced us to this decision.

Your applications for refund of deposits or passage moneys will be attended to as soon as you send them in, and we wish to take this opportunity of thanking you for your support, and of expressing our regret to your clients, at this unfortunate termination of our "Treasure Chest Cruises."

Wharton knew that the North Star would be needed because of her speed, and that part of the company's agreement when it had bought the ship was that she would remain under the Canadian flag. And although Canada would not declare war for two more days, he also may have known that the US Neutrality Act would prevent Americans from travelling on a "belligerent" ship, which the North Star would soon become.

On the same day that Wharton made his announcement, Canadian Pacific's Empress of Britain arrived at Quebec with a record 1,140 passengers. Having left Southampton on September 2, she was a day out when the Athenia was hit, and zigzagged the rest of the way across. Until it could be decided what would be done with her, the Empress was instructed to remain at Quebec. She had completed 100 Transatlantic voyages, eight World Cruises, six West Indies cruises and one cruise to Bermuda. Her running mate, Empress of Australia, on the other hand, had left Quebec on September 3, the day war was declared, to arrive at Southampton on September 10. On arrival in the UK she was immediately taken up for trooping.

When the Empress of Britain arrived at Quebec on the 8th, the Duchess of Richmond was arriving in Montreal, back from a 59-day Hawaii-
Alaska-Mexico cruise that had departed New York on July 7. While at Vera Cruz on her return voyage she had been ordered to black out and arrived that way in New York. The day after the Duchess of Richmond arrived in Montreal, Donaldson's Letitia was requisitioned and moved to Canadian Vickers for conversion to an armed merchant cruiser. Two months later, on November 6, she was commissioned as HMS Letitia. Before her loss, it had been intended to convert the Athenia in Canada as well. Meanwhile, the Duchess of Richmond would remain in service until requisitioned for use as a troop ship on February 14, 1940.

As the North Star was sent to Halifax to await further orders, the two three-funnelled white-hulled ships North Star and Empress of Britain met for the last time in the St Lawrence as the North Star passed Quebec downbound. And for almost three months the Empress's magnificent profile, soon painted grey, remained on view to passengers in the New Northland, North Gaspé, Gaspesia and Sable I as they passed Wolfe's Cove on their voyages to and from the Gulf of St Lawrence.

**Canada Declares War**

In a display of independence from Britain and France, Canada did not declare war on Germany immediately, but waited until September 10, a full week after the mother country and two days after Clarke's cancellation of the North Star's autumn cruise program. This was more for show than anything else, as the Canadian military had been mobilized at the end of August.

With the declaration of war, the US Neutrality Act prohibited its nationals from travelling in belligerent ships, the only exception being made for those escaping a conflict and returning home within 90 days after the outbreak of conflict. This would clearly preclude the New Northland from operating between Miami and Nassau that winter and Clarke and the Bahamian Government discussed the matter. As things stood, there was little they could do. On September 11, the day after Canada declared war, the Associated Press filed a story from Nassau. This appeared in the "Palm Beach Post" the next day under the heading "Nassau Wants Ship Service This Winter":

This British crown colony, left without a steamship service due to the war, considered today asking American ship operators to inaugurate service from New York or Miami to Nassau.

In order that the all-important United States tourist trade not dry up because of wartime passport restrictions clamped down at the outbreak of hostilities, the Government also planned asking Britain to revise or cancel visa requirements…

The British Colonial Hotel announced it was remaining open despite the
war and the lack of steamship service.

Meanwhile, Desmond Clarke, accompanied by Jim Hutcheson from the passenger department, went to Florida to see if they could register the *New Northland* under a neutral flag in order to operate her between Key West and Havana. Unlike the Bahamas, Cuba was still neutral territory, and would remain so until Pearl Harbor. Having operated the *North Star* and occasionally the *New Northland* to Havana in the past, Clarke approached the Cubans, who were seeking increased service, to see if they could obtain the kind of financial guarantee they had received in recent years from the Bahamas and Jamaica. These plans did not bear fruit, however, so Clarke decided to keep the *New Northland* in the St Lawrence, at least until such time as she might be needed for wartime duty.

As ticket agent and then passenger agent, Hutcheson had travelled frequently between Montreal, New York and Miami and now held the position of travelling passenger agent based in New York. Once it became clear that the *New Northland* would not be going south that winter, however, he sought a leave of absence to join Floridas United Tours Inc, a company that had supported Clarke's cruise ships and was still selling cruises on American ships sailing from Miami.

**Merchants & Miners Takes Over the Miami-Nassau Route**

A proposed visa requirement for Americans travelling to Nassau having been waived, an American ship would now replace the *New Northland* on the Miami-Nassau run for a second time. While Munson Lines had replaced the *New Northland* in 1931-32 with calls by the *Munargo*, the American ship this time would be Merchants & Miners Line's 4,858-ton *Kent*. At the same time, Eastern Steamship Lines' *Yarmouth* would serve Nassau from New York, and run alternate trips between Miami and Havana and Miami and Nassau.

While US-flag ships were classified as neutral, Americans were not allowed under the law to travel in a ship of a belligerent nation, such as the *New Northland*. This rule was modified on November 6 for ships working away from the war zone, but by then a new Miami-Nassau contract had already been inked with Merchants & Miners.

In his book "Queen of Sea Routes," about the Merchants & Miners Line, Edward Mueller talked about the Nassau route: -

The Board of Trade of Nassau ... assuming that American ships would not be vulnerable to attacks by German submarines, asked the Merchants & Miners Line to initiate a new steamship service between Miami and Nassau...

In response, the Merchants & Miners Line announced in November
1939 that its steamship Kent would be placed on an overnight route between Miami and Nassau during the busier winter months... In this service Kent made three round trips per week...

Provision was even made for the Kent's 4,869-ton sister ship Irwin to join the route should daily service be required. News of this service was carried by the "New York Times" on November 12, 1939, in a story headed "New Tri-Weekly Service Will Start on Dec 15 Between Miami and Nassau": -

The Merchants & Miners Transportation Company of Baltimore will operate a tri-weekly luxury steamship service between Miami and Nassau, beginning on Dec 15, it was announced yesterday by a special commission of the Bahamas government.

The 7,000-ton [displacement] liner Kent, recently reconditioned at a cost of $125,000, will begin the service, sailing every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, landing passengers at Nassau the following morning, about forty hours from New York by train and ship...

Government expected a good tourist season and ... the most important consideration had been "an easy and absolutely safe passage between Miami and Nassau, preferably with an American-flag vessel." Normally about 5,000 "stay-over" visitors visit the Bahamas during the winter season.

The difference in fares was interesting. While the New Northland in her last season had been able to charge $17 one-way and $24.50 round trip, Merchants & Miners' fares were $12 one-way and $21 round trip, but still above the $9.50 one-way and $17 round trip that Clarke had charged in 1935. Nevertheless, the new one-way fare was almost 30 per cent lower while a round trip booking was 15 per cent less. And the Kent, with 132 berths, could not carry as many passengers as the New Northland's 175. The Merchants & Miners Line, however, having its own coastal connections to Miami, was able to offer all-inclusive packages to Nassau from both Baltimore and Miami.

On January 21, 1940, the "New York Times" carried a brief traffic report on the Miami-Nassau route: -

R T Merrill, vice president and general manager of the Merchants & Miners Transportation Company, announced yesterday that the steamship Kent had carried 1,200 passengers in the first month of the new service between Miami and Nassau opened Dec 15 in conjunction with the government of the Bahamas.

"It is already very apparent that for Nassau, Bahamas, 1940 is to be one of the busiest and most successful years since the islands became the favourite vacation spot for American travelers," he said.
Indeed, the overall number of stopover tourists would increase from 12,905 in 1939, when the *New Northland* had been on the route, to 13,656 in 1940, with the *Kent*. A week later, however, on January 28, the "New York Times" would carry a slightly different report from Nassau: -

The anchor chain of the Merchants & Miners steamship *Kent*, from Miami, jammed when entering the harbor this morning and the ship was blown out of the basin by a twenty-mile wind and struck on a high sandbank. The passengers, numbering 115, were landed by tugs. It was believed that the ship was not damaged and that she might be refloated tonight.

Instead of adding a second ship, Merchants & Miners would replace the *Kent* in February, at the height of the winter season, with the larger *Alleghany*.

P&O also arranged to bring its *Cuba* to Miami in 1940 for one extra Havana sailing each week, supplementing the *Florida* in this service. As the *Cuba* usually ran between Tampa and Key West and Havana, P&O would have to reduce frequency on that route, which probably explains why Clarke had sought to reflag the *New Northland* to sail between Key West and Havana.

It was unfortunate that Clarke had not been able to reflag the *New Northland* to keep her on the Miami-Nassau run, where she was so popular, but the Canadian Government may well have wanted to keep her under Canadian flag. In that case, she would not have been allowed into the Florida-Cuba trade either.

**United States Neutrality**

In the US, this period of neutrality would last until the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. But in Canada, in the autumn of 1939, with the *North Star* lying at dock in Halifax and the *New Northland* working her season out in the Gulf of St Lawrence, plans were being made that would take them both far from home.

With the *North Star*’s winter cruises from Miami cancelled, Clyde-Mallory Lines scheduled the *Iroquois* for a series of 7-day cruises from Miami to Port-au-Prince, Santiago and Havana. Between 7-day coastal voyages to and from New York, the *Iroquois* would offer five cruises between January and March 1940, at the same $75 starting fare. While her 1939 cruises had gone only to San Juan and Havana, Port au Prince would see the *Iroquois* instead of the *North Star* in 1940.

However, even for Americans who wanted to stay out of it, war wasn't far away. Three months before she started her winter cruises, the *Iroquois*
made a voyage to Europe to bring stranded Americans back to New York, sailing from Liverpool on October 2 and from Cobh on October 3, a month after the sinking of the *Athenia*. The *Iroquois* winter cruises would last but one more season, for the US Navy would purchase her in July 1940 for conversion into the hospital ship USS *Solace* (ii).

While the *Iroquois* was cruising and the *Kent* and *Yarmouth* running to Nassau, the *North Star* and *New Northland* would be taken over by the Canadian Government, as Clarke ships and men prepared to go to war. Desmond Clarke would make his contribution in Ottawa. Both of Desmond Clarke’s sons and all four of Frank’s would enlist. Jim Hutcheson, now with United Tours, would join the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). A Clarke-owned shipyard would build minesweepers for the Royal Navy. Essential services would be kept up throughout the war, under blackout and with radio silence. And two of the company’s modern motorships, would see war service in the Atlantic, instead of being laid up at Quebec for the winter.

**The Navy Buys the "North Star"**

The company’s biggest and fastest ship, the *North Star*, was of course of most interest to Ottawa. Its policy of preventing the three sisters from leaving Canadian registry because of their high speed and potential as armed merchant cruisers had proven to be correct. During the 1930s, the Admiralty had also stored armaments in Canada for such use in the event of an emergency. Now the time had come.

On September 9, 1939, the day after Mr Wharton announced the cancellation of the *North Star*’s cruise program, Ottawa advised the Admiralty that she and her Canadian National sister ships *Prince David* and *Prince Robert* would be available for wartime use. Ten days later, on September 19, the War Cabinet approved a $10 million shipbuilding program that included conversion of the three “Princes”, and the Admiralty advised that two could be fitted out with the Royal Navy weapons stored in Canada, but that the third conversion should be held temporarily in abeyance. The *North Star* was thus requisitioned on November 26, while the Canadian National ships were purchased in January 1940, for $1.4 million en bloc.

The *North Star* followed a few weeks later, being acquired in March for $800,000. Although she had joined Clarke about thirty months previously, the *North Star* had only been purchased from Canadian National fourteen months before and the Government paid a slight premium for her in order to obtain three sister ships. The amount of compensation included $108,841 that Clarke had spent on alterations and improvements. Although $100,000 more than Canadian National had received for each of its two sister ships, Canadian National was a crown corporation and their purchase had involved a transfer of assets from one government department to another as opposed to a purchase from private interests. Even so, Clarke incurred a slight loss on
the transaction, while Canadian National recorded a capital loss of $1.45 million on its pair for the fiscal year 1940-41.

**Autumn and Winter Trading 1939-40**

On September 10, five days after the *New Northland* had left the *North Star* behind in Murray Bay, Canada declared war. The *New Northland* was steaming from Pictou to Corner Brook, halfway point of her final summer 12½-day "Round the Gulf Cruise," where she arrived on Monday, September 11. Unlike the *North Star*, which had been ordered to Halifax, the *New Northland* continued in the Gulf of St Lawrence trade for the balance of the 1939 season.

On November 15, another, much smaller, *North Star*, the 1,435-ton US Government-owned motorship built at Seattle in 1932, began to capture the headlines when she left Boston on the third Antarctic expedition headed by Admiral Byrd. Loaded with supplies and sled dogs, Byrd would join her en route at Panama and she would remain in the newspapers for most of 1940.

The *New Northland* would eventually take her part in the war effort, but for the moment she remained in company service in the Gulf of St Lawrence. That winter, unable to trade between Miami and Nassau and not having found alternative work sailing to Havana, she arrived back at Quebec on December 5, to lay up in the Louise Basin, her first winter lay up since 1933-34. But it would be her last winter in Quebec.

Ten days earlier the *Empress of Britain* had finally been requisitioned and departed Quebec. Taking on part of the First Canadian Division, 7,400 men bound for Britain, she departed Halifax on December 10 in troop convoy TC.1, together with the *Empress of Australia*, *Duchess of Bedford*, *Monarch of Bermuda* and *Aquitania*, Cunard White Star's second largest ship.

As the troops left Halifax, the *Sable I* was bringing a party of disgruntled lumberjacks out of Godbout to Quebec. Claiming they had been laid off in the woods without any money for transport home, the situation was soon resolved by the Quebec Government. An earlier *Sable I* passenger that summer had been a nine-year-old Camille Marcoux, a native of Tête-à-la-Baleine, on his way to Rimouski to take up studies that eventually led to him to becoming the first qualified doctor from the North Shore.

Between November 1939 and August 1940, the *Gaspesia*, *Sable I*, *North Gaspé*, *Jean Brillant*, *Matane I* and *Rivière-du-Loup* were all offered at one time or another to the Royal Canadian Navy, as was the *Père Arnaud*. Although none were taken up, two would later be chartered for winter duties with the Americans. All kinds of ships and yachts were now being offered to Canada's navy, including Wenner-Gren's *Southern Cross*, which was proposed through an intermediary in Miami.
In the meantime, as plans were being put in place for a wartime shipbuilding program, Canada decided to purchase a dozen large American yachts for conversion to stop-gap coastal escorts for the East Coast and Gulf of St Lawrence. This plan, kept secret because of US neutrality, broke on March 17, 1940, when the "Miami Daily News" carried a story headed "Ghosts of Great Stalk Pleasure Yachts as Canada Seeks Fast Sleek US Ships for Wartime Coastal Patrols." The "News" further advised that "luxuriant trappings may be scrapped if several yachts familiar to Miami's harbor are transferred by their owners from American registry to Canadian," and went on to name seven of those that were under negotiation.

Instead of the New Northland and North Star making their way north along the US seaboard in the spring of 1940, several of these yachts made the voyage instead, bound for shipyards in Halifax, Pictou and Quebec, and conversion by naval architects Lambert, German & Milne.

**Raymond-Whitcomb's 7-Day Cruises in the "New Northland"**

Uncertainty prevailed as Europe went through the "phoney war" between September 1939 and April 1940, but at least the rule that prevented Americans from travelling in belligerent ships had been modified to allow them to do so in areas outside a North Atlantic danger zone.

The North Star had been sold, but in the absence of any government requirement for the New Northland, Clarke planned a 1940 summer cruise program for her. The other St Lawrence operators did the same, as did Canadian Pacific, Canadian National and Union Steamships for their coastal liners on the West Coast. With Europe now closed to tourists, Canada, Quebec and Newfoundland had become attractive alternative destinations and featured in a special edition of "Travel" magazine that May. The New Northland's summer program was announced in the "New York Times" on the 19th of the same month:

Cruises along the St Lawrence River this summer will bring the Gaspé coast and Saguenay towns within the range of a seven-day holiday. Ten of these water tours, the first leaving Montreal on June 29, subsequent ones weekly, are announced by the Clarke Steamship Company in cooperation with Raymond-Whitcomb, whose cruise staff will have charge of ship programs and shore excursions. Stops will be made on both shores of the St Lawrence at a time when the country is at its loveliest and when summer activities at the various resorts are in full swing.

Those who know the Gaspé Peninsula recall the sturdy dog teams, ribbon farms and outdoor ovens with their aroma of fresh-baked bread. Anticosti Island and Tadoussac, Murray Bay and Quebec, are
among sharp contrasts on these seven-day cruises.

In addition to these de luxe tours, the Clarke company will continue its Vagabond Cruises covering much the same territory, but making more stops at pioneer settlements and remote hamlets.

Raymond-Whitcomb, whose New York office was a block from Clarke's on Fifth Avenue, no longer had access to the European liners it had been using. In 1939, it had run the Normandie, now laid up in New York, down to Rio de Janeiro for Mardi Gras and other ships to the Caribbean, the Mediterranean and the North Cape. It had also chartered the 32,583-ton-ton Roma from the Italian Line for a couple of summer cruises from New York to Boston, Bar Harbor, Gaspé, Quebec, the Saguenay and Bermuda. But for 1940, it had to turn to Clarke to put together a summer program of ten cruises with the New Northland to accommodate 1,750 travellers, or about 75 per cent more than the Roma had carried in 1939.

These cruises were a first for the New Northland. With the exception of weekend Saguenay excursions, her St Lawrence cruises had always been longer. She would now leave Montreal every Saturday until August 31, finishing her last cruise in Montreal on September 7. The news that she would not be coming to Newfoundland was not well received, however, especially at St Anthony. The April 1940 issue of the Grenfell Mission magazine "Among the Deep Sea Fishers" carried the story thus: -

News has reached us that there are to be no cruise steamers calling at our settlement this summer. This fills us with dismay as it means the curtailing of production and less work for the people of the district. From a busy active centre of the Mission we have had to settle down to a quiet building with a very small staff.

Sir Wilfred Grenfell, who had been on board the New Northland on her last peacetime voyage, added to this with a personal appeal to open that issue: -

Our fishermen need all the help we can afford them now in this terrible time of war. Breadwinners are called away too often, to lay down their lives. Moreover, the beautiful large tourist boats of the Clarke Steamship Company, which rendered our people invaluable service, have been taken away for war work and more than ever our fishermen's families need our help.

While the New Northland was not going to war quite yet, she would soon enough. The Grenfell magazine also noted that "owing to war conditions ... transportation facilities will be limited to the capacity of the schooner Cluett."

Meanwhile, on June 9, before the New Northland sailed on her first
1940 summer cruise, the 4,283-ton Italian cargo ship *Capo Noli* slipped out of Montreal just as Italy was about to enter the war, attempting to make her way to the open seas. Until 1937, this ship had been Munson Lines' *Munardan*. On June 10, however, the Sorel-built minesweeper HMCS *Bras d'Or*, built in 1919 and a sister ship of the *Cape Gaspé*, managed to take her Italian crew as prisoners of war. The pilot had informed the Italians of the presence of a Canadian warship, without mentioning how minor she was, so they had tried to set the *Capo Noli* alight and scuttle her. But she grounded on Bic Island and eventually, after being towed back to Quebec by the *Lord Strathcona*, was drydocked on July 4, to become the Canadian *Bic Island*.

On Saturday, June 29, the *New Northland* left Montreal on her first summer cruise for Mont-Louis, Gaspé, Percé, Anticosti, Baie Comeau, Tadoussac, the Saguenay, Murray Bay and Quebec. And on July 7, the day after she returned, the "New York Times" carried a reminder: -

Gaspé will be visited by the Raymond-Whitcomb cruises now leaving weekly from Montreal, up to Aug 31, on the s.s. *New Northland*. These St Lawrence cruises will include all the shipboard festivities found on Transatlantic tours. Many stops will be made along the St Lawrence and Saguenay, not only at well-known and fashionable resorts like Murray Bay and Tadoussac but at small fishing hamlets. Mont-Louis and Percé, both typical French waterside villages; Gaspé, more English than French despite its name; Baie Comeau and other settlements are on the itinerary.

That summer, Eastern Steamship Lines' *Acadia* opened a new summer service to Nassau. Starting on June 15, she left New York every Saturday at 3 pm, to arrive in Nassau on Tuesday morning, and return to New York at 2 am on Wednesday, thus giving passengers a day and an evening in Nassau. On June 29, the day the *New Northland* departed on her first cruise, Sir Harry Oakes caught the *Acadia*’s third sailing to Nassau. The *Acadia*’s Nassau sailings replaced those that had been offered before the war by Cunard White Star.

Other things were beginning to happen at Quebec, however. On July 15, the Gdynia America Line’s 11,030-ton liner *Sobieski* arrived with 980 internees and 450 German and 400 Italian prisoners of war, and embarked Canadian troops for Scotland. She left Quebec for Halifax, where on the 22nd she joined her 14,287-ton fleetmate *Batory*, which had embarked her own troops there. The next day, the two Polish ships sailed together in troop convoy TC.6, seven liners including the *Empress of Australia, Monarch of Bermuda* and *Antonia* carrying 8,077 Canadian troops to Britain. That June and July the *Batory* also secretly transported £40 million worth of British gold reserves for safekeeping in Canada.

**A Wartime Cruise in the "North Gaspé"**
As the New Northland began her 1940 season of 7-day cruises from Montreal, the North Gaspé and Gaspesia continued in their usual Gaspé and North Shore schedules. Travelling in the North Gaspé on her July 3 sailing to Gaspé and the Magdalens was Gertrude Frisbie, whose account of her voyage appeared in the August 9 issue of the "Lowell Sun" in Lowell, Massachusetts, to the north of Boston: -

The North Gaspé of the Clarke line sailed from Montreal at 8:30 pm July 3. She is a small white steamboat, as trim as a private yacht. We sailed in this beautiful white boat on the brown water of the St Lawrence river. From the deck we could see the foamy Falls of Montmorency.

After two nights in our cosy stateroom, we landed in the little hamlet of Ste-Anne-des-Monts, where we were met on the wharf by dog carts and their young masters, and later at Mont-Louis the white-throated sparrows were singing "sweet, sweet, Canada, Canada, Canada" above the clumps of great white daisies by the side of the road.

All along the north shore of Gaspé we could see the automobiles travelling on the roadway at the bottom of the cliffs, while our own white boat floated on the dustless, now blue water of the St Lawrence. Long before we reached the picturesque village of Gaspé, the water was blue, and it dashed foaming on the laminated rocks at Petite Vallee.

Gaspé was aflutter with daisies and pink, pink clover and green with pointed firs. Cormorants flew over the bay. Our farthest point beyond Gaspé was the Magdalen Islands. There are seven. After landing at Amherst island, which was flat and bleak, we made our main stop at Grindstone island, where we unloaded a big new Mack truck and lumber to build a new house. It is a lonely, sandy country where the industry is all in herring and lobsters. In great dark barns and shacks the herring were strung on rods which start at the roof and in tiers going to the floor, on which are the wood fires which smoke them.

The lobsters are brought hourly by the fishermen and boiled in great vats, then canned and packed to be shipped to many ports. One may purchase any size lobster for ten cents and take it, hot, in a paper bag to the side of the wharf to enjoy.

Our blue-eyed Captain Fraser, anchored for an entire day in the fog off Bonaventure Island, after our return from the Magdalen Islands. The fog shifted from time to time, enough to show us the birds on the island, but not one glimpse of the famous Percé rock could we see.

Early in the morning after leaving Gaspé again, we reached Fox River.
At night, we dreamed how beautiful Fox River would be, and at six in the morning the village was seen in the radiant sunlight, its white church spire pointing toward the blue sky and the cumulous clouds. The blue waves were dashing and sparkling, and all too soon we were away from the fascinating remote little town, and full steam ahead, up river, for quaint Quebec. At Quebec, we went ashore and left the little North Gaspé to travel without us to her home port of Montreal. Our captain signed one of our memory books with his address as "Lost on Shore."

In Quebec, after a week of voyaging we were also lost on shore. We missed the rocking of the boat and the chugging of the motor. With no fresh salmon, we did not know what to eat. Oh, to leave the steady, unendurable land and to travel once again with water beneath our keel and the picturesque Gaspé coast unrolling continually before our wondering gaze, and the fresh breeze glowing! We passed through a transition of shops, calèche driving, and ferry trip, to Lévis. At night on a sleeping car found us in the beautiful Matapedia Valley, where the river rushed among the tamaracks, until we met the sapphire water of the Bay of Chaleur. And so a day of travel brought us to the ocean, at Halifax.

The voyage on the Lady Hawkins from Halifax to Boston was over the wide sea, on a large steamship. We remembered the peace of the small North Gaspé and the friendly ways of her crew. We thought of our trip up Gaspé bay in the pilothouse, and again we thought of the tiny villages on the north shore of the Gaspé. When shall we see that peaceful land again, and when shall we see it at peace, and all the world at peace, like Fox River in the sunrise!

As the New Northland, North Gaspé and Gaspesia carried their cruise passengers out to the Gulf that summer, war was never far away, and plans were coming together that would affect the New Northland. An urgent need for the British to relieve their garrisons in Bermuda and the West Indies to free troops to protect their homeland meant that plans were being made to replace them with troops from Canada and Newfoundland. Ships would be needed to take replacements south. The Germans had invaded the Netherlands on May 10 and occupied Paris on June 14. In the St Lawrence, a naval control centre had been established at Quebec and all shipping was now inspected passing St Jean, Ile d'Orléans. During 1940, this included 3,806 vessels, of which 1,176 were ocean-going and the balance coastal and lakes.

The "New Northland" Is Requisitioned

Towards the end of her Raymond-Whitcomb cruises, the New Northland was requisitioned by the Canadian Government for use as a troop
transport. Her last three cruises were cancelled and she left Quebec on August 18, 1940, for Halifax, where she arrived on the 21st, sailing the next day with troops for Bermuda. Without any ships, Raymond-Whitcomb would shortly be reduced to offering "land cruises" to the US national parks or the Canadian Rockies, or cruises to Alaska.

The New Northland was called up so quickly that when she arrived in Hamilton, Bermuda, on August 26 with Canadian troops to replace the British garrison, she was still wearing her white cruise ship hull and Clarke funnel colours, and was unarmed. Leaving Bermuda that same day for Kingston, she arrived in Jamaica on the 31st, and after an overnight stay proceeded to Aruba and Curaçao, Netherlands West Indies, where she arrived on September 4 for three days. On her return to Halifax on September 13, she had been away for twenty-three days.

René Cantin, who went to sea as a purser in 1936, had served in all of the North Voyageur, Gaspesia, North Gaspé, New Northland and North Star. Assigned to the New Northland during the early part of the war, he gives us his feelings about being on board in 1940: -

I did a little troop transport in the south. We took them on at Newfoundland, and then took them south, far south. We took the troops down to Curacao and to Aruba, in the Netherlands West Indies...

The Government chartered us. I was always afraid during that period I was on the ship. I was the ship's purser. He looked after the money on board ship, entered the ship at customs, and so on, in the name of the master.

In her white cruise ship hull and peacetime buff and blue funnel colours while other ships around her were painted grey, it is not surprising that some of the New Northland's crew were nervous now that they were at war. Taking troops south from St John's to Aruba and Curaçao meant a voyage of about 2,250 nautical miles, or more than a week's steaming. Her purpose in doing so was to relieve the British and French troops who had landed there on the day after the invasion of the Netherlands in order to protect the islands' vital oil refineries from sabotage. The New Northland also found her way to St Pierre et Miquelon during this period.

Capt Joseph Boucher was now in command of the New Northland, having been re-assigned to his old ship after the sale of the North Star. On returning from his third trooping voyage, however, Boucher fell ill and was relieved by his first officer, Simon Bouchard. From Halifax, Boucher proceeded to Montreal, where he visited the company's head office in the Canada Cement Building. It came as some surprise, however, when he died in his sleep at the Queen's Hotel. At the time, Boucher had also been acting as technical consultant to a Royal Commission that Ottawa had convened to
investigate the coasting trade in the St Lawrence. Clarke had lost its commodore, a man who had not only served the company well and loyally from its very beginnings but had also been a pioneer of winter navigation in the Gulf of St Lawrence.

The *New Northland* spent some time alongside at Halifax in October 1940, and again in January 1941, during which she was painted grey and fitted with a single four-inch gun mounted on her stern, as were Canadian National's "Lady Boats." They were among fifteen Canadian-flag merchant ships that Ottawa had authorized for stiffening for four-inch guns on September 25, 1939, a program that had been slow in implementation. The *New Northland* was also equipped with paravanes. These highly successful anti-mine devices looked a bit like torpedoes and were towed at the end of wire ropes on either side of the ship. The wire ropes deflected mines to the paravane, which would then cut through the mines' mooring wires. Once severed, the mine could be destroyed at a safe distance away from the vessel.

**The "North Star" Becomes an Armed Merchant Cruiser**

Clarke had handed the *North Star* over to the RCN at Halifax on March 11, 1940, and on March 29, the Department of National Defence announced that she would join her two Canadian National sister ships *Prince David* and *Prince Robert* and be converted into an armed merchant cruiser for the Royal Canadian Navy. Confirmation came in a wire story that appeared in both Canadian and American newspapers the next day under the heading "Three Canadian Sister Ships Taken Over by Government": -

Three Canadian sister ships which operated in passenger services on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts have been taken over by the government for war duties.

The national defence department announced last night that the *North Star* of the Clarke Steamship Company will be put into service by the Royal Canadian Navy. Its duties were not disclosed.

This vessel, which cruised the Atlantic seaboard and St Lawrence River in the past few years, was previously named *Prince Henry* and was built for the Pacific coast service of the Canadian National Steamships, Limited. Later it was purchased by the Clarke company.

The *Prince Robert* and *Prince David*, with which the *Prince Henry* was operated on the west coast by CN Steamships, are being converted into armed merchant cruisers, the war supply board has announced.

To form a class again, the navy reinstated the *North Star*'s old name of *Prince Henry*. All three ships had been purchased outright as they had to be
totally rebuilt. The design work for these conversions was entrusted to Lambert, German & Milne and the contract for the conversion of the *Prince Henry* awarded to Canadian Vickers in Montreal. Having wintered over at Halifax, the *North Star* returned to Montreal, where work began on May 15, 1940, a week before she had been due to leave Houston on her Rotary cruise to Rio de Janeiro.

Canadian Vickers was not far downstream from Victoria Pier, so the remaining Clarke ships passed their former flagship on every voyage to and from the Gulf. The crews of the *New Northland*, *North Gaspé*, *Gaspesia* and *Sable I*, many of whom had served in the *North Star*, were able to observe the progress over the 1940 season, especially those in the *North Gaspé*, and until she was requisitioned, the *New Northland*, which sailed every week. That July, four small RCN patrol boats joined Clarke's *Rivièr du-Loup* at Rivière-du-Loup, from where they were assigned to run patrols of the river between Murray Bay and Anticosti, until better facilities became available at Gaspé.

Over the summer and autumn months, the *North Star*’s promenade and boat decks were cut away and removed and a new cruiser-style superstructure fitted, with the bridge moved further aft in order to make way for gun mountings. Her accommodation was rebuilt, hull and decks stiffened, and three funnels replaced by two naval-style uptakes. She was painted grey, and like her sisters, was armed with four six-inch guns, two forward and two aft, that had been taken from old Royal Navy "King Edward" class battleships built in 1905-06, and stored in Canada, plus two three-inch guns amidships, from First World War cruisers. These guns lacked the sophisticated fire control systems that modern ships had. Her complement would be twenty-two officers and 219 ratings and the cost to convert her to an armed merchant cruiser was $638,000.

**Company Officer Joins the Air Force**

With the *Prince Henry* undergoing conversion and the *New Northland* now dedicated to trooping, another loyal employee resigned in order to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. News of this was carried by "The Gazette" on August 29, 1940: -

R Ernest Lawson, secretary-treasurer and comptroller of Clarke Steamship Company Limited, its subsidiary and affiliated companies, was the main guest yesterday at a farewell reception given in his honour by the company in recognition of his commissioned appointment to the Royal Canadian Air Force. Mr Lawson will serve in the administration department of the air force as flying officer. He leaves for service immediately.

Farewell addresses eulogising Mr Lawson’s services were given by D A
Clarke, president, and by other executives of the Clarke organization. Telegrams were also read from captains and staffs of Clarke vessels at sea. The whole office and dock staff were assembled in the board room of the firm, to bid him godspeed, together with others associated with the company.

Mr Lawson is a native of Quebec and joined the Clarke Line 18 years ago. He came to Montreal two years ago when the Clarke head office was transferred from Quebec...

"Fifty members of our organization have already joined the navy and army," stated Mr Clarke at the reception. "Mr Lawson's services to our company have been of such a character that I feel the air force is to be congratulated upon acquiring him."

That autumn, the North Gaspé managed to get involved in one of the very rare collisions to touch the Clarke fleet. On Wednesday morning, October 23, 1940, while at Quebec en route from Montreal to Gaspé, she collided with the 20-ton motor vessel Jean Nicolet, owned by Thomas Beaudet of Deschaillons, a village upstream from Quebec. The small wooden vessel sank and became a total loss.

**A Corvette is Born and an "Empress" is Lost**

Also at Quebec, that Saturday, October 26, Davie Shipbuilding delivered the first Canadian-built "Flower" class corvette, HMS Windflower. One of ten that had been ordered by the Royal Navy, she sailed for Halifax, where she arrived on October 31. On December 6, the Canadian-crewed corvette departed Halifax for Liverpool in convoy HX.94, with an armed merchant cruiser escort and Furness Withy's Nerissa as commodore ship. There, she would be armed before working up at Scotstoun and joining the Royal Canadian Navy, on loan from Britain, as HMCS Windflower. Clarke watched with interest the construction of this new type of ship at Quebec as well as the work that was being performed on its former flagship at Montreal.

But what no one was aware of on the day that HMS Windflower was delivered, was that the former Queen of the St Lawrence, Canadian Pacific's Empress of Britain had been hit about 70 miles northwest of Ireland by a German four-engine long-range bomber and was on fire. Inbound from Suez and Cape Town, she had 419 crew and 224 military personnel and civilians on board, along with 300 tons of South African sugar and 300 tons of Royal Air Force stores. Once evacuated, she was taken in tow by the Polish destroyer Burza and two tugs and was bound for the Clyde when the U-32, attracted by a radio message from the bomber, managed to put two torpedoes into her. The Empress of Britain sank on October 28, and two days later the U-32 was sunk by the destroyer HMS Harvester. Forty-nine lives were lost on the Empress, most as a result of the original air attack.
The news broke in North America and newspapers carried their comment on Tuesday, October 29, the day after her sinking. She was the largest serving Allied merchant ship to be lost during the war. Although she had seen less than a year of military service, she had steamed 61,000 miles and carried 9,231 troops, 925 civilians and 2,850 tons of cargo. Of eighteen ocean-going ships that Canadian Pacific contributed to the war effort, ten would be lost to enemy action, two to marine casualties and one would be bought by the Admiralty.

**The "New Northland" Troops to Newfoundland**

In bringing its troops home, Britain had also asked Canada to send replacements to Newfoundland. After the fall of France and the Low Countries in June 1940, the first of these, 852 of the Black Watch of Canada from Montreal, arrived at Botwood, on June 22 in Cunard's *Antonia*, escorted by the destroyer HMCS *Ottawa*. About half were needed to defend the seaplane base at Botwood and the rest to protect the air base at Gander. The *Antonia* then left for Liverpool with 205 Newfoundland loggers, going to Scotland to help harvest urgently needed timber.

A couple of months later, Canadian Pacific's *Duchess of Richmond* brought replacements for the Black Watch from a Toronto regiment, the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada, leaving Montreal on August 7 and arriving at Botwood on August 10. The *Duchess of Richmond* had already been to Newfoundland on January 13, when she too had embarked 409 loggers at Bay Bulls, outside St John's, for Liverpool.

Now, for four weeks towards the end of 1940, the *New Northland* was assigned to carrying troops and their gear from there to Halifax as regiments were replaced. She left Halifax on November 21 with a Quebec regiment, the Royal Rifles of Canada, who had trained at Camp Sussex, New Brunswick, arriving at Botwood with the first group on November 25. While on board, troops busily wrote letters home on ship's stationery that still advertised "West Indies Cruises." As it happened, Frank Clarke was the Royals' honorary colonel, and his son Capt William Clarke, an officer. Once she disembarked the Royals, the *New Northland* took on the Queen's Own, to return them to Halifax for further training at Camp Sussex.

Where the *Duchess of Richmond* had been able to carry the Queen's Own in one voyage, the *New Northland* had to make three trips to get them back to the mainland. Leaving Botwood with the first group at 10 am on November 26, no naval escort was available so she sailed for the Strait of Belle Isle, but making little headway in twenty-four hours of rough weather, she took shelter near Blanc-Sablon. Delayed by more bad weather and running low on provisions, she finally made Sydney on November 29, and Halifax on November 30. Leaving Halifax on December 2 with the second
group of Royals, she was back in Botwood on December 6, and left there with another group of Queen's Own on December 7. Half the men became seasick the moment she left port, and after another rough late autumn trip, she reached Halifax on December 10.

The *New Northland* left Halifax with the third exchange group on December 11 and, in order to avoid the high seas on the way to Botwood, took them to Corner Brook instead. She was scheduled to leave Corner Brook with the last of the Queen's Own at 11:30 pm on December 13, but after more bad weather she did not get away until 3 pm on December 15. Even then, high winds forced her to anchor in the lee of an island for several hours before resuming at 1:30 am on December 17 for Sydney and Halifax. These trooping trips were far different from the cruises she had been operating only that summer, and her windy visit to Corner Brook that December would turn out to be her last.

When the Royals had completed their assignment in Newfoundland, Canadian National's *Lady Drake* took them on in St John's on August 18, 1941, to return to Quebec, where they were granted leave before their next assignment. In late October, together with the Winnipeg Grenadiers, who had been sent to garrison Bermuda and Jamaica in 1940, they left Vancouver for Hong Kong. The Royals had travelled to Newfoundland in the *New Northland* and some of the Winnipeg Grenadiers may have travelled in her to Bermuda, although most of that regiment had gone to Jamaica in the *Lady Drake* with Capt Clarke.

In late December 1941, almost 2,000 soldiers of the two regiments, including Capt William Clarke, became prisoners of war when Hong Kong fell to the Japanese, and would remain so for three and a half years. Of those who went to Hong Kong, 28 per cent would never return, about half dying in battle and half in Japanese prison camps.

**Montmorency Paper's Shipping Arrangements**

Through its association with the Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-Newfoundland companies, Frank Clarke's Montmorency Paper Co was active throughout the war, and its relationship with Montreal Shipping continued to grow. "A Montship Story" briefly recorded the events of 1940-41 from its point of view:

The most notable chartering business was the appointment as brokers and operating managers for the Montmorency Paper Company. A pooling operation was established to move newsprint and woodpulp from various Anglo mills in Quebec City, Grand Falls and Chandler to the Eastern United States. This pool was eventually named Montmorency Shipping Ltd.
Although the Clarke Steamship Co did not carry forest products, it did bring in mill supplies, and occasionally loaded small parcels of specialized product out. It also got carried pulpwood to the paper mills in some of its smaller chartered ships that loaded these return cargoes on the south shore of the St Lawrence.

Frank Clarke, a co-founder of the Clarke Steamship Co and president of the North Shipping Co, original owners of the North Shore, had developed an extensive knowledge of the shipping of pulp and paper to the United States. His customers had come to rely on him for efficient delivery, so much so that the Montmorency Paper Co eventually moved its operations to New York, in 1943.

Gulf Pulp & Paper at Clarke City was also busy at this time, working long seasons. One unusual caller that summer had been Quebec North Shore Paper's Brand, which while she continued to shuttle between Baie Comeau and New York, called at Clarke City on September 13, 1940, headed for New York. A month later, on October 16, the Admiralty requested that the 3,595-ton Romanian-flag Inginer N Vlassopol, which was loading at Clarke City, be detained. Lacking the resources to seize her there, she was delayed sailing in order to allow the Rimouski-based HMCS Bras d’Or time to come to Clarke City and shadow her to Sydney, where she could be properly detained. At 4:33 pm on October 18, Bras d’Or advised that she had the Vlassopol in sight. But that was the last that was ever heard from her.

At 3:50 am on October 19, while sailing off Anticosti, the second officer of the Vlassopol turned to his helmsman to say that the little ship had just "put its lights out." The Bras d’Or had in fact disappeared in a Gulf storm, one of the worst in twenty years, with her full crew of five officers and 25 men. A contributing factor may have been the fact that in her rush to get to Clarke City in time she had run aground off Rimouski, remaining there for four hours, and had not gone for an inspection before proceeding to Clarke City.

The last ship to leave Clarke City that year, the 2,183-ton Norwegian Borgfred sailed quite late for Gravesend, not reporting at Halifax until January 17, 1941. Although assigned to two earlier convoys, she returned from one and did not finally get away until convoy SC.24, leaving Halifax on February 28.

**Newsprint Carriers Hit**

While the North Star was being converted and the New Northland was still cruising, losses had begun to occur amongst the Transatlantic newsprint carriers. Bowaters was the first to be hit, luckily without loss of life, when its Humber Arm was torpedoed by the U-99 on July 8, 1940, en route from Corner Brook to the Mersey with newsprint, steel, lumber and pulp. On the
same day, another U-99 victim, Canada Steamship Lines' 2,053-ton canaller Magog, Halifax to Preston with lumber, sank without loss of life. She had been hit three days earlier, on July 5, while straggling from the convoy ahead of the Humber Arm.

In 1941, partly to replace the Humber Arm, Bowaters acquired three more ships. One of these, the 4,031-ton Kitty's Brook would be torpedoed on May 10, 1942, while carrying US Government supplies from New York to Argentia, a route the North Gaspé would also serve. The other two were 2,140-ton canallers, the Livingston and Waterton, delivered in 1928 by Armstrong Whitworth, the company that had built the Corner Brook and Humber Arm and completed the Corner Brook paper mill.

The Anglo-Newfoundland Steamship Co was to lose three ships in less than a year. First hit, less than a month after the Humber Arm, was the 7,244-ton Geraldine Mary, named for Lord Rothermere's mother. Sunk by the U-252 on August 4, 1940, while en route from Botwood to Manchester with newsprint and pulp, she lost two of her crew and one passenger out of the 51 on board. Rothermere himself would die in Bermuda on November 26, at the age of 72, while taking a break from a wartime mission in Canada. He had landed at Quebec on May 30 and had been working from Montreal.

In the following year, two more Anglo-Newfoundland ships were lost within two weeks of each other. The 4,976-ton Esmond, named for Rothermere's son and returning in ballast from the Tyne to Sydney, Nova Scotia, was hit by the U-110 on May 9, 1941, without loss of life. And the 5,356-ton Rothermere, travelling from Botwood to London with newsprint and steel, was hit by the U-98 on May 20, losing twenty-two of the fifty-six on board. Like the Bowater ships, Anglo-Newfoundland ships were all registered in Newfoundland.

An interesting result sprang from the torpedoing of Anglo-Canadian's Esmond, which was managed by the Donaldson Line. Immediately the Esmond was hit, her Royal Navy escorts attacked and managed to capture her attacker. The U-110's commander, Fritz-Julius Lemp, was the same man who had torpedoed Donaldson's Athenia when he was in command of the U-30 in 1939. Including the Athenia, the Esmond and another Donaldson ship, Lemp had sunk twenty ships totalling 96,784 tons while in the U-30 and U-110. He and 14 of his crew were lost in the engagement and a form of revenge invoked for the Athenia, but more importantly, an Enigma machine and codebooks had been captured.

Although a Hollywood film would portray Americans as capturing the first Enigma machine, it was in fact the British who did so, when responding to the sinking of the Esmond, long before the Americans entered the war. This capture, the most significant of the war, was kept from the Germans by allowing the U-boat to sink, but was vital in helping the Allies to break Nazi codes and read their radio traffic. The information was regarded as so
sensitive that it would be kept secret for more than thirty years.

Inter-Provincial Steamship Lines

On September 3, 1940, not long after the loss of the Humber Arm and Geraldine Mary, and a year to the day after the Athenia, Inter-Provincial Steamship Lines lost the 1,401-ton Ulva. En route from Newport to Gibraltar, she was torpedoed off Ireland by the U-60, with three of her crew of 20 missing.

After this, her owner, F K Warren, took advantage of wartime demand to sell the three other Inter-Provincial ships in 1941. The Swan Hunter-built Zenda and the 1,188-ton Sonia went to the Markland Shipping Co Ltd of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, as Liverpool Loyalist and Liverpool Packet, to carry newsprint for the Mersey Paper Co Ltd. Then on May 30, 1942, three weeks after Bowaters' Kitty's Brook was lost en route to Argentia, it was the turn of the Liverpool Packet, torpedoed by the U-432 south of Cape Sable. Engaged in the same trade, she was carrying 1,845 tons of US Government supplies from New York to Newfoundland. Two of her 21 crew were lost.

Inter-Provincial's other ship, the Swan Hunter-built Moyra, was requisitioned by the Canadian Government in 1941, and later sold to Newfoundland Railway Steamships. Although this effectively removed F K Warren from the business of shipowning, Inter-Provincial Steamship Lines would remain active in ship management, being appointed later in the war to manage a couple of 4,700 deadweight war-built ships for the Canadian Government, one of which was purchased by Markland Shipping after the war.

Canallers At War

Before the war, Clarke had used a number of canallers to back up its main line ships, particularly to the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Unlike the larger lakers that were restricted to trading within the Great Lakes, canallers could sail almost anywhere, and in the early years of the war 125 were pressed into overseas service. With this in mind, at the end of 1939, Canada Steamship Lines had laid up eight canallers on the Atlantic coast in case of need. Of those that went, some were for use as colliers in British waters and others as bauxite carriers in the Caribbean. Yet others were engaged to supply military bases in Newfoundland and Labrador, while, as noted, Bowaters would buy two for its own cargoes. Losses were incurred in all of these trades and one in five of them would be lost. But before the production of war-built cargo ships could begin, these little ships offered a ready source of emergency tonnage.

Twenty-five canallers left Canada for the UK in 1940. On their delivery
voyages they loaded lumber at Quebec, or sometimes Halifax, before joining a convoy to cross the North Atlantic. Much Canadian west coast lumber was now being moved by rail to east coast ports, rather than through the Panama Canal as had been the case before the war. This movement was organized by Harvey MacMillan, soon to become wartime Timber Controller, whose company, H R MacMillan Export Co Ltd of Vancouver, was engaged in the timber trade.

Being slow, there was inevitably a risk that some canallers might be lost on their voyages over to Britain. Unlike the July sinking of the Magog, where her crew had been saved, on September 15, the same U-boat, U-99, managed to sink Paterson Steamships' 1,780-ton Kenordoc, this time with the loss of seven of her 21 crew. The Kenordoc was en route from Quebec and Sydney to Bristol with a cargo of lumber when she was shelled, rather than torpedoed, as she straggled from convoy SC.3, the third slow convoy from Canada.

Faster ships travelled in the HX convoys that were assembled at Halifax, but the canallers, with their modest 8 or 10 knots, were assigned to the SC convoys used for slower vessels. In one convoy in particular, SC.7, which departed Sydney on October 4, 1940, for Liverpool, three canallers were among the thirty-four ships that sailed that day. Two of these, the Trevisa and the Winona, had worked for Clarke before the war. The third, the 1,900-ton Eaglescliffe Hall, was owned by Hall Corporation of Canada, also of Montreal. All were loaded with Canadian timber, the Trevisa for Grangemouth, the Winona for Glasgow and the Eaglescliffe Hall for Preston. Their sole escort was HMS Scarborough, the sloop that had brought British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald to visit Sir Wilfred Grenfell at St Anthony in 1934. As it happened, on October 9, five days after SC.7 left Sydney, Sir Wilfred died in Vermont.

The Winona had to return to Sydney, and twelve days out, on October 16 south of Iceland, the Trevisa was straggling from the eight-knot convoy. Exposed, she was hit by a torpedo from the U-124, with the loss of seven of her 21 crew, the first in the convoy to be hit. Including the convoy commodore, and despite receiving additional escorts on the 17th, twenty-two of the thirty-four ships in convoy SC.7 were torpedoed over that and the next three days by a pack of seven German U-boats. Five of those twenty-two were stragglers, but when the survivors eventually reached Britain on the 21st, the Eaglescliffe Hall was amongst them. The Winona arrived ten days later in convoy SC.8. Both ships would survive to take part in the Allied invasion of Europe.

Despite the absence of so many of these ships overseas, and ensuing war losses, Clarke's trade to Newfoundland was of sufficient importance that it would be able to obtain at least one canaller to continue its service to Corner Brook throughout the war.
The Nassau Season of 1940-41

Things were also beginning to happen in the Bahamas. Believing the Duke and Duchess of Windsor to be too sympathetic toward the Germans, Churchill, now British Prime Minister, had decided to put them out of harm’s way for the duration of the war. The Duke was thus appointed Governor of the Bahamas, succeeding Sir Charles Dundas, and the couple sent to Nassau, where they would remain for five years. This also served the purpose of keeping the former king out of the way of potential German kidnappers, which had been considered a threat were he to remain in Europe.

The Windsors boarded American Export Lines' 9,359-ton *Excalibur* in Lisbon on August 1, 1940, bound for Bermuda. As W H Coverdale was chairman and president of American Export Lines, as well as president of Canada Steamship Lines, it was not the first time he had hosted the Duke. As the Prince of Wales, he had sailed from Quebec to Montreal in CSL's *St Lawrence* in 1927. The Windsors arrived in Bermuda on August 9, spending some time there as guests of the Governor.

During their stay in Bermuda, the Duke inspected Canadian soldiers brought in to relieve the British garrison. The *New Northland* would bring more Canadian troops to Bermuda later that month. Where once Bermuda had seen Clarke ships bring tourists, now they would bring soldiers but throughout the war Bermuda would still see calls by Clarke ships. On August 14, a week before the *New Northland* was due to leave Halifax with her Bermuda reinforcements, the Windsors departed for the Bahamas in Canadian National's now grey-painted *Lady Somers*. After a three-day voyage escorted by the cruiser HMS *Despatch*, they arrived in Nassau on August 17, where they landed that morning, and he was immediately sworn in as Governor. The Duchess being American, the Windsors were hugely popular in the United States. As "Time" magazine put it in its August 26 issue:

The Duke & Duchess of Windsor walked slowly down the gangplank of the Canadian liner *Lady Somers* to meet a welcoming roar from thousands of Bahamians jam-packed around the pier. From the casuarina trees around Rawson Square, barefooted natives shouted down greetings as the new Governor General and his lady moved up the street to the Legislative Council Chambers...

After formalizing the oath with his signature, the Duke replied to the welcoming addresses of the Council's President and the Assembly's Speaker: "I do not doubt that, like all other British colonies, you here in the Bahamas are confronted with the same problem of reconciling your local interests with the changed conditions which hostilities have imposed. It will be my endeavor, however long or short the duration of my term of office, to lend you a helping hand in your efforts."
Then the Governor and his lady waved to the people of their domain from a balcony and drove off to get a long cool drink at Government House. Already the Duke had lent Nassau a helping hand. In Manhattan, Eastern Steamship Lines reported a boom in tourist bookings of Americans who wanted to visit the islands.

Eastern's Acadia had been leaving New York for Nassau every Saturday all summer, and had just sailed a few hours before the Lady Somers arrived. Fifty days after dropping the Windsors in Nassau, Ottawa requisitioned the Lady Somers for bareboat charter to the Admiralty as the ocean boarding vessel HMS Lady Somers. Assigned to contraband control in the Bay of Biscay, she would be torpedoded west of Gibraltar on July 15, 1941, by the Italian submarine Mirosini, based in Bordeaux, luckily without loss of life. Of the sixteen small passenger and cargo ships used as ocean boarding vessels, the Lady Somers was the largest.

Edwin Mueller recounted that Merchants & Miners had anticipated an upturn in its business, and at the beginning of its second season introduced a sister ship to the Alleghany into the Miami-Nassau service for its second winter season: -

For the winter of 1940-1941 the Merchants & Miners Line placed its Berkshire on the winter Miami-Nassau service rather than the Kent. Berkshire was not quite as fast, but she had a larger passenger capacity.

This had not been a foregone conclusion, however. The Nassau Development Board had been negotiating with Eastern Steamship Lines since September 1940 to keep the Acadia in service over the winter season, from Christmas to April. A January 10 report from Nassau appeared in the "New York Times" on January 11, 1941, indicating the results of those negotiations: -

The Legislature, at an emergency meeting today, approved a proposal by the Merchants & Miners Line to operate a Miami-Nassau service, starting from Miami Jan 21, with three trips a week by the steamship Berkshire at a subsidy of $700 per trip. The government recently contracted with the Eastern Steamship Lines for a weekly New York-Nassau and a twice-weekly Miami-Nassau service. The latter was cancelled, however, because of labor difficulties.

The 299-berth Berkshire could carry more than twice as many passengers as the Kent, and the expected increase in visitors to Nassau followed. From 13,656 the year before, the number of stopover tourists would rise to 14,741 in 1941. Although the Duke and Duchess would also be counted among her passengers, this would be Nassau's last big tourist season for the duration of the war.
Before the Berkshire started her winter schedule, the Windsors had to travel to Miami so the Duchess could undergo some dental work. They had booked to travel in the Munargo, but that sailing was cancelled because of a breakdown. Instead, Axel Wenner-Gren invited them to make the crossing in his Southern Cross, which he had already offered to the Canadians for use as an auxiliary. Leaving Nassau on Monday, December 9, for the overnight trip to Miami, they arrived at 10 am the next day, to be met by a crowd of 12,000 and greeted personally by the Governor of Florida and four local mayors.

While in Miami, the Duke received a personal invitation to come and meet President Roosevelt, back in the Bahamas, on board USS Tuscaloosa, in which he had left Miami on December 3 to tour potential military bases in Jamaica, St Lucia, Antigua and the Bahamas. The former King was offered a US Navy plane and the two men met off Eleuthera on Friday, December 13. Roosevelt planned to leave the Tuscaloosa in Charleston the following Monday.

On Tuesday December 17, the Windsors rejoined the Southern Cross in Miami to a send-off by the University of Miami band for a 48-hour cruise home through the western Bahamas. Stopping en route at Grand Bahama, where Wenner-Gren was developing a crayfish cannery, they arrived back in Nassau on the 19th. Wenner-Gren would take the Southern Cross to Peru in 1941, but after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would settle in Mexico, where he also had interests. After being blacklisted by the US Government in January 1942, and the British that April, he ultimately donated the Southern Cross to the Mexican Navy, whose training ship Orizaba she would become. Wenner-Gren himself would not return to Nassau until after the war.

For their second crossing to Florida, a five-day trip to Palm Beach, the Windsors chose the last sailing of the Berkshire, leaving Nassau on April 17, 1941, and arriving at Miami the next morning. The Duke would stop in Miami fifteen times during the course of the war and the Duchess thirteen, but this was only their second trip to the United States, and one that was followed closely by the FBI because of rumours of sympathies towards the Nazis. Outside their social and business activities, the Windsors did manage to visit the new US Army air base at Morrison Field, later Palm Beach Airport, and also the British War Relief Society.

When it came time for their return, however, the winter season was over and the Munargo had been requisitioned by the US Army Transport Service, having sailed from Miami for the last time in March. The United Fruit Co had replaced her by adding a Nassau call to its New York "mail ship" schedules, but these ships did not call at Miami. They would serve Nassau for only a few months in any case before being requisitioned themselves. Although the Duchess had a fear of flying, rough seas meant that they were unable to book one of the smaller ships to take them back from Miami to
Nassau and the couple were forced to fly home.

The Duke of Windsor would be Governor of the Bahamas until 1945 but the *Berkshire*, like the *Kent* before her, would last but one season. In fact, the Windsors had taken the last sailing that the Merchants & Miners Line would ever make from Nassau. The next commercial ship they would travel in would be owned by Clarke, for after two winters in American hands, the season of 1941-42 would once again see a Clarke ship, under a familiar Clarke captain, back on the Miami-Nassau route.

**HMCS "Prince Henry"**

Meanwhile, the *North Star*, now HMCS *Prince Henry*, under pendant F.70, had hoisted the White Ensign at Montreal on December 4, 1940. Under command of Capt Ron Agnew, RCN, she proceeded to Halifax to join her sister ship HMCS *Prince David*, which had been converted at Halifax Shipyards. The third of the class, the West Coast-based HMCS *Prince Robert*, was converted in Vancouver. As there was already ice in the river, the *Prince Henry* had to hurry downstream past Quebec to beat the freeze-up and the final touches to her conversion were applied in Halifax.

Agnew was a career naval officer, having served since 1911, and an Officer of the Order of the British Empire. His was the only OBE to be awarded to the RCN between the wars, while he was in command of HMCS *Saguenay* in 1935. As well as numerous Canadian ships, he had served in HMS *Hood*, as assistant navigating officer in 1924.

Together with a third armed merchant cruiser, the ex-Furness Bermuda liner HMS *Queen of Bermuda*, converted at Belfast and now reduced to two funnels as well, HMCS *Prince Henry* and HMCS *Prince David* worked up off Bermuda in early January 1941. The *Prince Henry* parted company with the *Prince David* and proceeded through the Panama Canal to relieve a British cruiser on station off the West Coast of South America. A month later, *Prince Henry*’s old running mate *New Northland* would also call in Bermuda, in her case to embark troops for Trinidad.

By February, *Prince Henry* was working off Callao, Peru, blockading four German merchant ships taking refuge there. On March 31, two of them sailed and although the *Prince Henry* was able to intercept both of them, neither was captured. The first, North German Lloyd’s 5,619-ton *München*, was set alight by her own crew and the second, Hamburg-American Line’s 4,833-ton *Hermonthis*, had to be sunk by gunfire after she too had been set afire by her crew. While the chance of taking a prize had been lost, this had at least taken two modern merchant ships out of enemy hands.

**West Coast, Bermuda, Newfoundland and West Indies Patrols**
The *Prince Henry* then sailed to Esquimalt, British Columbia, for West Coast patrols that lasted until August 1941, when she was again assigned to Bermuda. Towards the end of 1941, she was sent to St John's as a temporary depot ship for the RCN's Newfoundland Escort Force, which had been formed in May. The base had opened in June and her role was to back up the accommodation ship HMCS *Avalon II* until new shoreside naval barracks could be built.

The *Avalon II*, formerly Seaway Lines' *Georgian*, had been brought down from the Great Lakes. Eric Wharton was now general passenger agent for Seaway Lines in Detroit. Having left Clarke in December 1939 to become general manager of the Key Largo Anglers Club in Florida, he moved to Seaway Lines in 1940 and recruited Richard Gloyne, former cruise director of the *New Northland*, to fill the same role on the *Georgian*. Gloyne came from the *Evangeline*, where he had gone from the *New Northland*. Seaway Lines had only just managed to complete the 1941 season, with their last 7-day cruise on August 23, followed by a shorter Labour Day cruise, and by September 12 the *Georgian* was on her way to Halifax, and then St John's, where she arrived on September 23, boarded up and painted grey. Initially chartered for just seven months, with the idea that she might return to cruising in 1942, she would in fact spend the rest of the war at St John's.

The *Prince Henry* joined the *Avalon II* at St John's on November 16, temporarily discharging two-thirds of her crew in order to free up accommodation. This rather wasteful assignment for an operational ship lasted only one month, however. On December 15, a week and a day after Pearl Harbor, the *Prince Henry* was ordered back to Halifax, and then to Bermuda to work up for more West Indies duty. Now that the Americans were in the war, she would report to the US Navy Commander Caribbean Sea Frontier in San Juan, starting in January 1942.

A few weeks later, *Prince Henry* narrowly escaped being torpedoed at Castries, St Lucia. After she vacated her berth to Canadian National's *Lady Nelson* on March 8, the *Lady Nelson* and a British freighter were sunk the next day by torpedoes from the *U-161*, which had worked its way into port. Ironically, in command of the *Lady Nelson* was Capt George Welch, who had been master of the *Prince Henry* for her first Miami season as *North Star* in 1938. Although fifteen passengers and three crew died in the sinking, *Lady Nelson* was subsequently salvaged and converted into Canada's first hospital ship.

On April 12, the *Prince Henry* rescued forty-four men from the sunken 5,032-ton Delta Line ship *Delvalle*, hit by three torpedoes from the *U-154* while on a voyage from New Orleans to Buenos Aires via St Martin. The nearby *U-203* had also fired a torpedo but missed. The sinking occurred south of Haiti, where three years and two days earlier, the *North Star* had called at Port au Prince on her last cruise of the 1939 season - and Clarke's
last West Indies cruise before the war.

In May 1942, *Prince Henry* returned to Esquimalt for more West Coast patrols, being assigned in August, along with her two sister ships and two Canadian corvettes, to US Navy escort duty between Kodiak and Dutch Harbor, Alaska, in the Aleutians. For this duty, the Canadians fell under the Commander Northwest Sea Frontier in Seattle. The Japanese had taken the small Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska and naval incursions had been feared, but the Canadian ships never ran into the enemy on any of these patrols.

Like many other ships in the RCN, the *Prince Henry* developed her own gun shield art. In her case this was a naval crown and three maple leaves above a crowned black helmet, coat of arms and crossed plumes, all of which made reference to the Black Prince, Prince Henry, and not to the former president of Canadian National after whom she was really named.

**The "New Northland" Goes to West Africa**

In early 1941, the *New Northland* was transferred to the British Ministry of War Transport for service overseas. The Ministry of War Transport's office in Montreal was located at Windsor Station, where, as a significant contributor of tonnage, Canadian Pacific had allocated space for it.

Leaving Halifax on February 5, a Clarke crew, under Capt T Edge RNR, was to deliver the *New Northland* to Freetown, Sierra Leone, for trooping duties in West Africa. From R W Hughes, one of four naval gunners (known as DEMS, for defensively equipped merchant ships) assigned to her, we have the following account of her activities from January to September 1941: -

We picked up a contingent of Royal Navy sailors in Bermuda in February 1941 to transport to the West Indies.

Having completed this task and wondering what was next, we were much surprised one morning, while anchored in Port of Spain, Trinidad, to see a small amphibian monoplane with French markings land in the harbour, taxi up to us and ask for a line. There were two French pilots on board her and apparently they had stolen her from her base in Martinique, which we understood at the time was under the influence of Vichy France. We immediately hoisted it on board and tied it down on the foredeck.

Early next morning we pulled into the dock and almost immediately they started bringing a fairly large group of men aboard dressed in almost anything that would cover them, including the odd few pieces of women's clothing. The group appeared to be escorted by what we took to be Free French army officers. Eventually, it was explained that
they had been convicts on Devils Island in French Guiana and had been conditionally released by consenting to join the Free French forces.

The next morning we sailed accompanied by HMS Despatch and three weeks later delivered our guests to the Free French Forces in Pointe-Noire, Africa.

Shortly after this time we were taken over by the Admiralty and flew the Blue Ensign in place of our own "Red Duster." From now till we were paid off in September, we were engaged in transporting troops, nurses and equipment to points where they were required on this West Coast.

HMS Despatch had escorted the Duke and Duchess of Windsor from Bermuda to the Bahamas five months earlier, and would work with HMCS Prince Henry in September, seeking out German raiders off the Galapagos Islands, before returning to St John's via the Panama Canal.

Back in the Gulf of St Lawrence, apart from the usual winter service, the 1941 St Lawrence season got off to an early start if we can judge by a brief report from Pointe au Père that appeared in "The Gazette" on February 22. Headed "Gulf Navigation Opens," it brought the following news: -

Navigation opened in the lower St Lawrence River yesterday with the arrival here from Baie Comeau of the Clarke Steamship Company's Sable I. Navigation did not open last year until late in March.

Further south, wartime records show the New Northland left Port of Spain on March 15, 1941, and arrived in Freetown, a distance of 2,896 nautical miles, on March 27, consistent with a voyage made at 10 knots. She then sailed on March 30 for Takoradi, on the Gold Coast, and Lagos, Nigeria, where she arrived on April 5. Leaving Lagos on the 8th, she finally delivered her passengers the extra 848 miles to Pointe-Noire, Belgian Congo, where the Free French were headquartered at Léopoldville. From Pointe-Noire, she returned to Takoradi on April 17, arriving back at Freetown on the 22nd.

In Freetown, the New Northland's Canadian crew encountered two familiar ships. On April 23, Canadian Pacific's Duchess of Bedford arrived in port, followed the next day by the Duchess of Richmond. The sisters were sailing a day apart and returning to the UK after delivering troops to the Middle East. After an overnight stay, the Duchess of Richmond departed Freetown on the 25th, to collect more troops from the UK, while the New Northland also headed north, but for Bathurst, now called Banjul, in the Gambia.

**Trooping in Africa**
Once at Freetown, the *New Northland* fell under the control of the Royal Navy’s Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic Station, a position that had been moved from the Simonstown base in South Africa just before the war because Freetown’s excellent natural harbour, which could hold up to 150 ships, and its strategic location at a point on the west coast of Africa where all shipping had to pass.

Freetown was a key base for convoys moving between the UK and the Cape, Suez and Australia. The port was kept open from 7 am to 7 pm and vessels were not allowed to enter the anti-submarine net at night. Hazards that had to be avoided as the *New Northland* arrived included two wrecks showing funnels or masts and three unexploded depth charges that were cordoned off into a dangerous area. But Freetown was soon seeing up to fifty ships a day entering port. Even the *Queen Mary* had been there and would call again when she took troops out to Suez in 1942 and 1943.

Local infrastructure included a 13,326-ton accommodation ship, the former Union-Castle liner *Edinburgh Castle*, moored in the estuary, and an assortment of other base ships and repair vessels. Four-engined Sunderland flying boats, long-range aircraft big enough to rescue the entire crew of a sunken merchant ship, took off regularly on anti-submarine patrols. Belonging to 95 Squadron, Royal Air Force Coastal Command, they commenced operations only three days before the *New Northland* arrived and produced a dramatic reduction in the number of shipping casualties. On the other end of town, a 2-foot 6-inch narrow gauge steam railway led to the country's interior and its diamond mine. On it, British-made fighter planes were shipped to the end of the line, there to be assembled and flown to Egypt.

The *New Northland* was assigned to work as a coastal troop transport, operating between the various British colonies in West Africa. Her Blue Ensign allowed the port authorities to treat her as a naval auxiliary, thus reducing red tape and keeping the troops moving. Capt Edge, who had brought her out from North America, was an employee of Elder Dempster Lines Ltd of Liverpool, a firm that had been engaged in the West Africa trades since the 1850s, and knew the coast well.

As the *New Northland* arrived in Freetown, another Canadian ship, Paterson Steamships’ 1,746-ton *Portadoc*, was on her way there from Saint John, New Brunswick, by way of St Lucia, with a cargo of coal and miscellaneous generals. On April 7, however, sailing alone, she was torpedoed by the *U-124* about 150 miles southwest of Freetown. Her crew was able to make land, but as it was French Guinea, a regime that supported Vichy France, they ended up as prisoners of war. The *U-124* was the same boat that had torpedoed the *Trevisa* less than six months earlier.

Two weeks later, as the *New Northland* was getting used to the heat of
West Africa, the other Newfoundland trader built in Britain in 1926, Furness Withy's *Nerissa*, became a war loss in the cold waters of the North Atlantic. Leaving Halifax for Liverpool on April 21, 1941, on her fortieth Atlantic crossing, she was hit on the night of the 30th by three torpedoes from the *U-552*, thirty-five miles off the Outer Hebrides. Unescorted, and with 290 service personnel and crew and 1,800 tons of cargo, she broke in two and went down with 125 of her passengers and 83 crew, becoming the only troopship in which Canadian lives were lost during the war. Six months later, on October 31, the *U-552* sank the destroyer USS *Reuben James*, the first American warship lost in the war, with 115 of her 159 crew, while escorting convoy HX.156 between Argentia and Iceland.

In June 1941, management of the *New Northland* was formally awarded to Elder Dempster Lines. Elder Dempster was well-known in Canada not only because it was from that company that Canadian Pacific had bought its first Transatlantic steamships in 1903, but also because of its regular sailings from Montreal to Freetown and on to South Africa before the war. Elder Dempster's Montreal office had been located in the Board of Trade Building for many years. In addition to deep sea ships, Elder Dempster owned the 1,932-ton West African coastal liner *Calabar*, which in 1940 had been assigned to run between Takoradi, Lagos and Cape Town. The *New Northland* seemed to fit in well with the Elder Dempster fleet as it also included cargo ships that were named *New Brooklyn*, *New Brunswick*, *New Columbia*, *New Texas* and *New Toronto*, all of about 6,550 gross tons and some of which had made their way to Montreal. Three would become war losses.

From Freetown, sailing reports now saw the *New Northland* trading south to Takoradi, a voyage of 836 nautical miles, or 450 miles north to Bathurst. Twice, in her early months, she also sailed to Accra, in the Gold Coast, instead of Takoradi. Sailing independently at first, she would later be escorted by ships of the Royal Navy, usually sloops or destroyers.

In addition to her normal crew, the *New Northland* now had a military staff of ship's adjutant, medical officer, ship's sergeant, medical orderly and an orderly room staff of company quartermaster sergeant and first orderly. Meanwhile, on June 8th, 1941, Elder Dempster's 7,816-ton *Adda* was torpedoed about 100 miles off Freetown by the *U-107*. She had been commodore ship of convoy OB.323, Liverpool to Freetown, Takoradi, Accra and Lagos. Of her 425 crew, passengers and naval staff, 415 survived and were landed at Freetown and berthed in Furness Withy's *Monarch of Bermuda*, which had arrived on May 23. Now a troopship herself, she housed the survivors of the *Adda* and other ships until other accommodation could be found.

Four months earlier, the same *U-107* had sunk the 3,388-ton *Maplecourt*, with her entire crew of 37, en route from Montreal to Preston with 3,604 tons of general cargo, half of it steel. Originally the 1894-built
Great Lakes passenger ship *North West*, the *Maplecourt* had been acquired by Canada Steamship Lines and then used by Sincennes-McNaughton Lines as a salvage lighter. Like the *Mapledawn*, which CSL had used between Montreal and St John's, she had been cut in two, brought down the St Lawrence canals in 1918 and rebuilt by Davie Shipbuilding. Both were returned to the lakes when no longer needed on tidewater, but *Maplecourt* was cut in two a third time and returned to saltwater in 1940. The forty-seven-year-old ship was cancelled from two fast convoys before finally leaving Halifax on January 22, 1941, in a third, slow convoy SC.20. Approaching the British Isles on February 6, she was picked off as a straggler, her long journey from the Great Lakes having been made in vain. The *U-107* would sink thirty-nine ships totalling 217,751 tons before going missing in 1944.

**Desmond Clarke Goes to Ottawa**

In Ottawa, C D Howe, who as Minister of Transport had sent congratulations to Desmond Clarke on the event of the *North Star*’s first West Indies cruise in January 1938, was now wartime Minister of Munitions & Supply. In January 1941, he had asked Desmond, now 49, to assume the position of Assistant to the President of Wartime Merchant Shipping Ltd in Montreal, but on June 24 he appointed him Director General of Shipbuilding for Canada, replacing F A Willsher, who had been recalled to his position as Chairman of the Board of Steamship Inspection. Until April, the position had been filled by David Carswell, vice-president of Canadian Vickers and Montreal Dry Dock Ltd, who had been engaged in April 1940 and was now full-time Controller, Ship Repairs and Salvage as well as supervising the first destroyers to be built in Canada.

Desmond’s new job involved the production not of merchant ships but naval ships, the corvettes, frigates, minesweepers and other vessels that were needed for the war effort. The core of Canadian production was anti-submarine escorts, or "Flower" class corvettes, of which 122 would be built. Clarke had become one of Howe's so-called "dollar a year" men, leaders of industry who were asked to contribute their time and expertise to the war effort.

Howe himself had direct experience of U-boat warfare. On December 14, 1940, not long before first engaging Clarke, he had been on board Furness Withy’s 10,926-ton *Western Prince* en route from New York to Liverpool when she was lost to enemy action in heavy seas about five hundred miles from the Orkney Islands. Having on board 3,384 tons of base metals, 1,864 tons of foodstuffs and 511 tons of general cargo bound for the war effort, she had been hit by a torpedo from the *U-96*. Of 170 on board, sixteen were lost, including Gordon Scott, one of Howe's staff, and 154 rescued, including 55 passengers. That summer, after the fall of France, the *Western Prince* had carried two consignments of bullion worth £2 million from
Greenock to Halifax, as part of the transport of £827.8 million in British gold reserves and securities to safekeeping in Canada. These reserves, reportedly together with the Crown Jewels, were locked away in the vaults of the Sun Life Building, then the largest office building in the Commonwealth, in Montreal's Dominion Square, a short walk away from Clarke's head office in Phillips Square.

Howe had gone to London to protect Canada's position in the supply of vital armaments to Britain, so it is not surprising to find that another passenger in the Western Prince was Cyril Thompson of Sunderland shipbuilders J L Thompson & Sons Ltd. Thompson was returning to the UK after heading the British Merchant Shipbuilding Mission to the United States and Canada, which had left Britain in September with the objective of ordering sixty 10,000 deadweight ocean freighters in the United States. These ships, built to a design by his company, would replace the huge numbers of ships that had been lost to German U-boats. Howe, Thompson and others spent about nine hours in an open lifeboat before being rescued by a passing merchant ship.

Thompson's team had visited Howe in October, the result of which had been an order for twenty similar ships, soon increased to twenty-six, from Canada. These were the precursors of hundreds more that would follow, as well as the famous American "Liberty" ships that would be a modified version of the Thompson design. Although as early as October 7, 1939, the "Financial Post" had announced that the British were planning to order thirty ships worth $37.5 million in Canada, it had taken this long to put the idea into action, especially as warships were so in demand.

While Thompson had succeeded in saving precious documents and bringing them back for the British Government, Howe lost no time, when he finally arrived in Glasgow on December 18, in proceeding to London, so that he could return with vital plans for Ottawa. In fact, when he engaged Clarke, he was still complaining about not yet having received a full set of drawings for the corvette, the first of which, HMS Windflower, Canada had already delivered the previous October.

The "Montreal Standard," a national feature-based weekly newspaper, commented on Desmond's appointment in one of its "Man of the Week" columns in June 1941: -

Desmond Clarke has come to Ottawa to take one of Canada's biggest war headaches. He has accepted the Hon C D Howe's "request," which for any Canadian today implies his country's "command," to assume the burden of Director General of Shipbuilding, Department of Munitions and Supply. Ask any of the other production chiefs and you will be assured that the shipbuilding job is the one on which today, in view of what has happened in the Atlantic, all other production hinges. Mr Clarke's responsibility covers the naval program - the corvettes and
minesweepers that must clear the path to Britain for the merchant bottoms produced under the aegis of H R MacMillan, Director of Wartime Merchant Shipping Ltd. Since we are still fighting the Battle of Britain, on the success of ship construction efforts depends the possibility of putting into action everything else we have to offer, from Bren guns to the men trained to operate them, and even all aircraft that can't fly the Atlantic.

War, rearranging the Canadian firmament, has placed into juxtaposition two big stars similar in magnitude and quality, but ordinarily at opposite points of the horizon. Desmond Clarke on the Lower St Lawrence and Atlantic coast lanes has built for himself a success corresponding to that of H R MacMillan on the Pacific, and both men have prospered because of similar qualities: independence, initiative, vision, and personal individualism in their manner of doing business.

Clarke and MacMillan have known each other for years, have no doubts about their ability to work together now...

Clarke's problem is to uncork a bottleneck. For twenty years back, we built no ships to speak of in Canada. Then came the war and a rush program. Then came the Atlantic Blitz, increasing a hundredfold the urgency and a hundredfold the jams. Strewn from Vancouver to Halifax are our shipbuilding firms. No manufacturer can do his own job today. He agrees to build a ship ready at such a time - but that machinery from England goes down on a ship on the way over. He reorders. The British Admiralty commandeers the machine meant for him. He has to have some bullet proof armor steel. We never used to make it. We arranged to make a little. We need to produce maybe 20 tons a day instead of that little - if the manufacturer is to get his ship out on time. A week or two of delay now may just mean that his ship is frozen in next fall, and the next vessel can't be laid down on the ways.

Clarke must straighten out the cluttered up program, get priorities where they will count most, rush the materials to the little fellows up in the lakes that must come down the canals before the freeze-up, perhaps deflect from gun or shell production steel that must go first into the corvette that will ensure the guns reaching their destination when they are made.

That other "dollar a year" shipbuilding man, Timber Controller Harvey MacMillan, had been Chairman of the Wartime Requirements Board before being appointed Director of Wartime Merchant Shipping Ltd when the responsibility for merchant ships had been spun off from the department in April 1941. MacMillan's shipping experience came from the H R MacMillan Export Co, whose shipping subsidiary, the Canadian Transport Co Ltd, formed
in 1924, looked after its export needs.

Meanwhile, in January 1941, William Percival, general superintendent of the Clarke Steamship Co, had joined Desmond in government war service, having been appointed Deputy Controller, Ship Construction and Repair, reporting to David Carswell in Montreal. Percival, born in Glasgow, had served with the British merchant marine in the First World War before joining the Canadian Government Merchant Marine as assistant superintendent engineer. He had joined Clarke in 1927.

That spring, the pride of the Royal Navy, HMS *Hood*, was lost in the North Atlantic along with 1,415 of her men in a sea battle with the two-year old battleship *Bismarck*, pride of the German Navy. When the *Hood* was lost on May 24, 1941, Desmond Clarke remembered his visit to her in Barbados nine years earlier. And Capt Agnew, now in command of HMCS *Prince Henry*, had spent time in her. Three days later, her loss was avenged when the Royal Navy sank the *Bismarck* in the Bay of Biscay, with the consequent loss of 2,131 men. Over 3,500 lives were lost in these two sinkings alone.

In October 1941, Desmond also assumed, for a period of about ten months, the presidency of the Toronto Shipbuilding Co Ltd, a crown corporation that had previously been the Dufferin Shipbuilding Co Ltd. It had been owned by James Franceschini, a wealthy Italian-Canadian who had been interned and later released. The combined site on the east Toronto waterfront was used as a naval shipyard, building "Bangor" and "Algerine" class minesweepers and escorts for both the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Navy. In August 1943, the business, which employed about 3,000, became the shipbuilding division of the Redfern Construction Co Ltd.

Also in October, Douglas Ambridge, assistant general manager of the Ontario Paper Co, where he had been in charge of the development of Baie Comeau just a few years earlier, joined Desmond as Director of Shipbuilding. Ambridge had previously worked for Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper and the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co. After the fall of Malaya in January 1942, Ambridge's experience would be tapped to help develop a new synthetic rubber plant at Sarnia, Ontario, to be operated by Polymer Ltd. Ambridge would return in May 1943 to succeed Desmond as Director General of Shipbuilding, to be succeeded in turn by David Carswell in October 1944.

At the same time as putting Ambridge in charge of operations, Desmond had recruited Ernest Lawson, who had left Clarke to join the air force in August 1940, as his executive assistant, placing him in charge of administration. W Harold Milne, of Montreal naval architects Lambert, German & Milne, who had joined the department as technical advisor, was appointed in charge of matters technical, while M G Farquhar was placed in charge of negotiations.

By December 1941, Desmond was announcing new contracts for the
West Coast, with orders for seventeen twin-screw "super corvettes" that were "similar to construction undertaken in the United States and faster than anything so far built in the Dominion." These orders, with a value of $25 million, were awarded to Yarrows Ltd of Victoria. Having completed a number of cargo ships, Yarrows would now concentrate solely on naval ships. These orders were the first of the "River" class frigates, as they would become known, and part of a new program for 38 corvettes, 25 minesweepers and 16 naval trawlers. The first of the frigates, HMCS *Waskesiu* and HMCS *St Catherines*, were to be delivered in June and July 1943. Yarrows and four shipyards on the St Lawrence River would eventually deliver sixty of these ships.

In his first year in Ottawa, Desmond also found time to write a 28-page article entitled "Canada Builds A Navy." Appearing in "Canadian Geographical Magazine" in April 1942, it described in some detail the work of the Naval Construction and Small Boats arms of Canada's wartime emergency shipbuilding program. At the time he wrote the article, eighty-two ships were under construction in sixteen Canadian shipyards.

On April 8, just as this article appeared, the government established the Park Steamship Co Ltd, under the presidency of Canadian National Steamships general manager R B Teakle, who had once managed the Canadian Government Merchant Marine. This company would manage the Canadian-flag wartime merchant fleet and, like MacMillan's Wartime Merchant Shipping, was based in Montreal. Along with the British Ministry of War Transport and the US Maritime Commission, the new company would soon become an important recipient of Canada's war-built merchant ships.

On September 30, 1942, Desmond Clarke arrived in London together with C D Howe and Ralph Bell, Director General of Aircraft Production. Col James Ralston, Minister of National Defense, and his chief of general staff and military secretary, had also joined them for two weeks of meetings and other duties. The trip was made via Newfoundland in "one of Britain's big bombers" and was Howe's first trip to Britain since he was torpedoed in the *Western Prince* in December 1940. The group returned to Canada on October 20 in Churchill's private aircraft, a Liberator bomber called "Commando."

A few months later, on February 19, 1943, Desmond was in the press again when he announced in Toronto that more war workers were about to be released from programs that were not quite so urgent to build more escorts. The Canadian Press reported on his speech as follows:

Canada's 1942 shipbuilding program was directed primarily at an increase in the number of cargo ships. Prime Minister Mackenzie King in an address in the commons Feb 2 said "more than 80" cargo vessels were produced last year, compared with one ship in 1941.

On the other hand, there was a reduction in the production of
corvettes and minesweepers, which totalled 74 in 1942 and 85 in 1941. It is now considered apparent that fighting ships to provide protection for cargo vessels are required.

Mr Clarke said bluntly in his Toronto address that "there is no use building more cargo ships to have them sunk."

Canada's shipbuilding program is centred in 21 major shipyards and 58 smaller yards and production since the outbreak of war, including orders now issued, totals $1,000,000,000.

Typical of the hundreds of warships that fell under Desmond's purview was one of the "little fellows up in the lakes" mentioned in the "Man of the Week" article. HMCS *Lindsay* was among fifteen updated corvettes built under a program called "Revised Flower Class (Increased Endurance) 1942-43," the second last group of corvettes to be ordered. After delivery in November 1943 she would work up off Halifax and Bermuda before proceeding to the UK, where her six officers and 79 crew were to undertake convoy escort duty out of Londonderry in Northern Ireland.

As a colonel in the Canadian Army, Frank Clarke also served Ottawa. With his son taken prisoner by the Japanese at Hong Kong in December 1941, on May 12, 1942, he accepted the post of Special Assistant to the Adjutant-General responsible for the welfare of Canadian prisoners of war. Working with various government departments on their welfare, this position also involved liaising with next of kin on subjects such as parcel regulations and mail privileges, and eventually, repatriation.

**The Clare Shipbuilding Company**

Still in the realm of shipbuilding, Desmond and brother Wilfrid, had decided to take over a small shipyard at Meteghan, Nova Scotia, in 1941 called the Clare Shipbuilding Co Ltd. The yard was named for the French-speaking township in Digby County in which Meteghan is located. The Acadian Shore, as the area is known, lies on the Bay of Fundy between Digby and Yarmouth, and was full of shipbuilders and shipwrights. Shipyards all along this coast had built first large square-riggers, and then schooners, for generations. Meteghan, about forty miles by rail from Yarmouth, had received its first dry dock in 1890. With Wilfrid Clarke as president, the Clarkes decided to lease the shipyard and engage those same skills to build "Admiralty" type wooden minesweepers for the war effort.

In the spring of 1940, Clare Shipbuilding had revived the yard of the Meteghan Shipbuilding Co Ltd, which under the management of John F Deveau had installed three marine railways and built schooners, rumrunners and wooden motor coasters. Among the vessels built there were the RCN training ship HMCS *Venture* (ii), a 250-ton three-masted schooner
commissioned in October 1937, and the 275-ton wooden motor coaster
Mont-Joli, completed in 1939 and requisitioned by the RCN for use as an
examination vessel. The Venture had been designed by William Roué, who in
1921 had produced the record-breaking 168-ton Grand Banks fishing
schooner Bluenose, which has been portrayed on the Canadian dime since
1937. And one of Clarke's own fleet, the chartered Père Arnaud, a well-built
little ship, had come from this shipyard in 1932.

The plan was to produce anti-magnetic motor minesweepers (MMS) for
the Royal Navy, of which seventeen would be built, initially ten of the "105-
foot" class (119 feet overall) and, later, seven of the "126-foot" class (140
feet overall). The MMS was an inshore craft designed for clearing rivers and
estuaries of acoustic and magnetic mines, its wooden hull making it much
more effective for handling magnetic mines than steel minesweepers. The
first of the craft had been ordered in Canada in January 1941.

With the trade press soon reporting "Clare Building Minesweepers," the
yard's first "105-footers" were allocated the Royal Navy pendant numbers
MMS.196, 197, 198 and 199. These in turn were followed by the MMS.242,
243, 244, 245, 246 and 247 - in all, ten of a class of vessels numbering
almost 300 from Commonwealth shipyards worldwide. As well as the UK,
Canada and Newfoundland, eleven other countries, ranging from Nassau,
Jamaica and Grand Cayman to India, Singapore, Hong Kong and Burma,
built this type of vessel.

With the growth of wartime shipbuilding in Canada, one of the
problems faced by Clare Shipbuilding in 1943 was the spread of labour
unions. The newly-formed Industrial Union of Marine & Shipbuilding Workers
of Canada (IUMSWC) was busy that summer attempting to organize workers
at Halifax, Meteghan, Louisburg and other Maritime shipyards. Local 1 had
been formed in Halifax and Local 3 across the Bay of Fundy in Saint John.
When the union arrived in Meteghan, it opened Local 6. Management resisted
the attempts to organize its workers and lockouts stopped work from August
16 to 19 and from September 6 to 8 that year. Eventually an agreement was
reached, but not before three-quarters of the yard's workers had become
paid up union members.

Despite this, minesweepers were delivered to the Royal Navy and able
seaman Don Gilchrist later recalled his service in the Clare-built MMS.199.
Joining the MMS.199 at Colombo in 1944, he recounted his experience to the
Royal Naval Patrol Service Association:

My stay on board MMS.199 was sweeping into Akyab, then down to
Ramree Island, Andaman Island, and Port Swettenham and on to
Singapore, sweeping, sweeping and all the time, sweeping. We then
went 'Cha-ung Hopping' and could only moor up by tying to trees each
side of the ship. One day while we were tied up, an Indian sloop
flashed to suggest that we move as hostile guns were ranging on us.
For some considerable time after that we were sweeping to Port Swettenham, then into Singapore, then away to South India and then back to Singapore to 'pay off'.

The phrase "Cha-ung hopping" referred to the Cha Ungs, the narrow rivers of Burma. A sister ship, the MMS.197 ended up in the Burmese Navy after the war.

The seven "126-foot" (140-foot overall) minesweepers built by Clare were allocated Royal Navy pendant numbers MMS.1050, 1051, 1052, 1053, 1054, 1055 and 1056, and were ordered on December 18, 1942 for delivery in 1944. Once it was agreed that Clare would start building the larger class as well, land was expropriated from the adjoining yard of Jules Robicheau, on which new building ways were installed, and some local dredging was done to allow for their launching. Just over 100 of the larger type were completed, but these came only from British and Canadian shipyards.

Despite the fact that the country was at war, as Director General of Shipbuilding, Desmond Clarke could not afford to give the appearance of benefiting by owning a shipyard. Any potential conflict was avoided by ensuring that Clare built ships only for the Royal Navy and not for Canada. Two of the "126-foot" class, Maple Lake and Oak Lake, were later ordered by the RCN, but not until December 3, 1943, after space had cleared from Clare's Admiralty work and Desmond was no longer responsible for naval shipbuilding. But these were cancelled in September 1944 as "no longer required." As a result of this, Clare may well have been the only shipyard in Canada not to have built a ship for the Royal Canadian Navy during the war.

The "126-footers" were handy and would appear after the war in various guises. After service with the Royal Navy, MMS.1050 was sold to Norway and become the 415-ton Oslo-based hospital ship Elisier 5; 1051 became the merchantman Admiral Blake in 1946, then the Norwegian Nuvik; 1052 served at Grimsby and became the Arcus in 1946; 1053 became the Admiral Drake in 1946 and Norwegian Thor Bjorn in 1948; 1054 served at Plymouth, transferred to the French Navy, then became Dolphin and Greenland Fisheries' Greenland; 1055 also served with the French Navy, then became Admiral Pound in 1946, and went to Norway as Havbraut in 1947, while 1056 transferred to the French Navy before becoming the Danish Jane Lolk. The three that went to the French did so in early 1945, to be returned to the Royal Navy in 1946 and 1947. One of the Clare "126-footers," the MMS.1050, lasted until January 1984.

Likewise, one of Clarke's post-war local service ships, the Ungava, would be a former MMS of the "105-foot" type, from a British yard. Her pendant number, MMS.192, was just four before Clare's first ship. Another, the chartered Regina Polaris, would be one of the "126-foot" class, laid down as the Fir Lake in Sarnia, Ontario. 
In addition to seventeen minesweepers built by Clare Shipbuilding, it would produce two trawlers and twenty other small craft while under Clarke ownership, employing up to 500 workers at its peak.

**Wartime Cruising**

The effect the war was having on passenger shipping in the Gulf of St Lawrence can be gauged by what a book published in 1941, and no doubt prepared in 1940, had to say about it. "Here's to Canada!" by Dorothy Duncan gave the following guidance about wartime shipping:

Seaways: Service from Europe can be determined only by direct communication with steamship lines until the end of the war. No schedules are posted, no sailing dates given out to the press or the chance enquirer.

Cruises: These vary from year to year but schedules are still being kept from Toronto, Montreal and Quebec. Make enquiries of the Clarke Steamship Company in New York and Chicago, or their agents in Boston, Patterson, Wylde & Co. Canada Steamship Lines maintain agents for their Saguenay cruise in Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Duluth, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia and St Paul. If the government does not requisition their fleets, information may also be obtained from Canadian Pacific Steamships and Canadian National Steamship Company, Montreal, as to their plans for next summer.

Ocean shipping schedules were no longer published in the newspapers, just advertisements with phone numbers saying "for further information apply to" or "for dates, ports and rates please consult us." But although its cruise ships were now at war, Clarke still published a 1941 "Vagabond Cruises" brochure, featuring the *North Gaspé* and *Gaspesia*, and printed 10,000 copies, compared to 5,000 in 1939.

On June 3, 1941, under the heading "Cruises Along St Lawrence To Open for Summer Tourists," the "Christian Science Monitor" commented on the Gaspé route, saying that it was "good news to hear that despite the war the Clarke Steamship Company will again this summer conduct trips along this scenic route." And while Canadian National and Canadian Pacific each contributed two coastal liners to the war effort, they still managed to maintain cruise programs from Vancouver.

With America still not at war and no U-boats yet having appeared in the St Lawrence, Clarke's 1941 brochure managed to extol its Gulf cruises without even mentioning the war:

These two combined freight and passenger ships provide comfortable
accommodation, excellent French-Canadian cuisine, and a home-like, family atmosphere to be found only on small vessels of this type. The North Gaspé is a new motorship which presents a trim, yacht-like appearance, and is the last word in marine construction and designing. The Gaspesia is an old favourite with vacationists who enjoy her "vagabond" type of cruise, calling at many little trading posts, fishing villages and lumber camps, not accessible to larger ships.

Eight cabins on the North Gaspé and seven on the Gaspesia, were for sale to cruise passengers, and the balance reserved for local trade. Fifteen cabins was an increase on the eleven that had been set aside for cruisers on the same two ships in 1939, six on the North Gaspé and five on the Gaspesia. But these 35 berths for cruise passengers, including three-berth cabins in the Gaspesia, were still a long way from the 510 that had been offered in the North Star and New Northland alone in 1939. Nevertheless, this kept the company in the cruise business in some small way. Summer fares were $55 for North Gaspé’s 6-night Gaspé cruise, $70 for her 7-night Magdalen Islands cruise and $95 for the Gaspesia’s 12-night North Shore cruise, with reductions in the off-season.

Sailing dates were still given in 1941, although this would not last. The North Gaspé’s 7-day cruise departed Montreal's Victoria Pier at 7:30 pm on Monday, followed by the Gaspesia, with her 12-day cruise at 5 pm on Tuesday. The North Gaspé’s 6-night Gaspé cruise then left at 7:30 pm on Tuesday in weeks when there was no sailing of the Gaspesia.

The Gaspesia no longer voyaged "to North Shore ports and Newfoundland," but offered "12-day cruises to the Gulf of St Lawrence," her crossing to Corner Brook having been curtailed in 1940. While the 1941 brochure still gave Corner Brook in the port rotation, this was a mistake as the actual itinerary now ended at Natashquan and all other references to Newfoundland had been removed. This document, published in March 1941, must have been prepared in a hurry, as the itinerary still showed her arriving at Natashquan on Sunday and departing on Thursday - a rather long turnaround, and one that would have allowed plenty of time to make the crossing to Corner Brook.

The 1941 Season

In 1941, the Americans had still not entered the war nor had it yet crossed the Atlantic. But signs of impending developments were near to hand. On Sunday, August 10, while the North Gaspé was at Quebec on her way back to Montreal from her tenth voyage of the season, and the Gaspesia was at Natashquan, Winston Churchill was conferring with Franklin Roosevelt on the battleship HMS Prince of Wales in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland. This was the meeting that resulted in the agreement known as the Atlantic
Charter. Roosevelt had arrived in the cruiser USS *Augusta* and the conference was held just off Argentia, where a US Navy base had been commissioned on July 15 and a US Naval Air Station was about to open on August 28, days either way of that historic meeting. When he visited *Prince of Wales*, Roosevelt took particular interest in the presence of two Canadian officers, who in the practice of the day were doing part of their training in a capital ship of the Royal Navy.

Back on the St Lawrence, an interesting passenger travelled in the *Gaspesia* that summer, when 32-year old Gabrielle Roy took passage to Sept-Iles. She wrote two articles after the voyage for "Le Bulletin des Agriculteurs," suggesting in one that the North Shore was a land of the future, something that would be proven out within just a few years. Roy wrote of the *Gaspesia* discharging her cargo: -

> Yesterday, while strolling along the quay, I had the sudden impression of a united and harmonious life in which we were taking our small part... In a moment, the scent of bananas, stronger than that of the sea, filled the curious nostrils of the children. The whole wealth of the outside world came to us with this sweet aroma of the hot countries. But we were only receiving. The little hatch hurried to deliver its products... This exchange, evoking the peaceful beauty of the world, all taking place under a rare display of the northern lights.

The St Boniface, Manitoba-born author was supporting her writing by working as a sketch artist. She was now working on her first novel, "Bonheur d'occasion" ("The Tin Flute"), which would appear in 1945. Having lived in Europe before the war, she had returned to settle in Montreal and as part of her exploration of her new home province, she also travelled to Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands in the *North Gaspé*, deciding to vacation in the Gaspé thereafter.

Towards the end of the season, on November 2, the 3,498-ton Greek cargo ship *Chelatros* left Quebec with a cargo of 6,000 tons of aluminum, copper, lead, military vehicles, potatoes and cheese for Britain. Earlier that year, she had arrived in Freetown on March 27, the same day on which the *New Northland* had arrived from Trinidad, but was now trading to the St Lawrence. On November 4, she ran aground in the Magdalen Islands. The *Foundation Franklin* arrived from Pictou and began removing her cargo into lighters, one of which was the *Foundation Aranmore*. This ship, which had stood in for the *North Shore* twenty years earlier as *Aranmore*, had been acquired by Foundation Maritime in 1939. About 1,600 tons was loaded into Canada Steamship Lines' 1,781-ton canaller *Donald Stewart*, sent down from Port Alfred to assist. The *Foundation Franklin* then left the islands on November 14, just as the *North Gaspé* was winding down her own season, but would return over the next two summers to salvage most of the rest of the cargo and take it to Halifax for loading to other ships.
On the North Shore that month, war crept closer to home as the 2,902-ton *Leopold II* loaded at Clarke City. Owned by Armement Deppe of Antwerp, and managed by CMB, she had just delivered a cargo of iron ore from Wabana, Newfoundland, to Britain, and this time had been sent to Clarke City to load Gulf Pulp & Paper Co woodpulp. Crossing the Atlantic once more, she reported at Loch Ewe, Scotland, on December 18, and received orders for London. On December 23, whilst steaming down the North Sea, she sank after hitting a German mine off Lowestoft, taking with her 32 crew and two gunners. The *Leopold II*, built in the same shipyard as the *North Shore*, had loaded at the same Clarke City dock where less than a month before cruise passengers had been visiting in Clarke's *Gaspesia*.

**Quebec Airways Trains Pilots**

In his role as president of Quebec Airways, Desmond Clarke had organized a unit of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan at Cap-de-la-Madeleine, near Trois Rivières, under a contract between Quebec Airways (Training) Ltd and the Department of National Defence. One of eight such schools in Quebec, it had opened as No. 11 Elementary Flying Training School on October 14, 1940. No. 1 Elementary Flying Training School was at Malton, Ontario, now the site of Toronto's Pearson International Airport.

No. 11 was headed by Quebec Airways' Montreal manager J N de Blicquy, a Belgian flyer, while Canadian Airways supplied engineer Fernando Vachon to maintain the schools Fleet Finches and Cornell trainers. Fernando was the youngest brother of Quebec Airways' manager Roméo Vachon. Marcel Boisvert was appointed chief instructor and among the trainers was George Clarke, a member of the next generation of Clarkes and a nephew of Desmond's, who had been flying in the west. After the war George would become president of Fleet Manufacturing & Aircraft Ltd in Fort Erie, Ontario. While the majority of the new flying schools were on RCAF bases, Cap-de-la-Madeleine, one of ten civilian-run units, was built on an airfield that had been used by Quebec Airways. The original class size at Cap-de-la-Madeleine started out at 35 but this would be doubled by 1942 and the school would be active until it had finally fulfilled its wartime role on February 11, 1944.

The Commonwealth Air Training Plan fell under C D Howe, and would produce more than 50,000 Allied pilots during the war, with students not only from Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, whose governments sponsored the plan, but also from Norway, Belgium, Free France, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Churchill was quoted at one point as saying that this was Canada's greatest contribution to the war.

By winter, Quebec Airways had a contract to carry mail and passengers from Rimouski all the way to Blanc-Sablon. It also made the first commercial flight to Goose Bay, Labrador, when pilot Lucien Gendron landed a ski-equipped de Havilland Dragon Rapide on the new runway on December 3,
1941, four days before Pearl Harbor. Gendron had joined Quebec Airways in 1936 under Roméo Vachon and had become its operations manager. He had also been the pilot the Quebec Government hired in 1929 to bomb the beluga whales that they thought were destroying the North Shore fishery. That same month, on December 22, Quebec Airways began service six days a week between Montreal and Quebec's new Ancienne Lorette airport. Although the flights also landed at Trois Rivières' Cap-de-la-Madeleine airport en route, the flying time between Montreal and Quebec was only 80 minutes.

Goose Bay, about fifteen miles from the old Hudson's Bay Co post at North West River, was chosen for an airfield as it had suitable terrain. When the first Quebec Airways flight arrived, RCAF strength at Goose Bay was already 3,000. Goose Bay was to be a major aircraft refuelling stop for short range aircraft headed for Britain, with further stops at Greenland and/or Iceland en route to Prestwick in Scotland. In fact, when Gendron arrived, the first short-range aircraft had already left for Britain, just the month before. After Pearl Harbor, the United States also built a base at Goose Bay.

Fewer than a hundred flights had been made across the Atlantic before the war. Pan American had made its first passenger flight from New York to Southampton, by "Clipper" flying boat, in June 1939, with stops at Shediac, Botwood and Foynes in Ireland. In 1940, however, at the request of the British Government, Canadian Pacific had formed the Atlantic Ferry Service, a civilian organization headed by ex-Imperial Airways executives, in order to fly up to 150 aircraft a month across the Atlantic instead of delivering them by sea, thus freeing up space for other valuable cargoes.

On August 1, 1941, this organization, staffed by civilian pilots, was handed over to the Royal Air Force Ferry Command, which took responsibility for flying the bombers from Montreal's Dorval airport to Britain via the new bases at Gander or Goose Bay. Headquartered at Dorval, on April 1, 1943, it would become 45 Atlantic Transport Group, RAF Transport Command, and would deliver 11,000 aircraft in five years. Indeed, Canadian aircraft production rose from 31 in 1939 to 4,133 in 1943. Jim Hutcheson, now with the RCAF, would serve part of his war attached to this unit.

Not long after Gendron's landing at Goose Bay, Clarke's interest in aviation began to wane. As a result of experience gained from organizing the Atlantic Ferry Service, Canadian Pacific had decided to form its own airline, and in January 1942 acquired Quebec Airways, which became part of the newly-formed Canadian Pacific Air Lines that May. For a while, Desmond stayed on as president of Quebec Airways, after its move to Canadian Pacific's Windsor Station headquarters in Montreal, and thereafter as a director. Nevertheless, unlike other airlines involved in the merger, Quebec Airways retained its own identity within Quebec, using the tag line "operated by Canadian Pacific Air Lines."
Saguenay Terminals Suffers Freak Losses

Saguenay Terminals Ltd was a subsidiary of the Aluminium Company of Canada (Alcan), formed at Montreal in 1939 to bring cargoes of bauxite north from the Caribbean to its huge new aluminum smelter at Arvida, near Port Alfred on the Saguenay River, and to load general cargo back. Starting with three ships, when these were requisitioned for war service, Saguenay managed to find two former First World War US Navy colliers that had been laid up at Norfolk since the early 1920s. A third ship, the 1,827-ton Turret Cape, which was being used as a barge, was acquired and fitted with a diesel engine at Montreal in order to carry bauxite.

The navy colliers were the 10,647-ton Nereus, which Saguenay bought on February 21 and the 10,653-ton Proteus, acquired on March 8, 1941. Neither ship would last ten months as they disappeared within a fortnight of each other after sailing from St Thomas loaded with bauxite for Port Alfred. The Proteus vanished some time after November 23, with all 58 on board, and the Nereus after December 10, with 61 crew members. At first, it had been thought that they had been torpedoed but German U-boats had not yet reached that part of the world. As both sank in heavy weather, it was later surmised that they had suffered from heavy corrosion in almost two decades of lay-up at Norfolk.

From this rather inauspicious start, Saguenay Terminals would be managing more than 100 vessels for the US War Shipping Administration within a year.

The "North Gaspé" Goes to War

Although the North Star and New Northland had both gone to war, smaller Clarke ships would also serve. Before the war, a good part of the fleet had been placed in lay up each winter in the Louise Basin at Quebec. But starting in 1941-42, rather than laying up useful tonnage, ships that weren't needed for winter navigation were engaged for war duties further south. These included three motorships, the North Gaspé and the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's Jean Brillant, both quite modern ships, and the small Cape Gaspé, all of which would see war service with the Americans.

Capt Alphonse Bégin, who had joined the North Gaspé as first officer on her delivery in 1938, was now her master. Having assumed command in 1940, he would stay with her throughout the war. Capt Bégin had first signed onto a Clarke ship in 1922, at the age of fifteen, and joined the company as a full time sailor in 1924. Among the ships he had served in were the Nayarit, the Cape Gaspé, and the North Voyageur, as the Nayarit had become known in 1929, before joining the North Gaspé.

Well before Pearl Harbor, Clarke had made arrangements to charter the
North Gaspé to the US Army Transport Service, who would arm her and use her to move armed forces personnel and supplies during the winter. This she would do every year from 1941-42 onwards.

As a non US-flag ship, the Americans would use her primarily in the trades from New York, Baltimore, Norfolk and Charleston to Newfoundland and Bermuda, where they had established military bases in connection with the 1940 Lend-Lease Agreements with the United Kingdom. Early in this employment, the North Gaspé's watches were changed from twelve hours to eight, and her crew size increased by four, including a new third officer. This meant a reallocation of some of her crew spaces.

Foreign ports called at by the North Gaspé during the war would include New York, Charleston, Boston, Norfolk, Cape Henry, Baltimore, and of course Bermuda, plus the Newfoundland ports of St John's, Corner Brook and Argentia, where Churchill and Roosevelt had met in nearby Placentia Bay. Canadian ports, apart from her normal calls in the Gulf of St Lawrence, would also include Halifax and Louisburg.

Léo Chouinard, a young man of seventeen from l'Islet-sur-Mer, and later a master of Clarke ships, joined the North Gaspé at Quebec on April 17, 1941, the same day the Duke and Duchess of Windsor boarded the Berkshire in Nassau on their way to Miami. Léo joined her with his older brother Georges, who had served in her before. He spent the whole season of 1941 with her and then remained on board for the winter. Chouinard described the North Gaspé's first voyage south from Quebec in his autobiography, "Capitaine Silence":

While other ships cruised between Miami, Nassau and Cuba, the North Gaspé left Quebec under command of Capt Bégin on December 4, 1941, through the cold, the snow and the new ice with a full load for the coast and the Magdalen Islands...

A fierce storm forced us to shelter at Baie-Trinité on the North Shore, as we could not get near the docks on the South Shore. I was proud of myself for not having been seasick. After the islands it was "full ahead" for New York, where we would learn our destination. After two days in the American metropolis, they advised us that because of the war our ship had been engaged by the US military to serve East Coast bases such as Norfolk, Virginia, and Charleston, South Carolina. Our new base port would be New York. A few days later a crew boarded our vessel, shiny as a new penny, and in a single day their paintbrushes took her from her beautiful white to a melancholy grey. Our ship had been transformed into a military vessel, capable of transporting seventy-five soldiers in berths.

The North Gaspé now began her war career in overall grey paint. At the same time, small wooden structures with doors were added in way of
each outer door so that no light would escape from the interior of the ship when men were leaving or entering the accommodation.

The title of Léo Chouinard's book, "Capitaine Silence," is derived from a nickname given to him because of a habit he later developed of docking ships with hand gestures, rather like a conductor, instead of using the usual verbal commands.

Sailing to St John's

On December 14, 1941, just a week after Pearl Harbor, the North Gaspé cast off from Brooklyn Army Terminal on her first voyage for the Americans, bound for Newfoundland, a voyage of 1,093 nautical miles. Compared to the usual transports and troopships that loaded in Brooklyn, the North Gaspé was sleek and small, and many of her wartime passengers, and others travelling with her in convoy, took to describing her as "a former private yacht." With her on the way to St. Johns were fifty weathermen, United States Army Air Force technicians and FBI men. Not only was she carrying technicians to build and operate four military communications stations; she was also bringing the FBI to Newfoundland. The first American defence forces in Newfoundland had arrived the previous January.

When she docked in St John's on December 19, the North Gaspé had just missed her former fleetmate North Star, which as HMCS Prince Henry had been ordered to Halifax four days earlier, after completing her stint as a barracks ship. Of company-owned ships, however, only the New Northland had preceded her to St John's, in 1931, on her voyages in 1934-35 and when she had embarked troops there in 1940.

Léo Chouinard recounted the North Gaspé’s rough return to New York after spending Christmas quietly in St John's: -

Once discharge was complete, we set off for New York with about forty female passengers, wives of American officers who had come to spend Christmas with their husbands. As this was the stormy winter period, when the sea is always rough, most of them were very ill. The ship was always in motion and one passenger even broke her arm. It was such that the ship's nurse and doctor had no rest during the crossing. On our return to New York, several ambulances were needed to evacuate our improvised hospital.

The North Gaspé would return to Newfoundland many times over the course of the war, and after the war Clarke ships would return to become regular callers at St John's as well as Corner Brook and other Newfoundland ports.
Churchill visits Washington

On December 22, three days after the North Gaspé had arrived at St John's for the first time, Winston Churchill arrived at Hampton Roads in the battleship HMS Duke of York, from where he proceeded straight to Washington to confer with Roosevelt. He had departed the Clyde on December 12, only five days after Pearl Harbor and two days before the North Gaspé left Brooklyn, in order to cement his relationship with the Americans now that they were officially involved in the war. The Duke of York would have been passing somewhere to the south of St John's around the time that the North Gaspé arrived there.

Spending Christmas in the United States and then three days in Ottawa, where he addressed the Canadian parliament, Churchill finally departed Washington on January 14, 1942, by Boeing flying boat for Bermuda, from where the Royal Navy was due to take him back to England. Instead he managed to convince those that had the say in such matters to continue on to England by flying boat, leaving Bermuda on the 15th and landing at Plymouth the next day, saving perhaps ten days in the process.

The "North Gaspé" Has a Close Call With a U-Boat

When she was already about seven weeks into her winter duty, on January 21, 1942, the North Gaspé's charter was finally announced publicly in a Canadian Press bulletin that appeared in "The Gazette" and other newspapers across Canada: -

The Canadian steamship North Gaspé, owned by the Clarke Steamship Co Ltd of Montreal, has been chartered to the United States Army for a period of five months for service between St John's, Nfld, and British Guiana, Dutch Guiana and intermediate ports, it was disclosed today. This became known when an order-in-council was tabled authorizing the carrying of 132 persons on voyages over that route, providing that additional life-saving appliances were installed.

Ironically, it was on that very same day that the North Gaspé got her first real taste of the war. Chouinard tells of her encounter in his memoirs: -

Leaving St John's in the company of other ships destined for Halifax and Boston, our orders were to sail in escorted convoy, at a time when torpedoings were multiplying along the East Coast of Canada and the United States. The North Gaspé set course for one hundred miles off Cape Race, Newfoundland, to join a convoy arriving from Europe. Of twenty ships that had left England, four had been torpedoed during the crossing.
We joined the convoy towards 16:00 hours. Escorted by three corvettes, we progressed at about six knots, making allowance for the slower ships. The chief engineer did not appreciate this slow progress. Not hot enough for complete combustion of the diesel oil, there were engine problems at the piston heads, the fuel injectors and at the valves. To increase speed would have caused a fire in the exhaust.

Then ... a huge explosion shook the whole ship. Those sleeping were turned from their beds, while the waking and the captain thought that a torpedo had hit us! To the ringing of alarms, the captain ordered everyone to the boat deck. Poorly clothed, in temperatures below zero, we waited for an hour and a half for orders from the captain, to know if we would have to lower the lifeboats to the sea. The first officer's inspection found that we were not taking on water, nor was there any apparent damage. Having hardly had time to get dressed, many now had frozen hands and feet. The violent concussion our ship had experienced remained for the moment unexplained... Immediately, the captain decided to leave the convoy, engine at full speed. But we had to reduce speed because of a strong west wind.

The US Military's Eastern Sea Frontier Joint Operations Office in New York recorded this incident in its diary for January 21, 1942: -

2121: Message received that m.v. *North Gaspé* had been torpedoed in [position] 46-38N and 53W about ten miles south of Cape Race. Ship is of Canadian registry. Chartered by the US Army and has on board an army gun crew and communication unit, commanded by a second lieutenant.

2247: *North Gaspé* still afloat and will try to make port.

Returning to Chouinard's account of the event: -

At daylight, the convoy commodore realized that he was missing two ships, the *North Gaspé* and a Norwegian vessel. Because of the darkness and the haze of snow, he had not seen them leave. This was signalled to Halifax and the US military at New York.

Three days later, we entered Halifax to replenish our fuel and freshwater and to take orders from the US Navy. Not without cause, the captain feared reprimand, as he had detached from the convoy without permission... The officer in charge asked for an explanation, but the captain, fortunately, was found to be without blame. They told us that the other ship missing from the convoy was the little Norwegian that had been our neighbour. Hit by a torpedo, she had lost her propeller and rudder. It was this very incident that had caused the turmoil that had frightened us! Incapable of steering, the stricken ship, lucky not to have sunk, had been towed to Bay Bulls, Newfoundland.
The officer then showed us an aerial photograph, not very clear because of the fog, taken at the location where we had been two days earlier. Navigating alone, this unidentified ship that the Canadian navy had taken for a German warship was in fact the North Gaspé...

A note appears in the North Gaspé's military service record, dated January 24, 1942, the day of her arrival at Halifax: "Torpedoed 44 miles off Cape Race at position 46-38N, 53-00W - arrived Halifax undamaged 01-24, bump was probably depth charge from escort." That note of skepticism was later contradicted by German sources, which attributed the incident to a specific boat, the U-203, which had fired a brace of four torpedoes at what it thought was a bigger ship. Six and a half hours after her near-miss with the North Gaspé, the U-203 sank the anti-submarine trawler HMS Rosemonde with her whole crew of twenty-five off Cape Race. And that same day, the U-754 sank two Norwegians, the 2,153-ton Belize and 1,344-ton William Hansen, close to the North Gaspé’s position. She had had a narrow escape indeed.

The U-203 had left Brest on Christmas Day, 1941, on her fifth active patrol, as part of the first wave of Operation Drumbeat, the first attack on the eastern seaboard of North America after Germany declared war on America on December 11. Having sunk Portuguese and Norwegian ships on January 15 and 17, 1942, the U-203 was then noted as having "damaged the Canadian 888-ton North Gaspé" before returning to base on January 29. Meanwhile, from 3,295,000 tons of Allied shipping sunk in 1941, the total would rise to 6,150,000 tons in 1942.

U-boats were now very busy in the area. On the same day the North Gaspé arrived in Halifax, Newfoundland Canada's Belle Isle arrived with 41 of the 45 crew of the 4,887-ton Thirlby of Britain’s Ropner Shipping Co Ltd. This ship, en route from New York to Loch Ewe with a cargo of corn, had left Halifax just the day before and been torpedoed by the U-109 after breaking away from convoy SC.66. The Thirlby had had a narrow escape the year before, when on April 3, 1941, in an incident similar to the North Gaspé's, she had been damaged but not hit by a torpedo from the U-69, while straggling from convoy SC.26 with a cargo of wheat from Saint John to Hull. This time, however, she had been lost along with four of her crew.

The eight U-boats in the first wave of Operation Drumbeat managed to sink thirty-one Allied merchant ships totalling 175,990 gross tons in the ten days between January 11, the day Blue Funnel Line's 8,998-ton Cyclops was sunk 160 miles south of Halifax, and January 21, the day of North Gaspé’s narrow escape. The North Gaspé was one of four ships recorded as "torpedoed but not sunk." The U-203 did not seem to have very good aim as another torpedo would miss Delta Line's Delvalle in the Caribbean on April 12. But the U-154 got the Delvalle instead, after which her crew were rescued by HMCS Prince Henry, the former North Star.
This part of the *North Gaspé*’s career was nothing if not eventful. Not three weeks later, while at New York on February 9, 1942, the *North Gaspé* passed close to the French superliner *Normandie* as she burned at Pier 88. Renamed *Lafayette* by the Americans, who had seized her for use as a troop transport, this legendary Atlantic liner became the largest merchant ship loss of any kind during the war as a result of the fire, which had been started when an unguarded welding torch lit a kapok lifejacket.

**The "North Gaspé" Sails to Bermuda**

The *North Gaspé* would see frequent service to Bermuda during the war. After the Furness Bermuda liners were requisitioned in 1939, Furness had managed to carry on with other ships until March 1940. The Grace Line had then undertaken the New York-Bermuda passenger service, from April through December 1940, with weekly sailings by the 9,135-ton liners *Santa Paula* and *Santa Rosa*.

In 1941, the US Government contracted the Alcoa Steamship Company of New York to supply its Lend-Lease bases in Bermuda, the Bahamas and the Caribbean. Alcoa used several coastal liners chartered from Eastern Steamship Lines, including in 1941 the *Acadia* and the twins *Evangeline* and *Yarmouth*, and in 1942 the sister ships *George Washington* and *Robert E Lee*. The *Robert E Lee* would become an early war loss, torpedoed in the Gulf of Mexico, but Alcoa would still be sending the *George Washington* to Bermuda as late as 1947, by which time she would be making "simple, non-luxury" post-war voyages to Bermuda.

Because it was a refuelling station for aircraft flying between America and Europe, Bermuda had become an important centre for British Intelligence. An organization called British Security Coordination, based in New York’s Rockefeller Center and headed by a Canadian, William (later Sir William) Stephenson, looked after British intelligence in the Western Hemisphere. Codenamed "Intrepid" by Winston Churchill, Stephenson had been appointed in April 1940 and the Bermuda station opened later the same year. As Trans-Atlantic flights from Lisbon stopped over, Bermuda intercepted and analyzed the mails moving between Europe and the United States, as well as looking at telegrams and intercepting radio broadcasts and signals to and from enemy submarines. Bermuda's location had allowed much British intelligence activity to be kept off American soil, especially in the days when the United States was neutral. As many as 1,200 agents worked in the basement of the Princess Hotel in Hamilton gleaning vital intelligence from the correspondence of German spies, including interception of the famous microdots.

In the midst of all this, Léo Chouinard remembered the *North Gaspé*’s first voyage to Bermuda, in early 1942: -
Our next course was for the British archipelago of Bermuda, to the northwest of the Antilles, where a new American naval air station was located. We were all very pleased with the marvellous temperature of 68° Fahrenheit. Once in Bermuda, we marvelled at everything: the colour of the sea, the palm trees, the whitewashed houses and buildings, separated from the green landscape, the very narrow streets which could only take mopeds and bicycles...

After two days in Hamilton, we left for Norfolk with soldiers, various military supplies and munitions. A strong storm from the northeast held us back, the heavy seas forcing us to reduce our speed to four knots. Mechanical problems with the steering gear then compelled us to turn back to make repairs in calmer seas. Twelve hours later we resumed course for Norfolk, the storm having reduced to a strong west wind that delayed our progress.

After a four-day crossing, we discovered Norfolk, under a pleasant temperature of 70° Fahrenheit. For this time of year ... this was paradise when one thought about Newfoundland and Quebec. The green trees and lawns were so fresh and enchanting. Norfolk was, we were told, the most important American base on the Atlantic coast, with its twenty-one square miles, including streets, stores and bus service. We only went to town to mail letters; only sparingly did we use the phone, as it was far too expensive. We had to rush our daytime visits, as this was the era of the blackout.

A year after the New Northland had made her last call on Bermuda on her way south to Trinidad and then to Freetown, the North Gaspé found herself running there from Norfolk, a distance of 683 nautical miles. Far from the frozen St Lawrence, where she had previously been laid up each winter, the little ship was now playing a worthwhile role for the Allies.

The War And Bermuda

In early 1942, German U-boats besieged Bermuda and two of Canadian National's five "Lady Boats" were torpedoed on voyages to or from that island while the North Gaspé was working that initial winter for the US Government. The first to be hit, on January 19, was the Lady Hawkins, about 150 miles off Cape Hatteras, whilst en route from Halifax and Boston to Bermuda, with the loss of 251 of the 322 on board. She had been carrying 211 passengers and 2,908 tons of general cargo when she was hit by the U-66, only two days before the North Gaspé's close call off Newfoundland. Chouinard recounted this period in his book:

It was impossible to forget for a moment that we were at war, everything reminded us of it constantly. Not for nothing did our families worry. Sometimes, at daylight, we would see oil slicks,
lifeboats, various drifting objects, telling us that a ship had sunk nearby. At other times, the US Navy ordered us to change course to respond to an SOS. Or at night, after hearing distress signals, the captain gave orders to zigzag and as the clock struck each fifteen minutes, we changed course by twenty-five degrees right or left. Four US Navy men stood watch by day, while six Canadian sailors took the night watch.

Our ship was armed with a four-inch gun astern and with three machine guns forward and amidships with which to defend ourselves against aircraft attacks. Each of these artillery pieces had its own ammunition supply. The gunners drilled with their weapons daily...

During the war, our destination port was kept secret, to avoid submarines or other convoys on the Atlantic and to minimize risks of all kinds. With each departure, the captain called on the US Navy office for which we sailed. They gave him a sealed envelope that he was not to open until under way, without divulging the contents. Everything was recorded: destination, course to follow, speed, immigration, customs, etc. In a letter I sent to my worried family, I wrote from Norfolk: "I think our next voyage will be to Bermuda again, and we sail tomorrow morning." On seeing this letter again at my parents, I noticed that these words were obliterated. Each letter was opened and censored, and we know why.

There was major shipping traffic in the roads at Norfolk. Convoys leaving for Europe formed in Chesapeake Bay, where sometimes one hundred and fifty ships were at anchor awaiting orders. As the North Gaspé only went to Bermuda, we always sailed alone, the radio officer constantly listening in, picking up distress signals. He informed the captain of the position of these sinkings, which permitted him to situate or evaluate the position of the German U-boats.

All winter ... we ran the Bermuda-Norfolk shuttle. December, January and February were very hard, with numerous storms and crossing the Gulf Stream in a thick curtain of fog. This phenomenon of condensation resulted from the cold northwest wind hitting the warm water of the current. This screen of vapour very much reduced visibility, often to less than a quarter of a mile, and sometimes to zero. Even if the ship's company of North Gaspé wasn't seasick, the lack of sunlight fatigued them. With no one able to remain in his berth because of the confused motion of the ship, we slept on deck, using life preservers as pillows. How we appreciated nights tied to a dock! Night navigation was nerve-wracking and dangerous, without any light showing, neither on deck or elsewhere. And without radar, which was still reserved for military purposes.

That first season was an eventful one for the North Gaspé. Her
voyages between Norfolk and Bermuda were totally the opposite of the pleasure cruise that the *North Star* had performed between the same ports in June of 1939. Not only had the *North Gaspé* survived a torpedo attack and observed the death throes of the *Normandie*, but on a subsequent trip to Bermuda she ran into trouble again. This time, with an overloaded forward cargo hold, she ran into a storm and took water over her bows, flooding some cabins and forcing her to return to port to discharge part of her cargo.

The second "Lady Boat" to be hit was the *Lady Drake*, torpedoed by the *U-106* on May 8, about 90 miles north of Bermuda while en route to Boston and Saint John. Six passengers and six crew members of 261 on board were lost with her. Her master, Capt Percy Kelly, had been first officer of the *Lady Hawkins* when she was hit less than four months earlier. This happened just as the *North Gaspé* was finishing her season and ready to return to Quebec, where she was due in another nine days. The 5,861-ton Savannah Line passenger ship *City of Birmingham*, now working for the Alcoa Steamship Co, took the *Lady Drakes* West Indian crew members from Bermuda back to the islands.

On May 28, a couple of weeks after the *North Gaspé* had returned north, the US War Shipping Administration took the *City of Birmingham* on hire at Norfolk. And a month after that, on June 30, while running from Norfolk to Bermuda, the same route that the *North Gaspé* had been on, the *City of Birmingham* herself was hit by a torpedo from the *U-202*. With 362 passengers and crew and a cargo of 2,916 tons on board, nine lives were lost in the sinking.

**Clarke Returns to the Miami-Nassau Route**

Further south, Nassau's shipping services had been disrupted by preparations for war. In fact, they had been so adversely affected that the Duke of Windsor had written to Churchill on June 30, 1941, urging the establishment of a new steamship line to serve the Bahamas. The *Kent* had been purchased by the US Government on March 6, the *Munargo* had completed her last passenger voyage on March 25 before going to the military and the *Berkshire* would not return, as she too would be requisitioned. Although the United States was not yet at war, President Roosevelt had declared a state of "unlimited national emergency" on May 27. This was the same day the British sank the *Bismarck*, and six days after the *U-69* had stopped and torpedoed the 4,999-ton American cargo liner *Robin Moor*, with eight passengers, while en route from the United States to South Africa, some 750 miles off Freetown. The United Fruit Co's "mail ships," that had briefly served Nassau from New York, were also now being requisitioned, the first two having been delivered to the US Navy on June 14 for use as store ships. And Eastern Steamship Lines' *Yarmouth* was now on mandatory charter to the Alcoa Steamship Co.
Merchants & Miners, who had been operating the Miami-Nassau winter service for the last two years, also had its best ships requisitioned for war duty, and was forced to end all passenger service on December 6, 1941, the day before Pearl Harbor. On the same day, a story filed with the "Miami Daily News" enthusiastically reported as follows: -

There will be a number of cruise ships which will make Nassau a regular port of call. The smaller ships which maintain year-round service between Miami and Nassau are being "spruced up," one is being thoroughly overhauled and on another the accommodations are being increased.

Having lost the year-round services of the Munargo and the seasonal Merchants & Miners Line ships, the Duchess of Windsor clearly did not agree. Ten days later she wrote to her aunt from Nassau, saying that "this place is going to be isolated - no boat and only a sea-plane now and again - and everything will be very curtailed." On January 31, 1942, Merchants & Miners advised its customers that "with regret we announce the full suspension of all our coastwise steamship services until further advised, probably the duration of the war." Likewise, Clyde-Mallory Lines and Eastern Steamship Lines were in a similar position as their ships were taken up for war service and their coastal traffic, not only passengers but freight, went to the railways.

There was now an urgent need for a better winter service between Miami and Nassau, so the Clarke Steamship Co was approached to see if it could supply a ship for 1941-42. Not only did Clarke know the route, but it had a ship it could make available. Instead of spending her winters laid up at Quebec, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co's six-year-old Jean Brillant would now head south to work for the military each winter, when most shipping in the St Lawrence was closed by ice.

The Jean Brillant could only accommodate 148 passengers, 100 of whom were carried as steerage in the 'tweendeck, but the tourist trade had disappeared and these arrangements would be quite satisfactory for troops. As a modern motorship with 48 cabin berths that could be used for officers and VIPs, and an ability to carry a modest amount of cargo, she proved most suitable for the job. At the same time as Clarke was able to charter the North Gaspé to serve Newfoundland and Bermuda, it found winter work for the Jean Brillant between Miami and Nassau. Both ships would now work for the US Army Transport Service every winter, and the Jean Brillant herself for all of 1943.

The "Jean Brillant" Goes to Miami

The winter of 1941-42 saw the Jean Brillant leave Rimouski for the south, taking on a coat of wartime grey, for the first of two winters running to Nassau for the Americans. Like the North Gaspé, as a non-US flag ship she
was not allowed to trade between US ports, but she was well qualified to serve Nassau.

Capt William Tremblay, master of first the Gasp�性, then the Northland and North Voyageur, had succeeded Capt Boucher in command of the New Northland in 1937 and now, in 1941, took command of the Jean Brilliant, a ship he would stay with until 1946. Having made eighty-five Miami-Nassau round voyages in the New Northland in 1938 and 1939, Tremblay was back in familiar waters after an absence of two years, but now carrying troops instead of tourists. Indeed, from 14,741 stopover tourists in 1941, that number would drop by almost 60 per cent in 1942, to 6,054. Capt Tremblay's new command might have been smaller than the New Northland, but she was a product of the same shipyard, and a modern motorship at that.

Although smaller, the Jean Brilliant was able to move almost 450 men a week in each direction over three voyages, capacity that was much needed as two new air strips took shape on New Providence Island. Not only servicemen, but also civilian airport contractors and officials had to be moved, and often their equipment as well.

Treated by the US Navy as a single ship escort, the Jean Brilliant nearly always sailed by night, with only the occasional daylight crossing, spending the day in port at either Miami or Nassau, working cargo and preparing for her evening sailing. Under way, she was provided with between one and three escorts, occasionally four, usually 110-foot navy submarine chasers, 83-foot Coast Guard cutters or sometimes a 136-foot YMS type minesweeper. Proceeding at 12 knots, she was also generally provided with air cover from sailing until dark and from daybreak until arrival.

The only other vessel in the area that was treated as a single ship escort was the railcar carrier sailing between Port Everglades and Havana, a much larger ship but one that didn't carry armed services personnel. That ship, the 7,633-ton Seatrain New Orleans, had also been built by Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson, in her case in 1928.

Submarines in the Bahamas

As with the North Gaspé further north, the submarine threat soon moved to the waters the Jean Brilliant was sailing. That February and March, ships started to be torpedoed near the Bahamas and the Colonial Office had to take special precautions over the Duke of Windsor's security.

At 8:25 am on March 5, 1942, the U-128 torpedoed the 11,007-ton tanker O A Knudsen, Norway's largest when built, not far from Great Abaco Island. On her way from Port Arthur, Texas, to Liverpool with petroleum products, two of her 40 crew members were lost. The survivors were taken
first to Abaco Island and then to Nassau, where the Duke of Windsor personally supplied each of them with new clothing. The U-128 had already sunk two American tankers, the 8,202-ton Pan Massachusetts, on February 19, twenty-five miles off the Florida coast, and the 8,103-ton Cities Service Empire on February 22, in the same vicinity, with the loss of 33 lives between them. These loaded tankers had sailed from the Gulf of Mexico with precious cargoes of oil for the war effort.

By March, the U-boats were reaching right into the Gulf of Mexico and the Americans began to contemplate the use of convoys between Key West and New York. On March 10, an American merchantman off the entrance to Palm Beach harbour sighted the wake of a periscope. As it happened, the blackout orders that had just been circulated for Palm Beach bore the signature of O B Carr, who had been the Florida agent for the New Northland in 1927 and was now executive director of the Palm Beach Civilian Defence Council. At the same time, HMCS Prince Henry was seeing the influx of U-boats further south in the Caribbean.

Two Italian submarines had also been sent to patrol off the Bahamas and Florida and in the southern Bahamas, on March 10, the same day as the Palm Beach periscope sighting, the Enrico Tazzoli torpedoed and sank the 3,628-ton Greek cargo ship Cygnet. Three days later she sank the 6,434-ton British freighter Daytonian in the western Bahamas. The Daytonian's captain and 50 crew members were landed at Nassau and then taken to Miami, most probably in the Jean Brillant. The 8,780-ton British tanker Athelqueen was next, on March 15, a little further to the northeast. This was the Italian's last victim on this patrol, however, as she collided with the tanker during the action and had to return to Italy for repairs.

On March 22, forty-five miles north of Palm Beach, another submarine surfaced alongside the 9,862-ton American tanker Panamoco, but the tanker escaped. On March 27, the 8,028-ton British tanker Empire Gold sighted a submarine off Fort Lauderdale. And on March 31, another sighting was reported twelve miles due east of Miami. Meanwhile, the Jean Brillant continued to shuttle back and forth between Miami and Nassau, always on the lookout, sometimes running a zig zag course, under radio silence and completely blacked out by night.

On March 26, meanwhile, across from where the Jean Brillant berthed in Miami, the US Navy opened its Submarine Chaser Training Center, on Pier 2. Over the course of the war this centre would train the crews of 598 US and 79 Allied vessels in anti-submarine warfare, as well as providing refresher training to 233 other vessels. Where the New Northland and North Star once berthed, dozens of US submarine chasers and other anti-submarine craft would now be tied up alongside, and warehouses converted into classrooms. Five Miami hotels had to be used to accommodate the personnel that were arriving and by the end of 1943, over 10,000 officers and 37,000 ratings would have passed through the 60-day anti-submarine warfare course being
offered at the new Miami training centre.

Within a few months, across the water, the Royal Air Force was flying anti-submarine patrols from the Bahamas with American B-25 bombers. And just as RAF Ferry Command had its North Atlantic Wing for delivery of aircraft to Britain via Montreal, Gander and Goose Bay, so Nassau, reporting to Dorval, became the headquarters of South Atlantic Wing in 1942. Using the southern route, aircraft were ferried from Nassau via Trinidad, Belem and Natal in Brazil and Ascension Island to West Africa for delivery to the Middle East, India and the Far East. Some 2,200 American aircraft would be delivered via Nassau and West Africa between January 1942 and October 1944. In the midst of all this, the Jean Brillant continued to move British, Canadian and American services personnel and supplies between Miami and Nassau.

Meanwhile, the U-128, which had sunk the three tankers between Florida and the Bahamas in late February and early March, was next sent to West Africa. There, during the course of 1942, she would sink nine more merchant ships, most of them bound to or from Freetown, where the New Northland was now based. One of these, the 10,173-ton Andrea Brovig, was sunk on June 23 without loss of life. Yet another tanker, she was bound from Trinidad to Freetown at the time with 14,000 tons of fuel oil, some of which no doubt might have been used to refuel the New Northland.

The Windsors and the "Gemini"

The Windsors had acquired a 57-foot Electric Launch Company motor yacht called the Gemini during the summer of 1941. It was one of only seven of its class built by Elco, as after Pearl Harbor they began producing patrol torpedo (PT) boats instead. Elco was undoubtedly known to the Duke of Windsor as during the First World War it had received orders from the Admiralty for 550 anti-submarine motor launches, which had been assembled at Canadian Vickers in Montreal and Davie Shipbuilding in Lauzon. The Gemini was meant for the Duke to be able to travel around the islands of the Bahamas, but after the Duchess of Windsor's frightening return flight from Miami in April, she would also turn out to be useful for crossing to Miami when there was no Nassau-Miami boat.

On May 28, 1942, the Windsors used the Gemini to cross to Miami so they could travel to Washington and New York. The Duchess wrote about their June 27 return from Miami to Nassau, together with friends Herman and Katherine Rogers, in her book "The Heart Has Its Reasons,": -

The Commandant of the Seventh Naval District ... had provided us with a sub-chaser as escort across the Florida Straits, and had also asked his air-patrol to keep an eye on us. All this was fine; however, no sooner were we out of the harbour than a smashing, blinding
tropical rain squall hit us; so hard did it rain and blow that it was like being in a heavy fog, but one made up of furious stinging particles. The glass windshield was shattered; green water swished through the bridge-deck. The Captain, David and Herman struggled to hold the bow up into the sea. Down below in the cabin, Katherine and I sat on the sofa, clutching the table, expecting the boat to capsize at any moment.

The Coast Guard cutter provided to escort the *Gemini* to Nassau, the *CG-83413*, was commanded by family friend and sailor Edward du Moulin, who in later years was a great competitor in and backer of the America's Cup races. David is how the Duke of Windsor was known to family, and as to the storm, it did pass.

Even though she was a small ship, the *Jean Brilliant* would have provided a more comfortable ride across the Gulf Stream than the little *Gemini*. But like other Miami-Nassau winter ships before her, she was now back in northern waters for the summer.

**Miami-Nassau Freight Services**

Of Nassau's freight services, the Ena Steamship Line provided a basic year-round passenger and summer mail service to and from Miami. Although the Windsors did not use it, the Duchess wrote a letter to her aunt in July noting that there were "shortages due to too few ships." By September, she was writing that "the two little boats are gasping for breath - leaping back and forth between Miami and here - and things are difficult to have."

Of "the two little boats," the 116-ton *Ena K*, built in 1927, could carry a dozen passengers and that January would carry a 15-year old Sidney Poitier to Miami to live with his older brother. A round trip in the *Ena K* cost $17.50, compared to $24.50 in the *New Northland* before the war. The other was the 164-ton *Betty K*, built in 1938. The "motor boats," as they were called, offered sailings every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday in each direction between Nassau and Miami. Before the war, they had sailed from Miami at Noon and from Nassau at 2 pm but now they moved back and forth as cargo offered.

The vessels were named after the two daughters of Trevor Kelly, owner of the Kelly Lumber Company, who had started the service in 1920. The Miami agents were Saunders & Mader, who had also represented the *Queen of Nassau* and a number of other small ships in this service, and the Nassau agents were Albury & Company. More than eighty years later, Betty K Agencies Ltd of Nassau would introduce the sixth and seventh ships of that name, the 1,457-ton *Betty K VI* in 2004 and 2,028-ton *Betty K VII* in 2006.

The G W K Roberts Co, also known as the Monarch Line also operated
two small vessels, the 215-ton Monarch of Nassau and 186-ton Richard Campbell, which had been used on the Miami-Nassau mail route before the war, but these two were used on longer 12-day voyages through the Out Islands and usually called at the P&O Dock in Miami. Meanwhile, the Jean Brilliant would return at the end of 1942 to resume her winter passenger and cargo service, and next time it would be for a longer spell.

**A Trooping Voyage in the "New Northland"**

While the North Gaspé and Jean Brilliant were serving islands in the Atlantic by winter, the New Northland had now been in West Africa for a year. British Army musician Ken Eade, invalided back to England with malaria, left us a record of one of her early 1942 voyages. Eade had arrived in Takoradi from Liverpool nine months earlier, in May 1941 in the Royal Mail Lines' 14,128-ton Highland Princess. He made a five-day coastal voyage in the New Northland from Takoradi to Freetown while she was still under Clarke ownership, and recorded his observations in his wartime diary:

Saturday, February 14th, the great day arrived. A truck arrived to pick me up. The Sergeant Major, bless him, had kept his word. I left at 1.30 and by 3 o'clock I, and my luggage, were aboard the New Northland, a native troop ship.

I shared a cabin with another man. There were even separate toilets - not like the Highland Princess, which merely had a long wooden bar, room for about twenty men, over an open drain.

We sailed at 5 o'clock, accompanied by the [4,017-ton Elder Dempster motorship] Mary Kingsley (named after the missionary, sister of Charles Kingsley the author) and escorted by two corvettes.

The evening meal was served - to my surprise it was a splendid five course dinner. There was a very rough sea and the ship rolled badly. The cabin was not well ventilated and neither my companion nor I could sleep.

On Sunday, I soon felt better in the open air. Boat drill was at eleven, when the native troops had to form up and be allotted their boat stations - this was done of course by their British officers. Then it was wash time - the troops were assembled on the foredeck, naked, and the ships hoses turned on. They appeared to enjoy spraying each other. My companion stayed in bed. There was no ships doctor, but he obviously had malaria and this was where my medicine supply came in useful - I was able to treat him.

On Monday, February 16th my ear played up ... though I felt fit in other ways, and had a good dinner of roast turkey. My companion
however was worse and became delirious. He kept calling for a drink. The only drink available was lemonade from the canteen, which was expensive and cost quite a lot over the next few days - not that he knew anything about it.

Then to crown my day, the alarm bell rang - a submarine was spotted trailing us. One of the corvettes turned and went after it but without success. Late in the afternoon the Captain addressed us over the speakers. "The submarine which is following us is probably waiting for nightfall before attacking. No one is to undress and cabin doors must be wedged open." What with this and my friends ravings it was not a happy night.

I spent the next day nursing my friend, who was still delirious. The ship was vibrating, and we were obviously going full speed ahead. At midday a flying boat arrived and circled round, obviously looking for the submarine.

On Wednesday, February 18th, my companion was feeling better. I saw some sharks following us, and then, a happier sight, several ships. Land was sighted at three, and by six o'clock we were safely anchored in Freetown Harbour.

The next day we were landed by invasion barge at 3 o'clock. The harbour was a wonderful sight, being full of ships of all sizes, from liners to small cargo boats.

Eade returned from Freetown to Liverpool in the New Zealand Shipping Company's 16,737-ton Rangitata. Meanwhile, the New Northland left Freetown again on February 21, escorted by three destroyers, HMS Boreas, HMS Brilliant and HMS Wild Swan, and two days later was in Bathurst, running the gauntlet between the West African ports that she now served.

A few weeks later, the New Northland carried several newly-arrived flyers from Freetown to Lagos, from where they were flown to Cairo by Pan American Airways to train for the fight in the Middle East. Qualified flying officers were also carried in the New Northland to Takoradi, there to pick up newly-assembled Hurricane fighters and fly them via Lagos to Cairo. With Italy allied with Germany and Field Marshal Rommel's Desert Rats on the loose in North Africa, travelling to Egypt by way of West Africa was a much safer route than the Mediterranean.

On the other side of the Atlantic, meanwhile, the Jean Brillant had taken up the New Northland's old Miami-Nassau route, while the North Gaspé was serving Bermuda and Newfoundland. There, on February 18, 1942, in the midst of a snowstorm, the American destroyer USS Truxton and transport USS Pollux were wrecked in Placentia Bay, whilst en route to the American base at Argentia, with the loss of 203 lives. Miners from the nearby fluorspar
mine at St Lawrence rescued 186 survivors. A third grounded ship, the destroyer USS *Wilkes*, was refloated.

**The Americans Buy the "Cape Gaspé"**

Following the *North Gaspé* and *Jean Brilliart*, the third company ship to see war duty with the Americans was the motorship *Cape Gaspé*, which was purchased outright by the US War Shipping Administration in 1942. Being a coastal cargo ship, she fell under the jurisdiction of the US Army, but not having been built in a US shipyard she was registered in Honduras. Without change of name, the *Cape Gaspé* would serve out the balance of the war in US ownership.

On March 14, 1943, she was reported in a coastal convoy at Cape May, and ten days later she was having engine trouble off Cape Hatteras. While the submarine chaser USS *SC-743* stood by, the US Coast Guard tug *Carrabasset* was despatched to tow the *Cape Gaspé* into Norfolk, where she arrived the following day, with *SC-1016* attending.

That summer, the *Cape Gaspé* was variously reported sailing from Cape Henry to Cristobal, Panama, in May, under Coast Guard escort, and from Kingston, Jamaica, to Barranquilla, Colombia, in June. Partly because there was another ship called *Cape Gaspé*, we have no further account of her duties except that she was still listed in 1945. When Pennsylvania Shipyards Beaumont, Texas, yard delivered the new "Cape" class transport *Cape Gaspé*, in June 1944, the coaster continued with the same name. This was slightly confusing as, rare for American ships at the time, the war-built C1-A was also a motorship, and thus also identified as m.v. *Cape Gaspé*.

After the war, Lloyd's Register would still be reporting the little diesel coaster trading under the same name for Panamanian owners as late as the 1960s.

**A Threat to Baie Comeau**

In early 1942, the four-year-old paper mill at Baie Comeau was threatened with closure after the 5,527-ton *Colabee*, the ship that Quebec North Shore Paper's parent company had bought in 1940 to ensure its supply of newsprint to the "New York News," was requisitioned for war service. On March 13, she was torpedoed by the *U-124* near Nuevitas, Cuba, with the loss of 23 of the 37 on board while carrying a cargo of Cuban sugar to Baltimore, but as she was only damaged she was returned to war service.

Quebec North Shore Paper had been told that it would not be able to ship its newsprint to New York by the Atlantic route, and set about solving this problem. This it did by using the New York State barge canal and the
port of Oswego, New York, to combine its own low priority newsprint traffic with high priority shipments of bauxite moving from the Caribbean to Port Alfred for the Alcan aluminum smelter at Arvida. The threat that might have closed Baie Comeau was thus averted. Three New York canal ships were chartered along with a fleet of 90 barges, some self-propelled, that were used to move cargo between New York and Oswego, while canallers were used to bring newsprint from Baie Comeau to Oswego and carry the bauxite back to Port Alfred.

All the barges loaded bauxite, which was delivered to New York by the Alcoa Steamship Co, but with most of them not being suitable for newsprint much of this cargo was loaded into rail cars at Oswego while some was delivered direct to New York in the three barge canal ships. Between 1942 and 1945, 425,000 tons of newsprint would be delivered to New York and 1,089,000 tons of denser bauxite brought to Port Alfred through the New York State barge canal. For the duration of the war, grey-painted Clarke ships could often be seen in Baie Comeau together with these low-slung barge canal ships or passing them in the river. Two had been built in 1929-30 but the third, the 1,540-ton Badger State, had been converted in 1934 from the Fordonian, the canaller that the Quebec Steamship Co had operated between New York and the West Indies in the First World War.

Plans for the 1942 Season

Before the North Gaspé returned to her accustomed summer service that spring the Gaspesia was already busy on the North Shore run. As she no longer sailed on to Corner Brook, her schedule had been revised to make two sailings every 21 days, with one turning at Havre-St-Pierre and the other sailing further to Natashquan. In her old fortnightly schedule, she had made two trips every 28 days, but from 1942 she would be able to offer a total of twenty-two sailings in a season where she had performed but fifteen or sixteen in the past. This meant that sailings were no longer on a fixed day of the week, but they nevertheless followed a pattern that repeated itself every three weeks, with 10-night sailings leaving every third Friday and 9-night sailings every third Tuesday. The Sable I, meanwhile, sailed every other Wednesday on her longer voyage to Blanc-Sablon, as she had before the war. Wartime sailings for both ships now left Montreal at 5 pm, rather than 7:30 pm, although the North Gaspé continued to sail at 7:30.

While the North Gaspé would cruise to Gaspé and the Magdalens as usual, the Anticosti Shipping Co now offered 6- and 7-night cruises with the Fleurus sailing from Montreal to Anticosti, and also to Gaspé on the 7-night cruises. Moving to Victoria Pier, along with the Clarke and Canada Steamship Lines vessels, she would no longer sail as far as Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. The North Gaspé’s fares were $55 for 6 nights and $70 for 7 nights, while the Fleurus's competing fares were $56 for 6 nights or $58 for 7 nights, and $65 for the peak season in July and August.
Both ships sailed from Victoria Pier, along with the Gaspesia, with which the Fleurus had once competed head-on-head to the Maritimes. In the absence of the North Star and New Northland, the Fleurus, with 62 berths, was now the largest ship to cruise the Gulf of St Lawrence. The North Gaspé, however, was more modern, and the Gaspesia's cruises were longer, so between them the Clarke ships offered more choice and more capacity in what was left in wartime cruising.

When the North Gaspé was scheduled to sail on 7-day Magdalen Islands sailings, on Mondays in June and July, the Fleurus would sail on the same day, casting off at 5 pm, with the North Gaspé following at 7:30 and Canada Steamship Lines' Saguenay ship at 7:45. The North Gaspé and the CSL ship would both arrive at Quebec at 6 am the next day, an hour before the Fleurus. The Saguenay ship left Quebec at 8 am and the Fleurus at 9 am, while the North Gaspé would stay until 5 pm.

This was to change in August, when the Fleurus began staying overnight in Montreal after each 7-night cruise to Gaspé. This meant she would sail one day later each week, Monday one week, Tuesday the next and so on. Occasionally, she would sail together with the North Gaspé, or sometimes the Gaspesia or the Sable I. When a Clarke North Shore ship sailed on the same day as the Fleurus, which wasn't very often, their departures would coincide at 5 pm, but sailing schedules were very soon to change.

**War Comes to the St Lawrence**

Anticosti had featured in "National Geographic" magazine in January 1942, just as Canada and Quebec had been featured in "Travel" magazine in 1940. With the appearance of U-boats off the East Coast that winter, however, something that had very nearly cost Clarke its North Gaspé that in the same month, Anticosti Shipping's 1942 "St Lawrence River Cruises" brochure for the Fleurus did mention the war: -

As war rages on all sides, some of us are apt to wonder if there is any danger, from enemy activities, on these cruises. Our best answer is to suggest that those few passengers, who feel the need for added caution, should study a map of the River and Gulf of St Lawrence. To all intents and purposes, it is just like a huge Inland Sea, protected by Newfoundland on one side, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island on the others. And, on these cruises, we only touch the fringe of the actual Gulf - we are rarely out of sight of land.

This wording may seem remarkably sanguine now, but little did the writer know that two merchant ships would be torpedoed right off the Gaspé coast on the night of May 11-12, even before the Fleurus had left on her first
cruise, which was scheduled for June. On May 12, Naval Services Headquarters in Ottawa issued a terse statement:

The Minister for Naval Services announces that the first enemy submarine attack upon shipping on the St Lawrence River took place on 11 May, when a freighter was sunk. Forty-one survivors have been landed from this vessel. The situation regarding shipping in the river is being closely watched, and long prepared plans for its special protection under these circumstances are in operation. Any possible future sinkings in this area will not be made public in order that information of value to the enemy may be withheld from them.

The headline in that evening's "Montreal Star" was "Freighter Sunk by Sub in St Lawrence." The next day, May 13, Angus Macdonald, Minister for the Navy, gave the rest of the story, announcing the second sinking in the House of Commons. The "Montreal Star" then followed with another headline, "U-Boats Sink Another in St Lawrence: Enemy Still Preying on Vessels in River."

The Gaspesia had sailed from Montreal on May 8 and on the night of May 11-12, when the first two merchant ships were sunk, she was working her way along the North Shore on a 10-night voyage to Natashquan and back. The Sable I, meanwhile, sailed on May 13, in the midst of all these U-boat headlines. Their crews and more especially their relatives must have been concerned with this turn of events. The North Gaspé, meanwhile, was on her way north from her first winter of war service with the Americans.

In what came to be known as the "Battle of the St Lawrence," the identity of the first merchant ship torpedoed, on the night of May 11, 1942, was not immediately revealed, but it was the 5,364-ton Britisher Nicoya, owned by Elders & Fyffes Ltd and now working for Cunard White Star. She was en route from Montreal to London with a few passengers (she could carry twelve), refrigerated meat, steel and two Hurricane fighter planes lashed onto her deck. Six crew had been lost out of the 85 people on board. The second, torpedoed in the early morning hours of May 12, was the 4,712-ton Leto, owned by Hudig & Veder of Rotterdam, and travelling from Montreal to the UK with grain. Twelve persons were lost of a total of fifty-three on board. At the time, Germany was occupying the Netherlands and part of the Dutch royal family was in Canada. Queen Wilhelmina's daughter Princess Juliana and grand-daughters Princesses Beatrix and Irene were resident in Ottawa, where Princess Margriet would be born on January 19, 1943.

Both the Nicoya and the Leto had been steaming along the Gaspé coast when they were hit, on either side of midnight on May 11-12 by the U-553. The Nicoya was known to some Clarke staff as the North Star and Nicoya had met in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1938 and 1939, when the latter had been operating between there and England carrying bananas and a few passengers, and the North Star from Miami. That wartime sinkings were kept
secret was confirmed by the fact that both ships were still listed in merchant ship directories published as late as two years after their losses. One result of these attacks was an announcement on May 15 that marine insurance rates on the St Lawrence were to be increased immediately.

This news must have unnerved some people contemplating a cruise in the St Lawrence, but nonetheless people still booked. The practice of publishing sailing dates together with detailed itineraries quickly came to an end however. Wartime brochures, while still offering cruises, would henceforth contain instructions to intending passengers: "For information about sailing dates apply to your travel agent or to the Clarke Steamship Co." Although the public would be kept largely in the dark, and news would often not be broken until months after an attack, more merchant ship losses would follow that summer and autumn in the Gulf of St Lawrence. In the meantime, all shipping in the river was ordered to maintain complete radio silence in order not to signal their whereabouts or their destination to the enemy.

**Welcome Home "North Gaspé"**

The *North Gaspé* returned to Quebec on May 17, only a few days after the torpedoings, and did so to much celebration and thanksgiving. The Quebec newspaper "L'Action Catholique," on the following day recorded the speech given by Clarke shoreside manager Willie Douville to the family gathering held in the ship's main lounge, with the ship's 34-year-old captain in attendance: -

"My dear captain," said Mr Douville, "Mr Desmond Clarke regrets not being able to be here in person for your arrival and he has asked me to extend to you in his name and that of all officers of the company, his sincere compliments and his huge appreciation of the services you have rendered during the course of the voyage you have just finished. This tribute is addressed to all the officers and members of your crew."

"You departed in the month of November to fulfil a six-month contract with the American Army. At the time of your departure, all was peaceful on the American coast because the United States was not at war. Shortly thereafter the Japanese declared war on the Americans and two months after that the coast was infested with German U-boats, which sank a considerable number of ships. You sailed all winter in these dangerous waters."

"We know," continued Mr Douville, "that during the course of these many voyages that you had some experiences that you will never forget. We are proud of you, captain, of your officers and of all your crew. You return with your full crew, without having changed a single man and after having fulfilled your contract to the end."
"You have created a marvellous impression that is to your credit as well as to the credit of all French-Canadians. You are without doubt all desirous of seeing your families. They will all be proud to see you and rightly proud of what you have accomplished. You have proven once more that when a task is entrusted to French-Canadians, whatever the risks, they will accomplish it completely."

"As a sign of appreciation," concluded Mr Douville, "our president has asked me to tell you that he is extending to you, captain, your officers and each member of your crew who remains in the service of the company, one month of paid leave, vacations well earned, believe me. These will be awarded to you as we find men to replace the officers and sailors who go on vacation."

Having sailed for many years before coming ashore as company port steward a few years before, Douville himself knew something about the seagoing life. "The Gazette" reported a week later, on May 25, under the heading "Little Quebec Vessel Back Home After Winter US Army Service":

A Clarke Steamship "vessel" and her French-Canadian crew are back in an Eastern Canadian port after an adventurous winter in the service of the American Army Transport. Chartered to the United States Army when navigation closed last season, the Quebec-built vessel, after operating in the St Lawrence Gulf last season, reached the United States just four days after Pearl Harbor.

So, by a curious twist of fate, it was in American waters that this Canadian ship got her first taste of war. The sudden entry of the United States into the conflict placed a heavy burden on all available shipping, and the little Quebec vessel became known as "Waltzing Matilda" in United States ports because her "turn-arounds" were so rapid that she maintained an almost non-stop schedule all winter.

Operating in the submarine zone and an especially attractive target for the enemy because of the nature of her duties, the ship had at least two hairbreadth escapes but terminated her charter in safety. United States Army authorities had high praise for the conduct of the crew, it was learned at the head office of the Clarke Steamship line. They had commented especially on the discipline and devotion to duty of the ship's company and the speed with which they adapted to changed conditions, stating that they had conducted themselves from first to last like veterans of sea warfare.

A disappointed man was the first officer, who was instructed in gunnery by the American Army crew and given sole charge of the armament on the homeward lap of the return voyage. Learning of the recent torpedoings in the St Lawrence River, he cherished high hopes of matching his newly-acquired skill against the Nazis but the trip up
the river proved uneventful and his big opportunity was lost.

The youthful captain of 34, a typical French-Canadian sailor of Norman ancestry, has followed the sea since he was 16. Expressing himself as well satisfied with his winter's adventures, the skipper mentioned especially the excellent understanding which prevailed between the American crew and his ship's crew.

After a few hours at Quebec, the *North Gaspé* continued on to Montreal to resume the service for which she had been built, the weekly run to the ports of the Gaspé coast, and on to the Magdalen Islands on alternate sailings.

**A Nurse Sails to the North Shore**

The overall mood in the major ports by this time was captured by Stephen Leacock, who in 1942 wrote in his book "Montreal: Seaport and City": -

For over three years now the harbor of Montreal has been secluded and surrounded by all the grim secrecy and mystery of wartime. No one may enter its precincts except upon his lawful occasions. Sentries guard the approaches. There are no reports of arrivals or departures, no sailing dates. Silent vessels slip away to unknown ports.

Bessie Jane Banfill captured this wartime atmosphere in her book "Labrador Nurse." Banfill had written about her voyages in the *North Shore* in 1928 and 1929 but now tells us about accepting a return posting to Mutton Bay in 1942 and trying to get a berth in the *Sable I* that June: -

An emergency call had come for a nurse to take charge of the Mutton Bay district for a year. Once again I had to make ready to voyage down the great River and Gulf, this time on the *Sable I*, which had replaced the *North Shore*...

On the seventh of June I went to Montreal, expecting to sail the next morning. Our country was at war; submarines were in the Gulf and at the very mouth of the St Lawrence River...

I telephoned the steamship company's office and asked what time the *Sable I* would leave the next day. Over the wire a voice answered, "Who are you?" I explained that I was the nurse booked to sail the next day. "Lady," said the voice, "we cannot give you any information over the wire, but you will not sail tomorrow or the next day. Come down to the office and see me." There I learned that the *Sable I* had not returned from her last eastern trip and that no one knew what day she would dock. Also, that no reservations had been made.
Furthermore every berth had been reserved for a group of government surveyors...

Still I hoped for a last minute cancellation. Early each morning I haunted the shipping office. On the night of the twelfth, tired, discouraged, and disgusted I went back to my hot room. My landlady handed me a telegram, which read: "Do not leave on the Sable I. Our boat, the Nellie Cluett is calling at Montreal. Be ready to leave at any moment. Keep telephoning our office for last minute information. We cannot wire date of sailing because everything depends on the Admiralty." Three days later, to my astonishment, the secretary replied, "She's in, come down and see the captain." The captain was a man of few words. "We sail when the Admiralty says 'Go,' " he told me, "but bring your baggage down early tomorrow morning."

Overnight, a pea-soup fog enveloped the city and the misty air penetrated to the bones. Fog or no fog, the Nellie Cluett was in harbor and I had to crawl out of my warm bed because the Admiralty might say "Go." Had I not waited long enough for this day? My sister and brother-in-law called for me and soon we drew up at the wharf, but the globule-laden fog seemed determined that I should not mistake this for a pleasure cruise. We were walled in with the heavy, damp curtain. We could discern a dirty-grey steamer, which resembled a shapeless ghost as it rocked and swayed and bumped against the wharf.

Captain Erick, a tall, angular, weather-worn Scandinavian with high cheek bones, a wavy shock of yellow-grey hair, and a ruddy complexion, gazed at us with frank eyes, which reminded me of the far-off blue sea. They managed to twinkle but his face wore a worried expression as he gave us permission to wander over the boat. The Nellie Cluett was not at all like the North Shore. She was owned and operated exclusively by and for the Grenfell Mission; she was built to carry freight but had several small cabins for Mission workers. Previously, Captain Erick had sailed her between Halifax, Newfoundland, and New York. Recently the Admiralty had ordered him to ply only in the waters of the Gulf and St Lawrence River.

We soon completed our tour of inspection and I said farewell to my relatives. For another day painters and electricians worked at top speed to meet Admiralty requirements: the whole boat must be painted grey and re-wired so that when doors opened inward the lights would automatically be extinguished. But at long last the pilot came aboard and we heard the welcome order to weigh anchor.

The voyage down the great river was interesting but we were never allowed to forget that our country was at war. The Nellie made few stops and, sooner than I had thought possible, I could see the landmarks that indicated our approach to Mutton Bay.
The 288-ton \textit{Nellie A Cluett}, whose real master was Capt Kenneth Iversen of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, was the new Grenfell schooner that had been completed at Lunenburg in August 1941 to replace the \textit{George B Cluett}, so familiar to Clarke passengers. The \textit{George}, meanwhile, had promptly been wrecked on St Paul's Island in the Gulf in September, to be salvaged by other owners, only to be wrecked again near Pictou a couple of years later. Registered in St John's, the \textit{Nellie} was named after a daughter of George B Cluett and was almost half again as large as her predecessor. Powered by a Fairbanks-Morse diesel, she could carry 360 tons of cargo as well as a few passengers. Meanwhile, when it came time for Bessie Jane to return to Montreal in August 1944, after two years on the coast, it would be in the \textit{Sable I}.

Ironically, in the midst of these wartime conditions, one advantage that small coastal ships had when sailing in the Gulf was that U-boat commanders wanted to preserve their limited supply of precious torpedoes for larger ships with lots of hatches and booms. Those signs would identify an important strategic target loaded with weapons or war supplies rather than just another coaster with a few hundred tons of local cargo. U-boat captains were under strict orders to wreak maximum damage on Allied shipping, and, luckily for the smaller ships, this meant the biggest and most valuable.

\textbf{The Battle of the St Lawrence}

Immediately after the losses of the \textit{Nicoya} and \textit{Leto}, all merchant shipping was ordered to proceed to the nearest port and within forty-eight hours a system of convoys had been established between Quebec and Sydney, with Gaspé as the chief focus point. There, an escort base known as HMCS "Fort Ramsay" had been opened on May 1 at Sandy Beach, where the \textit{North Star} had berthed on her cruises before the war. Although armed yachts had been based at Gaspé since October 1940, by September 1942 the escort force would come to include seven corvettes, five minesweepers, an armed yacht and six Fairmile motor launches.

Convoys helped to protect shipping, but they did not prevent ship losses. The third ship loss that summer was the 2,555-ton British-managed \textit{Dinaric}, torpedoed on July 6, 1942, off Cap Chat. Running from Quebec to Sydney as part of convoy QS.15, with a cargo of lumber and steel, she was one of three ships sunk within less than two hours that morning by \textit{U-132}. Four crew were lost out of 41 on board.

Six days later, on July 12, the \textit{North Gaspé} joined convoy QS.17 from Pointe au Père to Sydney. With her were three familiar ships, the \textit{Fleurus}, the Hudson's Bay Co's \textit{Nascopie} and the 2,227-ton canaller \textit{Northton}, now running to Newfoundland and Labrador. Two of that convoy of a dozen ships, the 2,166-ton \textit{Inger Elisabeth} and 2,245-ton \textit{Carolus}, would be lost in the St
Lawrence within three months, while a third, the 6,625-ton British-flag *Essex Lance*, would be damaged in September and have to be towed to Quebec, only to be lost off Cape Farewell, Greenland, in October 1943.

Many of the losses in 1942 occurred off the north Gaspé coast, almost due south of Clarke City. In fact, the *Gaspesia* had been on the North Shore the night the *Nicoya* and *Leto* were hit. Meanwhile, another vessel, inbound for Clarke City, was hit not in the St Lawrence but southeast of Cape Farewell on August 25. The 3,163-ton British-managed Latvian ship *Katvaldis* was bound from Welsh ports to Sydney and Clarke City when she was torpedoed by the *U-605*, losing three of her 43 crew. Clarke City was frequently served by British merchantmen as well as a number of Norwegians managed by the Norwegian Shipping & Trade Mission (Nortraships), in exile in London, all managing to get cargoes across to England.

**Loss of the Troopship "Chatham"**

The first of two passenger ships to be lost in the Gulf of St Lawrence was the Merchants & Miners Line's *Chatham*, torpedoed in the Strait of Belle Isle on August 27, 1942, while serving with the US Army Transport Service. A frequent pre-war visitor to Miami, where she had opened the improved shipping channel in 1927, she had often been in port together with the *New Northland* or *North Star*. The *Chatham* was en route from Sydney to Goose Bay and Greenland in convoy SG.6 when she was hit, becoming the first victim of the *U-517*, a boat that would claim twelve hits, all but one of them kills, in the St Lawrence that August and September.

On board the *Chatham* were 428 passengers, 106 crew and 28 navy personnel, but loss of life was kept to fourteen due to the quick rescue efforts of escort USCG *Mojave*, which picked up 293 survivors, and the nearby Canadian corvette HMCS *Trail*. With the *Chatham*’s proximity to shore, many lifeboats and rafts were able to land on their own. The former Clarke port of Battle Harbour, not having seen a cruise ship for three years, now became a refuge for several hundred American survivors while they awaited transport. Most were construction workers on the way to build the "Bluie West 1" airfield at Narsarssuq, which would be used to ferry American planes to Britain. Three days later, the destroyer USS *Bernadou* arrived at Forteau Bay and by the end of the next day most of the survivors had been landed at Sydney, while others were taken to the US base at Argentia. The *Chatham* was the first American troopship to be lost in the war.

Two days after the *Chatham*, on a Saturday, a minor incident, at least for wartime, occurred not far below Trois Rivières when Canada Steamship Lines' *Richelieu*, returning from a late summer Saguenay cruise, collided with the *Roberval*, the former *Savoy*, now owned by the Saguenay & Lake St John Navigation Co Ltd. On the last night of her cruise, the *Richelieu* had left Quebec at 5 pm and was on her way to Montreal. Although the *Roberval*’s
owners had offered her for war service the year before, the forty-six-year-old ship had not been taken up and was still busy carrying cargo in the St Lawrence.

**Loss of the "Donald Stewart"

A week after the *Chatham*, and five days after the *Richelieu's* collision, Canada Steamship Lines had worse news when its *Donald Stewart* became the first Canadian merchant ship to be lost in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Several canallers had been chartered that June to carry supplies from Montreal to Goose Bay and other bases in Newfoundland and Labrador. On the third anniversary of the outbreak of war, September 3, 1942, the *Donald Stewart* became the unlucky one when she was torpedoed in the Strait of Belle Isle by the *U-517*, and lost with three of the twenty on board.

She was travelling in convoy NL.6 to Goose Bay with a cargo of cement and building materials and drums of high-octane fuel lashed to her decks for the new air base being built by the McNamara Construction Co. Almost 150,000 tons of concrete would be needed that summer to build two 3,000-foot runways, and buildings, hangars and fuel storage tanks that were to be ready for hand over to Ferry Command by December.

Somewhat prophetically, the *Donald Stewart*’s original crew had refused to sail from Montreal and the ship got away only after Capt Dan Nolan, chief officer Shaw, a member of the Shaw Steamship family of Halifax, and a new chief engineer were brought in. Survivors were rescued by the escorts HMCS *Shawinigan* and HMCS *Trail* and landed at Quebec and Gaspé. Although the other two ships in the convoy escaped, her loss led to a delay in the work being completed at Goose Bay.

**Loss of the "Oakton"

Things now started to happen almost every four days. On September 7, four days after the *Donald Stewart*, it was the turn of Gulf & Lake’s *Oakton*, when she became one of another trio of merchantmen to be lost, this time within one minute. She was in convoy QS.33, Quebec to Sydney, off Cape Gaspé, with a cargo of coal from Sandusky, Ohio, for Corner Brook when the *U-517* attacked.

The loss of the *Oakton*, a ship that Clarke had used in its Maritimes service before the war, was recounted to Nathan Greenfield for his book, "The Battle of the St Lawrence," by seaman Edward Read. Remembering the moments just after seeing the first two torpedoes, Read described the event:

- Seconds later, as I got out on deck, I felt the *Oakton* ... it was like it
missed a beat. A deep rumbling thud, coming from behind us. I ran, but the deck wasn't where my feet expected it to be. The explosion of the torpedo didn't destroy the deck. No, it drove the ship down - the entire length of the ship down - into the water. The water that poured over the deck pushed me head over heels into the garbage cans. She struggled to lift herself, as she did when a wave broke over her bow in a storm. She did, but it wasn't the same; she was heavier, being pulled. You could feel her going down.

After the ship had launched its lifeboats and carley floats in record time, and the crew started to row away from the ship, Greenfield continued Read's account: -

"We hadn't gone more than fifty or sixty yards, " recalls Read. "It was maybe two or two and a half minutes since she'd been hit when, suddenly, we saw her break clean in two. We were dumbstruck.

"The two halves were just about equal. The bow rose up on one side, and the propeller rose up on the other. Everything that wasn't bolted down on the deck slid down, the hatchways broke off and just for a second we could see the coal the stevedores had so carefully shovelled into her in Sandusky begin to spill out. When we saw that the propeller was still turning, one guy said "Jeez, she's still trying to go somewhere.

They watched as the funnel, still belching smoke, and the monkey island (which was above the bridge in the forward part of the ship) came together. Then the funnel smashed through the monkey deck.

"Together, the two halves then sank in water that was boiling like a cauldron as all the air in them came to the surface, along with everything that wasn't bolted to sinking steel. Then we heard the muffled explosions of her boilers and one last great bubble," recalls Read.

The Fairmile Q.083 rescued the Oakton's crew, along with 61 survivors of two Greek ships that had been lost in the same attack. The Oakton was lost on a route that Clarke ships had sailed many hundreds of times between Montreal and Corner Brook. Clarke would continue to serve that route throughout the war with ships very similar to the Oakton, but they would be luckier.

**Naval Losses**

Worse than some of the merchant ship losses, just the night before, convoy QS.33 had lost one of its escorts, the armed yacht HMCS Raccoon, with her full crew of 38. Torpedoed by the U-165 while trying to protect the
convoy from U-boat attack, two explosions heard from other ships that night were thought to have been *Raccoon* dropping depth charges, but instead they turned out to have been the converted yacht being torpedoed herself. The *U-165* had tried to torpedo HMCS *Raccoon* four days earlier, on September 3 off Matane, but the two torpedoes had missed. This time the *Raccoon* was not so lucky. But revenge would be achieved three weeks later, on September 20, when *U-165* would be sunk in the Bay of Biscay, with her whole crew of 51, by depth charges from a Wellington bomber.

Another naval loss, the "Revised Flower" class corvette HMCS *Charlottetown*, followed four days after the *Oakton*. Having escorted convoy SQ.35 to Rimouski, *Charlottetown* was returning to Gaspé, when on September 11 she was torpedoed by *U-517* off Cap Chat, with the loss of nine of her crew. She had been launched a year and a day earlier at Kingston, Ontario, and commissioned nine months before. Although she was a new warship and her loss came as a surprise, the loss of the little *Raccoon* remains the more tragic. HMCS *Charlottetown*, meanwhile, would be remembered in a new "City" class frigate commissioned in 1996.

Nothing could stop some people, however. On September 14, just three days after the loss of HMCS *Charlottetown*, Connecticut's "Hartford Courant" advised its readers that "Miss Margaret McGill of Wethersfield Avenue recently returned after a fortnight's trip up the Gaspé Coast to the Magdalen Islands in the vessel *North Gaspé*." What should have been a week's voyage seems to have taken a fortnight so it might have been interesting to have heard Miss McGill's own account of her cruise through the Battle of the St Lawrence.

**More Merchant Ship Losses**

On September 15, the day after the "Hartford Courant" reported Miss McGill's safe return, it was the turn of the Norwegian *Inger Elisabeth*. Loaded with 3,400 tons of coal from Swansea for Port Alfred, on the Saguenay, she was hit by a torpedo from the *U-517* off Cap des Rosiers, while in convoy SQ.36. Of her 26 crew, 23 survived and were taken to Gaspé. Along with the *Winona* and the *Eaglescliffe Hall*, the *Inger Elisabeth* had been a survivor of convoy SC.7 in 1940 in which the *Trevisa* had been one of twenty-two ships lost. The *Inger Elisabeth* was the last victim of the *U-517*, however, as on November 21, 1942, exactly eight months after her commissioning, the U-boat was sunk herself in the Bay of Biscay by an aircraft from the British aircraft carrier HMS *Victorious*. All eight of the *U-517*'s victims had been taken in the St Lawrence.

On October 9, the *Carolus*, a Finnish cargo ship managed by Canadian National Steamships, succumbed to a torpedo from the *U-69*, losing eleven of her crew of 30 in the process. She had been sailing in convoy LN.9 from Goose Bay to Montreal when she was hit off Matane. The *Carolus* had made
previous voyages to Goose Bay. Earlier that summer, for example, she had sailed in convoy together with the Lady Rodney and Anticosti Shipping's Fleurus. Directly behind her, but not hit, was Quebec & Ontario Transportation's 2,310-ton New York News, a Swan Hunter-built ship that had once delivered newsprint from Thorold to New York, but was now more familiar in Baie Comeau, Franquelin and Shelter Bay.

Two days after the Carolus, it was the turn of the Waterton, one of the two canallers Bowater's had acquired the year before. Carrying a cargo of newsprint from Corner Brook to Cleveland in convoy BS.31, she became a victim of U-106 on October 11 off Cape Breton Island, luckily with no loss of life. The U-106 was the same boat that had sunk the Lady Drake as she made her way to Bermuda five months earlier.

**Dominion Shipping Company Losses**

To the east of the Battle of the St Lawrence, in Newfoundland, cargo ships also fell victim to U-boat attacks at Wabana, the location of the iron ore mine on Bell Island, Conception Bay, not far from St John’s. Shore-based searchlights simply served to outline the targets, loaded ships lying at anchor and awaiting convoy escort to Sydney. On September 5, 1942, the U-513 torpedoed the collier Lord Strathcona and the 5,454-ton British-flag Saganaga. The Saganaga was hit first, and 27 of her crew plus three gunners were lost, while eleven crew and three gunners were rescued by a customs launch that also managed to rescue the 44 crew members of the Lord Strathcona.

The Saganaga was one of three sister ships that had worked for Dominion Coal before the war. Completed in 1935 for Christian Salvesen of Leith, she had been trading into the St Lawrence in 1940 while the New Northland was still cruising. After trading to Labrador and the US in early 1941, she followed the New Northland to West Africa that July, and the two ships met in Freetown and Takoradi a number of times, the last time being in Freetown on May 11, 1942. Her two sister ships had already been lost, the 5,458-ton Shekatica on October 18, 1940, running Gaspé to Hartlepool with pit props and steel, in the infamous convoy SC.7, and the 5,458-ton Sirikishna on February 24, 1941, in ballast from the Clyde to Halifax after having dispersed from convoy OB.288. Both ships had been under the command of Capt Robert Paterson when they were lost. The Sirikishna was hit by the same U-96 that had sunk C D Howe's Western Prince two months earlier, but this time Paterson and his entire crew of 42, including nine Canadians and a Newfoundlander, were all lost.

Several days after the first Wabana attack, the same U-513 managed to hit the 7,174-ton Ocean Vagabond off St John’s as she made her way from Vancouver to Loch Ewe with wheat, lumber and railway ties, but she was only damaged. Lucky this time, she would last another three months before being
hit in the North Atlantic on January 11, 1943, by the U-186, while on a voyage from Botwood and St John's to Hull with lumber and woodpulp. One of the sixty ships ordered by the British shipbuilding mission, and completed at Richmond, California, her career would last but six months.

On November 2, U-boats would return to Wabana a second time, with the U-518 sinking the 5,461-ton Free French PLM.27, a collier formerly owned by the Paris, Lyon and Marseilles Railway, and the Rose Castle. The PLM.27 had been at Wabana during the first attack but escaped when the torpedo meant for her failed to detonate. As the four ships usually travelled together in convoy, the Rose Castle too had escaped, but this time neither ship was lucky. In all, seventy seamen were lost in the two Wabana attacks.

The four ships that were sunk at Wabana were either owned or controlled by the Dominion Shipping Co of Sydney, whose parent company, the Dominion Steel & Coal Corp, was headquartered in the Canada Cement Building, where Clarke was based. These war losses were replaced by three new "Park" ships, which would be sold to the company for $1 each after the war in recognition of its contribution to the war effort.

**A Near Miss and Coasting in 1942**

On September 5, the day of the first attack at Wabana, and two days before the U-165 despatched HMCS Raccoon, the 1,865-ton Hall Corporation canaller Meadcliffe Hall had been the target of an attack by the U-165 near Cloridorme on the Gaspé Coast. The torpedo intended for her had missed and gone ashore at St Yvon. Capt Lawrence McDonald, then a seaman, recounted his wartime experiences in an interview for the Fall 1978 issue of "Steamboat Bill of Facts": -

In the spring of 1942, I obtained a job on the Meadcliffe Hall, which was a typical canaller. The usual run was pulpwood to Waddington, Ogdensburg or Erie and then coal down to Montreal, Quebec City, Port Alfred or Chandler. We then reloaded pulpwood in the Maritimes or on the North Shore. Hall had two or three ships in the pulpwood trade between Trinity Bay and Three Rivers and we were on this run many times...

A few months after I joined the Meadcliffe, she was painted wartime grey and a gun was mounted on the stern. By this time, German subs were active in the Gulf, and we spent part of the year running down and back in convoys. We had a hair-raising experience in September, when we were shot at with a torpedo. Apparently, the German misjudged our speed, as the torpedo passed about 100 feet ahead of us. It exploded on the shore, breaking several hundred windows in a nearby village. We were immediately given orders to dock at Fox River, and were held there for two days.
Everything we did after that was on Navy orders. We were permitted to travel alone, but only by day and tying up at night.

Except that the Clarke ships made so many calls en route, their experiences were generally similar. Clarke ships and Hall ships were often in port together and passed one another in the river. Much of the pulpwood that Hall ships carried was for St Regis Paper and St Lawrence Paper Mills, which were served by Clarke ships as well.

The "Gaspesia" Brings Aide for a Downed Bomber

September also saw some excitement at Natashquan, when a US Army Lockheed Ventura twin-engined patrol bomber of the 32nd Bomb Squadron out of Presque Isle, Maine, made an emergency landing on a sandbar in the Natashquan River. Presque Isle was a base for American aircraft assigned to patrol the Gulf of St Lawrence, now that they were sending convoys to Labrador and Greenland, as well as headquarters for the North Atlantic sector of the US Army Air Corps Ferrying Command sending planes to Britain. Hit by a thunder storm in the Gulf of St Lawrence, the Ventura, on a routine patrol, had lost her electronics and compass and was lost. Her captain decided to chance an emergency landing on the sandbar near Natashquan and in the course of landing she damaged her engines, propellors and part of her fuselage.

The plane's crew were taken in by the locals and a telegram sent to to Presque Isle, where arrangements were made to send a technical crew together with an "Alligator" amphibious vehicle and replacement parts to Montreal to catch the next sailing of the Gaspesia. On her arrival at Natashquan, the crew boarded the "Alligator" and took their gear along the riverbed to the stranded aircraft, about fifteen miles away. The Americans made camp on the shore and commenced repairs while a twin-engined Catalina flying boat arrived with additional food and supplies from Presque Isle. Later that autumn, the sandbar was levelled and the $175,000 Ventura took off for her base in Maine, where she was handed over to the US Navy for service from Quonset Point, Rhode Island, on patrols over the Atlantic.

Loss of the Newfoundland Ferry "Caribou"

In the Cabot Strait, a fate worse than the Chatham's awaited the Newfoundland Railway's 2,222-ton Caribou, its Rotterdam-built North Sydney-Port aux Basques ferry. On October 14, 1942, seven weeks after the loss of the Chatham in the Strait of Belle Isle, the Caribou was hit in the early hours of the morning in the Cabot Strait. En route from North Sydney to Port aux Basques with passengers, 450 tons of cargo, four railcar loads of Prince Edward Island potatoes and fifty head of cattle, and under escort of the
corvette HMCS *Grandmère*, she was hit by a torpedo from the *U-69*.

The *Caribou* suffered the largest death toll of any ship torpedoed in the Gulf of St Lawrence, with the loss of 136 of the 238 on board. Of these, 48 were civilians, 31 crew, 20 navy, 18 air force, eleven army and eight US forces personnel.

To many Newfoundlanders, the loss of the *Caribou* was the most significant event of the war, one that would be commemorated by two ships built later. Almost twenty years later, the 1961-built 1,135-ton *Taverner*, a Newfoundland coastal boat, would be named in honour of Capt Ben Taverner and his sons Harold and Arthur, officers lost with the *Caribou*. And twenty-five years after that, in 1986, the 27,213-ton car ferry *Caribou*, would be built for the same route.

In the Gulf of St Lawrence in 1942, a total of eighteen merchantmen and two Canadian warships were lost. On three occasions a single U-boat had been able to sink three merchant ships on the same day, on one occasion within one minute. But because the layering effects of salt and fresh waters at different temperatures in the Gulf of St Lawrence allowed them to escape sonar detection, not one U-boat was destroyed.

**Greenland Convoys**

Like the *Chatham*, her 5,649-ton sister ships *Dorchester* and *Fairfax* were now trading to Newfoundland and Greenland for the US Army Transport Service, and after the *Chatham's* loss, Eastern Steamships' *Yarmouth* was brought in to replace her. The *Dorchester* had been involved right from the start, going north in Greenland convoy SG.1 in May 1942, while the *Chatham* and *Fairfax* had joined convoy SG.2 in June. Until October 1942, Greenland convoys departed from Sydney but in November they switched to St John's, which would be the case for the rest of the war.

That spring, the *Fairfax* had seen brief service in West Africa. She and the *New Northland* had even passed one another, steaming in opposite directions between Freetown and Takoradi in mid-April, the *New Northland* bound for Takoradi under escort and the *Fairfax* in convoy for Freetown. But the American ship had left Freetown on April 23 after only a little over a month, re-assigned to Greenland.

Newfoundland Canada's *Belle Isle* was also now trading to Greenland. But unlike the *North Gaspé*, which had been chartered by the US Army Transport Service to serve Newfoundland and Bermuda, and the *Jean Brilant* to serve Nassau, the *Belle Isle* was purchased outright. The US Maritime Commission bought her on September 3, a week after the loss of the *Chatham*, for charter to the US Army Transport Service for the run between Boston, Newfoundland and Greenland. The *Belle Isle* was also handy as she
was able to serve smaller ports and landing sites the larger ships couldn't reach.

Another war trader to Greenland was the *Nascopie*. Aside from her usual summer voyages from Montreal to the Arctic, she now called occasionally, in spring and autumn, at the Ivigtut mine in west Greenland. There, between the spring of 1940 and October 1942, she loaded cargoes of cryolite for delivery to Alcan at Port Alford.

An even worse fate was to befall the *Dorchester* than the *Chatham* and the *Caribou*. The *Dorchester* travelled together with the *Belle Isle* in the last convoy of 1942 back from Greenland, during which their crews celebrated Christmas at sea. But a month later, on January 29, 1943, when the *Dorchester* left St John's in convoy SG.19, the *Belle Isle* was in Boston undergoing voyage repairs and alterations that would last until April to allow her to carry 163 passengers. On February 3, five days after leaving St John's, the *U-223* sent a torpedo into the *Dorchester* about 100 miles off Greenland. Of 904 people on board, 672 perished in the freezing winter seas. The *Dorchester*, another ship that had traded to Miami together with the Clarke ships, was lost in the course of her sixth voyage to Greenland.

**Other Canadian and Newfoundland Losses**

The *Caribou* and *Carolus* were not the only Canadian or Newfoundland ships lost to the *U-69*, the same boat that had sunk the American *Robin Moor* in 1941, before the United States had even entered the war. On October 20, 1942, less than a week after she sank the *Caribou*, she fired a torpedo at the *Rose Castle* but missed.

Two other Canadian ships had earlier fallen victim to the *U-69*. On May 1, 1942, she had sunk the 671-ton Nova Scotia schooner *James E Newsom* by gunfire northeast of Bermuda, while the latter was on a voyage from Barbados to St John's with molasses. Three weeks later, on May 21 off Martinique, she had torpedoned Paterson Steamships' 1,927-ton canaller *Torondoc*, travelling from St Thomas to Trinidad, which went down with her whole crew of 21. Revenge would be extracted by the destroyer HMS *Viscount*, which would sink the *U-69* with her entire crew off St John's on February 17, 1943.

On the same day the *Torondoc* was hit, her sister ship, the 1,925-ton *Troisdoc*, was lost to the *U-558* west of Jamaica. Travelling from Mobile to Demerera with a cargo of cement and general cargo, her crew of 18 were saved. Both Paterson ships had been built by Swan Hunter's Wallsend shipyard in the two years following Clarke's *Northland*, having followed her across the Atlantic in 1927 and 1928. Of twenty Paterson canallers that went to war, ten were lost to enemy action or marine disaster and six were requisitioned by the US War Shipping Administration. Of those that survived,
several would later work for Clarke.

Six months before the *Troisdoc*, on October 15, 1941, the *U-558* had sunk the 9,472-ton Canadian war prize *Vancouver Island* in the Atlantic. With 32 passengers and a cargo that included 2,638 tons of copper, aluminum, zinc, asbestos and steel from Montreal to Belfast and Cardiff, the *Vancouver Island* was lost with all her passengers and crew of 70, including six gunners. The ex-North German Lloyd *Weser* (iv), she had been captured by HMCS *Prince Robert* off Manzanillo, Mexico, on September 25, 1940. While the *Prince Robert* had succeeded where the *Prince Henry* had missed seizing the same company's *München* six months later at Callao, the *Vancouver Island* had seen less than a year's service under that name. She and a number of former Danish and French ships were managed by a temporarily-revived Canadian Government Merchant Marine, under the auspices of Canadian National.

The "New Northland" is Sold

In 1942, the British Ministry of War Transport purchased the *New Northland* outright. Together, the sales of the *North Star*, *New Northland* and *Cape Gaspé*, along with the military charters of the *North Gaspé* and *Jean Brilliant*, served to put Clarke's finances into a reasonable condition. But the company and its personnel were also making significant contributions to the war effort, supervising naval shipbuilding in Canada, building minesweepers in Nova Scotia and training pilots in Quebec, not to mention transporting vital wartime supplies and personnel.

That October, while ships were being sunk in her old home waters in the Gulf of St Lawrence, the *New Northland* was scheduled for a 144-day refit at Smith's Dock Co Ltd of South Shields, on Tyneside, where an extensive overhaul would bring her into compliance with Sea Transport Department standards. Leaving Freetown on September 14, she joined convoy SL.122, Freetown to Liverpool with 33 other ships, carrying a cargo of cotton seeds, groundnuts, important to Britain's fat ration, and hides to make into army boots. While the main part of the convoy arrived at Liverpool on October 6, the *New Northland* was routed to Loch Ewe and then round to South Shields on the North Sea.

On October 10, while she was gone, the *U-178* sank Canadian Pacific's *Duchess of Atholl*, on a voyage from Cape Town to Freetown, headed for the UK with troops and 2,500 tons of general cargo. Only four of her crew, engineers killed when the torpedo struck, were lost out of 830 persons on board, and her survivors were landed at Freetown. The *New Northland* and *Duchess of Atholl* had passed many times in the St Lawrence.

With her refit, the *New Northland* retained her original cabin accommodation but received new mess decks for almost 500 troops in her
tweendeck and cargo spaces. As refitted, she could carry 660 troops in mess decks and cabins. Six sets of life rafts were added, one on each side just aft of the bridge and two sets between the third and fourth lifeboats on each side of the ship. And in addition to her four-inch gun, her armament now consisted of 12-pounders, five Bofors anti-aircraft guns and six machine guns, while a shorter mainmast was stepped aft.

On March 13, 1943, eleven days before the New Northland was due to leave the UK for Freetown, another Canadian Pacific troopship, the 21,517-ton Empress of Canada, first of the name, was lost off the West African coast. On her way from Durban to Freetown with military personnel from Poland, Greece, Norway and Great Britain and 500 Italian prisoners of war, she was torpedoed, ironically, by an Italian submarine, the Leonardo da Vinci. Of the 362 who lost their lives, many were victims of shark attacks. After four days in their lifeboats, survivors were picked up by the destroyer HMS Boreas, one of the ships that had rescued survivors from the Athenia in 1939, and by the corvette HMS Petunia. Landed at Freetown, the survivors were accommodated in the Edinburgh Castle until they could be repatriated.

The crew of the New Northland would not learn of this tragedy until their return to Freetown, and it would not be made public until February of the following year. Although the Empress of Canada was a Trans-Pacific liner, the two ships had met at Quebec on September 2, 1929, on the Empress of Canada’s one and only visit there, a round voyage from Southampton to test new engines. The New Northland had been on her usual inbound call at Quebec when the Empress of Canada arrived, setting a speed record for the passage from Cherbourg. The two ships had also been together in Freetown roads for three days when the New Northland first arrived in April 1941. At the time, the Empress had been on her way from the UK to Suez in convoy WS.7.

Once her refit was completed, HMT New Northland, as she was now called, returned in convoy OS.45, forty-two vessels that left Liverpool on March 24, 1943, for the 2,964-mile voyage to Freetown. Nine days out, at 6:55 pm on April 2, while 320 miles west of Oporto, the convoy was attacked by the U-124, the same boat that had sunk the Trevisa in 1940 and the Portadoc in 1941. Two British freighters loaded with military supplies, munitions and aircraft for South Africa and the Indian Ocean were torpedoed, the only ships to be lost in this convoy. British-India Steam Navigations 5,190-ton Gogra took with her 75 crew members and six gunners and Henderson Line’s 4,357-ton Katha one crew member and five gunners.

The 4,281-ton Ropner tramp Danby, carrying coal to Buenos Aires, and the corvette HMS La Malouine, rescued 54 crew and four gunners from the Katha, and the Danby five crew members and three gunners from the Gogra. As she was travelling light, he New Northland took on all 66 survivors as passengers for the next twelve days, finally landing them at Freetown on April 14.
The Trevisa had been the U-124's fourth victim and the Portadoc her sixteenth, and she had now managed to sink fifty ships totalling 236,791 tons, between her commissioning in June 1940 and the attack on convoy OS.45. But her luck had finally run out. The Gogra and Katha would be her last victims, as this time she would not escape. After almost three years of preying on Allied merchant shipping, the U-124 was sunk by depth charges from the corvette HMS Stonecrop and the sloop HMS Black Swan. None of her 53 crew members survived.

The day after the New Northland's return to Freetown, the Queen Mary arrived from Sydney and Cape Town, after having taken British troops to the Middle East and repatriated Australians. That same day New Northland left with escort on her first post-refit voyage to Takoradi and Lagos. The next day, Queen Mary left Freetown with 8,326 troops for the Clyde, there to resume her North Atlantic trooping duties.

On her return to Freetown, the New Northland's first assignment was three months trooping between that port and Bathurst, arriving in both ports at daylight, and sailing in the evening. Bathurst, 450 nautical miles to the north of Freetown, was now being used by the British to train and familiarize troops with tropical conditions before they were sent on to India or Burma.

Her first voyage to Bathurst was made together with the 1,346-ton British motorship Pinto and three ships bound for Trinidad. Their escort consisted of the anti-submarine trawlers HMS Buster and Portsdown and ML's 1072 and 1231. Travelling together with them, the "Flower" class corvettes HMS Burdock and Crocus then escorted the rest of the convoy across the Atlantic.

Returning from Bathurst to Freetown, the New Northland and Pinto were joined by the 2,660-ton Danae II and 2,783-ton Kana and the trawlers were augmented by the whaler HMS Buttermere.

**The "North Gaspé" Returns to War**

At the end of the 1942 St Lawrence season, as with the previous winter, the North Gaspé went back into war service for the Americans, but this winter it would be mainly to Newfoundland. Léo Chouinard recorded the start of the North Gaspé's second winter of war service in his memoirs:

On December 3, 1942, we left Quebec on the same itinerary as the previous winter. There was already snow and it was cold. We had a full cargo for the Gaspé coast and the islands. A huge storm from the northeast had dumped twelve inches of snow on our decks, where one couldn't remain standing in the uneven sea. We tried to take shelter to the west of Pointe des Monts, but the wind turned to the northwest, so
we weighed anchor for Pointe à Moulin (Baie-Trinité), finally reaching New York three days late...

It had been decided to send the *North Gaspé* to St John's, Newfoundland, with soldiers and munitions for the base at Fogo... This voyage to Newfoundland was awful, at this worst time of the year. A violent wind and penetrating cold raised sea spray that iced up the superstructure, making the ship heavy and dangerously unstable. The captain decided to take refuge in Placentia Bay to de-ice before continuing the voyage.

In late December, the *North Gaspé* joined convoy ON.153, 45 ships and twelve escorts Liverpool to New York, as it passed St John's, arriving in New York on New Year's Eve. Leaving St John's again on January 14, 1943, the *North Gaspé* and the 3,660-ton Norwegian *Lista*, escorted by destroyer HMCS *Columbia*, were sent to join Liverpool/New York convoy ON.159 as it passed St John's. Seas were rough and as the convoy had already passed, the destroyer went ahead while the slower merchant ships followed.

Three days later, four ships left the convoy for Halifax. And on January 18, south of Nova Scotia, four more were detached for Guantanamo and two for Houston. But as the *North Gaspé* and *Lista* were still trailing more than thirty miles behind the convoy four days after joining, they were ordered to make for Halifax while the rest continued to New York. Not so lucky that day was the Canadian Gulf Line's 2,609-ton *Frances Salman*, lost with her crew of 28. On her way from St John's to Corner Brook to pick up a new cargo, she was torpedoed by the same *U-552* that had sunk the *Nerissa* and USS *Reuben James* the year before. The date was three days short of the anniversary of *North Gaspé*’s close encounter with *U-203* on a similar voyage from St John's to New York the year before.

And so it went. There were no Bermuda voyages this year but many cold and rough Newfoundland passages, sometimes in convoy to or from St John's with the troopship *Lady Rodney*. The two had often been in Montreal together before the war, the *Lady Rodney* returning to Montreal from her southern voyages on a Sunday evening as the *North Gaspé* prepared for a Monday departure for the Magdalen. Two fellow travellers in these St John's convoys were the *Fort Amherst* and *Fort Townshend*, which remained on the route throughout the war. Between them, they would make 217 round voyages from New York, often acting as commodore ships. Yet others included the *Meigle*, *Moyra* and *Northton*, all running cargo to Newfoundland, and the *Belle Isle*, on which Eric Wharton had booked her first passengers.

Had it not been time of war, one possibly amusing incident happened that winter. On the morning of March 25, 1943, the *North Gaspé* left Halifax in convoy XB.39, Halifax to Boston. Later, the destroyer USS *Greer*, a ship that had been escorting Allied convoys since well before the US entered the war, came alongside the *North Gaspé* and asked why she had failed to
acknowledge a secret wartime challenge. The response was that it was because they did not know what the signal was, but all was well in the end.

On April 30, the North Gaspé and Belle Isle travelled together from St John's in convoys JH.51 and XB.50, arriving in Boston on May 8. The North Gaspé then went to Boston Navy Yard from May 10 to 14 for routine maintenance. On leaving Boston on the 14th for St John's, she found herself in convoy BX.51, 23 ships, together again with Belle Isle, en route to Argentia, and Fairfax on one of her many trips to Greenland, plus the canaller James Stewart, returning from a winter of hauling coal on the coast. Three weeks earlier, the North Gaspé and Belle Isle had travelled together with Stewart's sister ship, the Charles R Huntley, in convoy HJ.48, seven ships from Halifax to St John's. The Stewart and Huntley, 1,760-ton canallers owned by the Upper Lakes & St Lawrence Transportation Co Ltd of Toronto, were engaged each summer running supplies from Montreal to air bases in Newfoundland.

After an arduous winter working between New York, Boston, Halifax and Newfoundland, the North Gaspé finally departed St John's on May 24 for Montreal, joining convoy CL.66 for Sydney. From Sydney, she joined convoy SQ.50 for Quebec, passing Rimouski inbound in on May 31, ready for her sixth season on the St Lawrence.

The North Gaspé's appearance was changed that spring, however, after one of her officers, Georges Chouinard, made a proposal to head office in Montreal. Admiring the various wavy camouflage schemes used by Canadian corvettes and other warships, and with knowledge of the incursions of U-boats into the St Lawrence the previous year, he received a go-ahead from the company to do something similar. He thus had the ship's crew paint the hull medium grey and the superstructure light grey, then chalked markings on the hull and had them paint a wavy light grey band all the way round the ship. Although her raked bow and cruiser stern gave her a jaunty look in her new colours, the camouflage scheme eventually gave way once more to overall grey.

The "Jean Brillant" in Parliament

In March 1943, while the Jean Brillant was away running in war service between Miami and Nassau, a parliamentary debate over the Battle of the St Lawrence had almost involved her in a potential scandal. Sasseville Roy, Member of Parliament for Gaspé, had made an accusation that at the height of the struggle in the St Lawrence, in June 1942, "a navy corvette" had been despatched from her escort duties to "convoy a small steamer from Rimouski to conduct a party of fishermen to a North Shore holiday place."

Possibly he had seen "The Motor Ship" article from 1935 that had described her luxurious accommodation and potential for use as a yacht. But
the accusation was false and signed affidavits were quickly produced not only by Capt Tremblay, but also by the manager of the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co, its president Jules Brilliant and a member of the Quebec assembly who had been on board, stating that this was manifestly untrue. Capt Tremblay’s statement said in part: -

I was in charge of the said ship on the occasion of the trip from Rimouski to the North Shore on June 17, 1942. At no time during this trip has the Jean Brilliant been escorted or convoyed.

The invented scandal soon evaporated, but Roy had not only accused the Jean Brilliant of wasting navy time, he had also made the even more serious accusation that the government had hidden the loss of thirty ships sunk by German U-boats in the Gulf of St Lawrence in 1942. This accusation likewise proved unfounded, and Navy Minister Angus Macdonald broke with convention by naming the twenty vessels that had been lost and where they had been lost.

The "Jean Brilliant" Stays South in 1943

While this was going on, the Jean Brilliant was busy running military personnel to Nassau, where the Royal Air Force had opened Operational Training Unit No 111 in order to train bomber crews in skies that were clear of enemy aircraft. This was done in American-built four-engined B-24 Liberators, with the first training taking place on January 5, 1943. Altogether, 140 Liberators would be delivered to the RAF.

One trainee, flight engineer Jack Burgess, gave an account to the Aircrew Association’s Scottish Saltire Branch in which he remembered his trip to Nassau after arriving in New York in the Queen Mary: -

After a brief stay in Montreal, we returned to New York, then spent a very interesting 3-day train journey down to Miami. This appeared to be the well-worn route, and for the very first time it was confirmed that our final destination was No 111 OTU Nassau. This was confirmed when on arriving in Miami, we embarked on the 640-ton Jean Brilliant, which we discovered had been built by Swan Hunter in 1935 at Newcastle. Registered in Quebec, the ship had been specially strengthened to navigate through ice in the St Lawrence, but was now pressed into military service for taking personnel to Nassau.

From the moment we sailed into Nassau harbour the following morning, we entered a different world. If we were not flying, we were swimming at Wavecrest Beach. We were also given the use of the "Bahamian Club," all of those facilities we were told, granted by the Duchess of Windsor, whose autograph I received at a Club visit. I was crewed up with an all-Canadian crew, and during our flying training the
oft repeated tale of the Bermuda Triangle was mentioned. This was tragically brought to mind when one of our Liberators mysteriously disappeared.

It seems not always to have been a comfortable crossing however. Later, in an article Burgess wrote for the Autumn 2010 issue of "The Friends of St Clement Danes," the church of the RAF, he recalled his crossing in a little more detail upon leaving Miami: -

Two hours later, we were being flung about like a cork in the midst of a terrifying storm. Arriving in Nassau harbour next morning, several hours past our scheduled time, we came ashore bruised and battered by kit and unsecured iron beds and loose cargo which had been flung from one side of the small vessel to the other all during the night crossing. Medical attention was required to deal with sprains, bruises, and other injuries.

Many of those trained in Nassau ended up in the Far East, where the long-range Liberator became the bomber of choice. Large numbers of Canadian aircrew also trained in Nassau, arriving in Clarke's Jean Brillant. The number of stopover tourists to Nassau, meanwhile, had fallen dramatically, to 3,652 by 1943, almost 10,000 less than the peak in 1941.

The Jean Brillant had obviously proven herself useful as the Americans decided to keep her south for the whole of 1943. Normally engaged on the Miami-Nassau shuttle, she made so many voyages between the two ports over this period that she performed almost as many as the New Northland had in the 1930s. Capt Tremblay would eventually make many more Miami-Nassau voyages in the Jean Brillant than he had in the New Northland. But the Jean Brillant also made one call elsewhere in the Bahamas, when on April 30 she arrived at Great Exuma under escort of CG-83405 with 32 tons of miscellaneous freight and provisions for US Naval Air Station Great Exuma.

That summer, while on a routine return voyage from Nassau to Miami, two of the Jean Brillant's American escorts were in collision, with one of them being lost. Malcolm Willoughby recorded the event in "The US Coast Guard During World War II": -

At 2336 on 29 June 1943 CG-83421 collided with USS SC-1330, seven miles north of Great Isaac Light, while both vessels were part of an escort for the s.s. Jean Brillant, Miami to Nassau. The stern of CG-83421 had two watertight compartments carried away, but the remaining compartments kept her afloat though her water-tight integrity had been impaired. The crew were taken off and the vessel taken in tow by SC-1330. After two hours of towing, the 83-footer sank in deep water. There was no loss of life or serious injury to personnel.
The SC-1330 had ploughed straight into the CG-83421 while they were at sea southwest of Freeport, after which the Coast Guard vessel sank, on the last day of June. Both were wooden patrol craft capable of over 20 knots, but the SC-1330, which had been commissioned only a month earlier, was of the larger 110-foot class submarine chaser variety, the American equivalent of the Fairmile.

Little more than a week later, the Bahamas became the scene of one of the most famous murder mysteries of all time. At 7 am on July 8, Sir Harry Oakes, the richest man in the Bahamas and owner of the British Colonial Hotel, that was now being used by the US military, was found bludgeoned to death, his body partially burned in a clumsy effort to hide the crime. The Jean Brillant had departed the previous evening at 7:30 on one of her many crossings to Miami. A suspect, Sir Harry's son-in-law Alfred de Marigny, was eventually charged and tried, but was acquitted and the real murderer has never been found.

On July 31, while returning from Nassau to Miami, one of Jean Brillant's escorts, CG-83368, had a possible submarine contact when it heard a ping at 5:25 am while running ahead, and reported that twenty minutes later a shape had become apparent on the surface almost dead astern at a distance of about four miles. The CG-83446 was in the astern position but when they were interviewed in Miami both her commanding officer and Capt Tremblay of the Jean Brillant reported having seen nothing. The sighting, originally thought to be a possible, was reclassified to doubtful because of distance and visibility. As dawn was breaking it would have been difficult to determine whether an object might be a small patrol boat or the conning tower of a submarine.

The "Jean Brillant" Serves Grand Cayman

While it had been announced that the North Star would cruise to the Cayman Islands in the autumn of 1939, the war had intervened and she had never made it. But eventually, in the autumn of 1943, a Clarke ship did make it to the Cayman Islands when the Jean Brillant was assigned to make a monthly supply voyage to US Naval Base Grand Cayman. Between August 1943 and March 1944, she made seven such voyages, taking time out from her regular Miami-Nassau shuttle to do so. Her route from Miami was southwest to Key West, where her escorts would normally change, then round the western tip of Cuba and by way of the Isle of Pines and the south coast of Cuba to Georgetown in Grand Cayman. These round voyages without passengers usually took about a week or ten days and after sailing from Grand Cayman she would often proceed to Nassau first before returning to Miami.

On her August voyage, the Jean Brillant and two US Coast Guard cutters arrived at Georgetown anchorage at 9:30 am on Monday the 23rd. At
10:30 navy crews came out in a landing barge to start unloading her cargo of miscellaneous supplies, two large refrigerators and fresh and dry foodstuffs. Work stopped at 7:30 pm and started again at 9:30 the following morning. The last of the supplies and lumber having been discharged by 1:30 pm on Tuesday, the Jean Brillant departed with her Coast Guard escorts, discharge having taken a day and a half with an overnight stay.

In September, she would arrive Georgetown at 8 am on Thursday the 16th and complete discharge by 11:45 am, a very quick turnaround for what must have been a light load, sailing again with her escort at 1 pm. In October, escorted by USS SC-1282, she arrived on Saturday the 16th, unloading got under way at 7:15 am and discharge of a cargo of miscellaneous supplies, foodstuffs, lumber and 200 sacks of cement took until 10 pm. But again she managed to get away the same day.

In November, however, when the Jean Brillant, escorted by USS SC-1342, arrived off Georgetown at 6 am on Friday the 12th, heavy seas and winds prevented the landing barge from reaching the ship. While the Jean Brillant stood by waiting for better conditions, the weather prevented unloading all day Friday and all of Saturday and Sunday as well. On Monday the 15th they were finally able to get started at 7:30 am, to complete at 5 pm, when the Jean Brillant and SC-1342 got away for Miami.

The Jean Brillant's December voyage would go well as far as discharge was concerned. Arriving at 5:30 am on the 7th, with escort USS SC-1064, she began unloading at 8 am and also took on miscellaneous supplies for return to Miami. Work completed by 5 pm, she departed for Miami. But by 7 am the next day she was back with a fault in the intermediate driving gear of her main engine. Eventually repaired, she made it back to Miami under escort.

**The Wartime Fleet**

In the Gulf of St Lawrence, meanwhile, Clarke was in need of other ships with which to supplement the North Gaspé, Gaspesia and Sable I, especially after the sale of the Cape Gaspé in 1942. Because of the war, good tonnage was in short supply so such ships as were acquired were usually stopgaps that would last for only two or three seasons. Clarke had to rely on a smaller ships obtained from secondary coastal shipping companies in the St Lawrence, only one of which had a steel hull while the rest were made of wood.

These were the Miron L, the Maurice M, the Charlenest and the chartered Père Arnaud, two of which would be registered to company associates. Indicative of the short-term nature of their employment, even if Clarke purchased them, the ships kept their original names. Nevertheless, they were an important factor in keeping cargo services open after the
mainline ships had gone to war.

The "Miron L"

The first of these had already joined the fleet in 1942. Like the Labrador and the Cape Gaspé before her, she was a former armed trawler, the third to be acquired by Clarke. The Miron L's official number, 150284, followed immediately that of the Cape Gaspé, 150283, which she replaced. The Cape Gaspé, the former Manon L, and the Miron L had both originally belonged to the same fleet.

The Miron L had come from the same Sorel shipbuilder, the Transportation & Shipping Co Ltd, and been completed in 1922 as a steel dumb barge and later converted into a coaster. With dimensions of 140 by 23 feet and machinery aft, there were many similarities with the Cape Gaspé, and both were powered by Fairbanks-Morse diesels, but of differing specifications. A few others of this class were still active in the St Lawrence, two of them now operating as large tugs for Sincennes-McNaughton Lines.

Clarke acquired the Miron L, first of the wartime fleet, from La Compagnie de Navigation de Gaspé Baie-des-Chaleurs, for whom she had been running with the Méchins in weekly service from Montreal and Quebec to the Gaspé Coast. She was registered in 1942 with company executive Willie Douville as owner.

The Miron L remained with Clarke until 1944, when she was sold to the Maple Leaf Steamship Co Ltd. She would then trade for two years in the Caribbean before being lost in October 1946 after leaving Trinidad for Belize to pick up a cargo of lumber for Jamaica.

The "Maurice M"

Second of the wartime ships was the Maurice M. "The Gazette" of Montreal had noticed her in port on June 12, 1936, when it had described her as a "new coastal steamer" on the route from Montreal and Quebec to the North and South Shores of the St Lawrence. She had worked from Montreal with several other coasters under the auspices of the Maurice Steamship Agency, the firm that had delivered the granite cross to Gaspé in 1934. By 1941, the Compagnie de Fret de Gaspé Inc was advertising her in its service from Montreal and Quebec, where she called at Shed 21, to the Gaspé coast.

The Maurice M was a double-ended machinery-aft type wooden motor coaster, completed by the Meteghan Shipbuilding Co Ltd at Meteghan, Nova Scotia, in 1936, the same shipyard where the Clarke brothers were now building wooden minesweepers. She was a modest vessel of about 100 by 25 feet and had a gross tonnage of 221.
This motorship, for she was not a steamer as "The Gazette" had reported, was acquired from the Compagnie de Fret de Gaspé in 1943, and would remain with Clarke until 1945. The most notable event during her time with Clarke was a fire on board at Rimouski on November 2, 1943, towards the end of her first season.

The "Charlenest"

The third wartime ship, the Charlenest, was a wooden-hulled engine-amidship motor coaster that had been completed in 1938 by Hector Coulombe at St-Laurent, Ile d’Orléans. The Coulombes had previous experience running smaller ships for Canada Steamship Lines between Montreal, Sorel, Trois Rivières and Quebec with cargoes such as beer, cement and sugar, the result of which was that the Charlenest had started trading for Clarke before the war, running to the North Shore and Gaspé Coast.

Charles and Ernest Coulombe, after whom the Charlenest was named, were Hector Coulombe’s two eldest sons. Diane Bélanger, in her book "La Construction Navale à Saint Laurent, Ile-d’Orléans," comments on the Coulombes wartime experience working for Clarke: -

Charles Coulombe remembered this epoch. Night navigation was forbidden. Each evening they had to take refuge in river ports. For them, it paid very well because the voyage duration was forcibly prolonged. This had to be paid for by the company and Coulombe found this very agreeable. Nevertheless, today he says that all of this was probably very dangerous. Several times, in the lower river, he had seen strange movements on the surface of the water. After the war, he learned that German submarines had managed to break into St Lawrence waters. Had they known that, Charles recounted, they would have been much less pleased at a situation that kept them idle in port.

These extra wartime costs were partly why Clarke managed to obtain an increase in its North Shore subsidy starting in 1943. At any rate, the Clarke Steamship Co finally bought the Charlenest outright in 1943. With dimensions of 122 feet overall by 22 feet, and a gross tonnage of 143, she was another small ship, but a handy one for the trades for which she had been designed. With cargo booms both forward and aft of her superstructure, she was able to work two holds at once.

The Charlenest would not stay long with Clarke, but she was the beginning of a long-standing relationship between the Clarkes and the Coulombes that would last twenty-five years and would move from wooden schooners to steel coasters. Diane Bélanger quoted Desmond Clarke as having said to Hector after buying the Charlenest from him, "Coulombe, you have sold your boat; now go home and build another one," which is just what
The "Père Arnaud"

The fourth wartime ship was the handsome little *Père Arnaud*, which after trading to the Lower North Shore during the 1930s had been combining roles as a temporary Ile d’Orléans ferry and Cunard White Star tender at Quebec. During all of this period, she had remained in Clarke employ. In 1942 she was purchased from Messageries Maritimes Nord Ltée by another Clarke associate, Louis T Blais. Not only was Blais associated with the Clarke Steamship Co but Desmond Clarke was a director of Louis T Blais Ltée, incorporated in 1933, and of the St Lawrence Sea Products Company, which had built the plant at La Tabatière in 1939.

After working with Labrador Fisheries, Louis had gone on to become the driving force behind St Lawrence Sea Products, and its new $500,000 seal rendering and fish meal facility. After a fire in 1945, this plant would become a producer of fresh and frozen seafood products but for now the plant’s prime activity was seal processing. One sideline of this was that Blais regularly advertised sealskin work boots for sale in Quebec. Louis T Blais and St Lawrence Sea Products were located at 17 rue St-Jacques, the original head office and now the Quebec branch of both Clarke and Labrador Fisheries.

Although Clarke operated her, Blais' interest in owning the *Père Arnaud* was probably to assure his own security of supply. Just a few months earlier, on September 18, 1941, the 115-ton schooner *OK Service II* had been wrecked near Ile aux Chiens, about five miles west of Vieux-Fort. Blais had chartered her from Nova Scotia owners and she had just loaded a full cargo of codfish from St-Augustin, Shekatica and Vieux-Fort before she was lost. Although she was not lost to enemy action, such ships were becoming more difficult to obtain because of the war.

The St Lawrence Is Closed to Ocean Shipping

Despite a shortage of escorts, the convoy system had been relatively successful, limiting losses in 1942 to three tons in one thousand, so that 99.7 per cent of the shipping traversing the Gulf of St Lawrence got through.

The U-boat attacks of 1942 had their effect, however, as that September the Canadian Government decided to close the St Lawrence route to overseas shipping. Movement on the river was now restricted to essential coastal services and ships loading export timber, while other export traffic was to be diverted to Halifax, Saint John and even American coastal ports.

The only exception was newbuilding merchant vessels coming out of
shipyards in the Great Lakes and St Lawrence. The main reason for this decision was a shortage of escorts. Seventeen Canadian corvettes had been sent off to urgent duty, escorting convoys for the invasion of North Africa, while others were needed in the Caribbean. This decision of course caused an outcry in Montreal and Quebec, where large numbers of skilled stevedores depended on shipping for their livelihood, and became a subject of debate in both Ottawa and Quebec City.

In 1942, export trade from Quebec ports had already fallen to 2.2 million tons, from 4.8 million tons in 1941, as less shipping proceeded upriver. The number of ships loading export cargoes had also fallen, from 704 in 1941 to 278 in 1942, and fell to only 178 in 1943. A reflection of how this affected rail traffic was contained in a January 3, 1943, article in the "New York Times" about Canada's railways: -

Almost the best way to get any estimate of Canada's war production is to stand for a few hours beside a railroad track near the Atlantic seaboard and watch the freight trains roll past in constant succession, all so heavily loaded that the tracks bend below the weight. Traffic is double what it was during the last war and 50 per cent higher than during the prosperous years of 1928-29. New records are being set every month in the handling of cars at terminals, as many as 5,500 being received and dispatched in twenty-four hours.

U-boats did not return in 1943, however, partly because of improved aircraft patrols that meant naval vessels could be on the scene within an hour of any U-boat sighting. Now, in addition to the naval base at Gaspé, air bases at Mont-Joli, near Rimouski, and at Sept-Iles and Summerside, all regular Clarke ports of call before the war, were equipped with Canso flying boats. This combination of air and naval force made the St Lawrence a less profitable zone of operation for U-boats, and one that was now much riskier. Meanwhile, outside the St Lawrence, on March 11, 1943, before the limited 1943 season opened, one familiar ship, Bergen Line's Brant County, was torpedoed by the U-86 while on a voyage from Saint John and Halifax to Newport, Wales. Lost were 28 of her crew and eight passengers out of the 58 on board and a general cargo that included carbides and 670 tons of explosives.

Although the number of ocean ships in the river was down, the coastal trade continued as usual in 1943. The North Gaspé, Gaspesia and Sable I, along with the Père Arnaud and Maurice M, and now the Miron L and Charlenest, carried on Clarke's essential services to the North Shore, the Gaspé coast and the Magdalen Islands, while a chartered canaller ran to Corner Brook. While the Jean Brillant remained in southern waters, the Matane I and Rimouski, both now painted grey, continued to run from Rimouski and Matane, the upper reach of the U-boats, to the North Shore.

But the submarine attacks of 1942 had also taken a toll on coastal
shipping, as was brought up in an article in the "Ottawa Citizen" on May 22, 1943, entitled "Allowed To Use Birds Usually Protected": -

Fishermen and the families along the North Shore of the St Lawrence from the Saguenay River to the Strait of Belle Isle will be able to vary their meals by adding to them certain wild birds and birds' eggs usually protected under the Migratory Birds Act.

An order-in-council lifting the provisions of the act until well into June was published Saturday, and the information has been telegraphed to the settlers along the coast. German submarine activity last summer, coupled with an unusually late spring, had left the residents short of food, an official of the Mines and Resources Department said.

Last summer, the boats that usually ply from Quebec City to these North Shore points were thrown off their schedules by the submarine menace, and did not make as many trips as in other years. Accordingly, the inhabitants did not have as much food as usual when winter set in.

As well as the Clarke ships to the North Shore and Gaspé and the Magdalen islands, the Gaspé County carried on to Gaspé, as did the remaining canallers, carrying bulk cargoes as well as government supplies. But with no more tourists, the Fleurus was now on the Goose Bay run, sailing in convoy roughly every three weeks from mid-June to early November. In three of these convoys, in June and July, she was joined at Quebec by the Lady Rodney. Goose Bay had now became the Fleurus's regular wartime run, and she would return in 1944 in convoy after convoy, often with two or three St Lawrence canal-size tankers carrying aviation fuel north.

By 1944, some ocean shipping would be allowed back into the St Lawrence because of the strain being placed not only on the port facilities at Halifax and Saint John, but also on the supply of railway cars. This was especially true with the planned Allied landings and advance into Europe. The number of ships loading exports would rise to 346 in 1944, almost double the level of 1943, and would reach 754 again in 1945, more than four times the 178 ships that made it in 1943.

Frank Clarke Hosts Churchill

In August 1943, Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King and their staffs gathered for the first Quebec Conference to plan the Allied strategy for the invasion of Normandy the following spring. Churchill arrived at Halifax in the Queen Mary on August 9 and travelled to Quebec by train.

The Conference ended on August 24 and from August 25 to 31, Frank
Clarke hosted the Churchills and a number of their party in the Laurentian Mountains for six days' rest and relaxation. The Canadian Government had cleared Frank, now 56, as a long-time friend of Churchill’s. Three days were spent at his Cabane de Montmorency, 35 miles above Quebec on the Montmorency River, for which Frank had named his paper sales company, and three more at his lakeside retreat at Lac des Neiges, 65 miles from Quebec. The rapids of the Montmorency River and the mountain air and calm lake 3,500 feet above sea level helped to revive a war-weary Churchill and his enjoyment of these days was reflected in a letter he wrote to Julienne Clarke, Frank’s wife, on August 31:

I have just returned from five most delightful days spent at La Cabane de Montmorency and at the camp on the Lac des Neiges. It is the first real holiday I have had since the war began, and I can imagine no more pleasant place in which I could have spent it. Your husband has told me how largely you were responsible for the making of these two camps, and I do want you to know how very much my wife, my daughter and myself benefited from our stay there and how sorry we were that you could not be with us.

President Roosevelt, having spent a day fishing with Churchill at nearby Grand Lac à l'Épaule, had been keen to join the Churchills at Lac des Neiges, but it was thought that this would have presented too much of a security risk. Instead, Churchill sent him one of the trout he had caught, which went by plane with his daughter Mary, and then visited him in the United States by private rail car, provided by Canadian National Railways, before returning to Halifax on September 14 to board the battlecruiser HMS Renown for the Clyde.

While Churchill was entertained by Frank Clarke, the Allied chiefs of staff were treated to a 24-hour overnight cruise on Canada Steamship Lines' Tadoussac, which sailed from Quebec under fighter escort and wearing all the Allied flags. Included in the many admirals, generals, field marshals and their staff on board, were Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, newly-appointed Allied commander Southeast Asia, and General George Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff and Time magazine’s man of the year for 1943.

As with Clarke, Canada Steamship Lines had still been able to attract passengers despite the scare caused by the Battle of the St Lawrence. But unlike Clarke, which sailed into the Gulf of St Lawrence, CSL’s Saguenay steamers stayed well above the zone where U-boats operated, advertising "healthful stimulating days on peaceful inland waters." Most embarrassing for Canada Steamship Lines, however, on August 27, almost immediately after the Quebec Conference, as Churchill was fishing with Frank Clarke, the Richelieu and Tadoussac collided near Murray Bay, killing two passengers on the Richelieu.

During the first Quebec Conference, shipping in the St Lawrence was
restricted, but by the time Churchill and Roosevelt returned to Quebec for a second conference in September 1944, the river would once again be open to ocean shipping.

**Anglo-Canadian' Sets up a Shipyard**

In 1943, at the request of Desmond Clarke's Shipbuilding Directorate, Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper Mills formed a Shipbuilding Division to take some of the pressure off the regular yards. Headed by Anglo-Canadian vice president Walter Clarke and backed by its mill engineering staff, the paper mill opened a fitting-out yard in Quebec's inner Louise Basin, where frigates launched in Quebec City shipyards could be towed for installation of their engines, other vital equipment and weapons.

While the Quebec Conference was under way in the upper town, in the Louise Basin the finishing touches were being put to the first of Canada's new frigates to be completed in the St Lawrence. On September 11, 1943, that ship was commissioned as HMCS Dunver. John D Henderson of Victoria BC remembered the Dunver in a letter to the author in 1986:

The name Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper Mills Ltd takes me back to the war days and the frigate Dunver. I used to visit friends who were in her and was always taken by her builder’s plate, i.e. Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper Mills Ltd. I never fully understood how she had been built, but eventually turned up the knowledge that she had been built, i.e. hull etc, by the old Morton Co at Quebec and completed by Anglo-Canadian. Oddly enough, she was a good job, mechanically and technically, and ran well, which is what the ship’s staff like. Some of the wartime ships just seemed to stagger from one repair yard to another, yet others were built by people as inexperienced as those who sailed in them and got around very well!

Honouring the Montreal suburb of Verdun she was called Dunver as there was already a destroyer in the Royal Navy called HMS Verdun. The Dunver, the first of half a dozen frigates to come from the Morton Engineering & Dry Dock Co Ltd, had been the first to be launched for the Royal Canadian Navy, on November 10, 1942, but three others completed on the west coast had been commissioned before her completion.

Both Morton and the Geo T Davie yard in Lauzon were having labour problems and the two yards, as well as Anglo-Canadian's Shipbuilding Division, had been brought under an umbrella corporation, Quebec Shipyards Ltd, on June 18, 1943. At the same time, Elliott Little, Anglo-Canadian’s general manager of shipbuilding became a director of Quebec Shipyards. Fifteen years after entering the newsprint business, Anglo-Canadian was completing ships for the war effort, an activity that at its peak would employ 2,000 men and women in three daily shifts.
The Bahamas Hires the "Jean Brillant"

At the end of 1943, having spent the winter of 1942 and all of 1943 with the Americans, the Jean Brillant was chartered instead by the British Ministry of War Transport and the Government of the Bahamas for what would be three more winters service between Miami and Nassau. For this, she was awarded the British auxiliary pendant number X.51, which she carried on her bows. Her most famous passengers during this period would be the Duke and Duchess of Windsor.

As she was now working for the Bahamian Government, the Jean Brillant had effectively assumed the New Northland's old contract position in the Miami-Nassau trade, and under the same master. And as Governor, it was ultimately the Duke of Windsor who was now responsible for the charter of the Jean Brillant. Desmond Clarke also visited Miami in late February 1944, as he had become accustomed to doing when the New Northland was on the route.

The Jean Brillant's escorts continued to be the same mix of navy submarine chasers, coast guard cutters and minesweepers. From mid-May to mid-June 1944, however, she acquired a dedicated escort for a month or so, when USS YMS-370 was assigned to escort the Jean Brillant back and forth between Miami and Nassau. Completed at Whitestone, New York, in October 1943, this 12-knot wooden-hulled minesweeper was eventually sent to the Far East. With a complement of 50 and a single three-inch gun, two 20-millimetre guns and a pair of depth charge throwers, she became the Jean Brillant's dedicated escort for a while. Four hundred and eighty-one of these minesweepers were completed during the war, of which forty were built at Whitestone. They were similar to the MMS minesweepers being built by Clare Shipbuilding in Nova Scotia but faster, more powerful and more heavily armed. They also had additional crew amenities such as refrigerators.

One of the Jean Brillant's passengers, Alex Bowie, later recounted many of his experiences to the Scottish Saltire Branch of the Aircrew Association. In January 1943, he had taken the 26,032-ton Empress of Scotland, formerly the Transpacific liner Empress of Japan from the Clyde to Halifax. He had been assigned to train at Camp Sussex over the winter, then was sent to Bombing & Gunnery School at Picton, Ontario, in early May and on to No 9 Air Navigation School at St Jean, Quebec, in mid-summer and finally to No 1 General Reconnaissance School in Summerside. After two weeks leave in New York, the winter of 1943-44 saw them off to Nassau:

Good things come to an end hence we reported to Lachine a suburb of Montreal where we joined a train which took us all the way down the East Coast of the USA to Miami. We stopped twice en route once at Rocky Mount, North Carolina, where we were confronted by two white
men with sawn-off shotguns who informed us they "would blow our heads off" if we gave any chocolate to the little black children. Next stop was Savannah, Georgia, where again stepping out of the train to stretch our legs we entered the station terminal and were yelled at because we had used the "Jim Crow" i.e. Black's door not the White's entry. We still arrived at the same place! We embarked on the m.v. Jean Brilliant and sailed to Nassau in the Bahamas to do Operational Training at No 111 OTU.

At Nassau, six weeks were spent at Oakes Field flying B-25 Mitchells and six weeks at Windsor Field on Liberators. In 1944, at the end of his training Bowie returned to the Clyde in the Empress of Scotland, but his three weeks' leave was interrupted by a telegram instructing him to report back. He continues the story, recounting his journey back in the Queen Mary, which was also carrying Churchill to the second Quebec Conference, to be held September 12-16, 1944: -

It appeared that Liberators were desperately required hence six ex-Nassau crews (pilots & navigators only) were being sent to Montreal to fly them. As is the RAF way theory is one thing practice another. We embarked on the Queen Mary from the tender at Greenock.

Several days later that same tender brought Mr Churchill and all the Chiefs of Staff to the ship which then was under way before the tender returned to the shore. All the bigwigs were en route to meet President Roosevelt at the Chateau Frontenac, Quebec. We had absolutely millpond conditions all the way across the Atlantic and were escorted by two Tribal Class Destroyers and a County Class Cruiser who were replaced halfway across by three similar ships. We never saw Churchill en route but Air Marshal Tedder and Field Marshal Sir Alan Brooke chatted to us daily as we strolled round the Boat Deck. It was most exhilarating to go right forward on "C" deck and stand at an angle of 30 degrees, held up by the wind as the ship proceeded at over 30 knots. The food on board was superb, the ship being victualled in New York.

Typically, on arrival at Halifax, we were prohibited from disembarking "for security reasons" whilst the local paper trumpeted the PM's arrival to the world at large. We disembarked the following day at New York and reached Montreal by train.

At Montreal, Bowie began a long series of aircraft ferrying flights to Prestwick by way of Goose Bay, Greenland and Iceland, where Jim Hutcheson, who once looked after Nassau bookings and ticketing, was also active. Other flights took Bowie back to Nassau and over to Bermuda and the Azores, the more southerly route to Prestwick, as well as to many other parts of the world. The training given in Nassau saw many of the Jean Brilliant's former passengers either flying these large aircraft in theatres of the war or
delivering new ones across the Atlantic from Montreal and Nassau.

Liberator AL.504, named "Commando," was Churchill's luxury version, equipped with seven sleeping berths for him and his staff, and always returned to Dorval for maintenance. This was the plane that had returned the Howe party, including Desmond Clarke, to Canada in October 1942, and it was flown by an American pilot and co-pilot and Canadian flight engineers and radio officer. It was the first Liberator to be delivered to the RAF, in August 1941, before the Americans entered the war, and would disappear near the Azores on March 27, 1945, with the loss of all fourteen on board. Others who had flown in her included Lord Beaverbrook and Queen Juliana of the Netherlands. Six Liberators from the first batch had also been assigned to British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) for use in the North Atlantic Return Ferry Service.

West African Trooping

Across the Atlantic, at Freetown, the New Northland had been joined for the best part of a year by the 8,351-ton sister ships Elisabethville and Thysville of the Compagnie Maritime Belge (CMB). The Thysville had actually left Freetown together with the New Northland when she headed north for her trooping refit on September 11, 1942, while Thysville had been bound for Takoradi, Lagos and points south. Thysville arrived in Freetown this time in convoy OS.48 on June 7, 1943, a few weeks after the New Northland had returned from refit, and would remain until March 13, 1944, when she sailed for Liverpool in convoy SL.152 with 240 passengers, a cargo of groundnuts and mails for the Clyde. The Elisabethville, meanwhile, left Freetown in mid-January 1944.

During this time the trio often operated as a unit with its own escort group, consisting of the sloops HMS Wellington and HMS Lowestoft, and HMS Totland, the former US Coast Guard cutter Cayuga, which with two sister ships had sailed to the UK as escorts in convoy HX.128 from Halifax in May 1941. From 1940 until April 1941, before being transferred to the Royal Navy, the Cayuga had been active in scouting out sites for air bases and weather stations in southern Greenland.

The New Northland acted as commodore ship for the group, and other ships joined on occasion to travel with them as far as Nigeria, usually with a couple of anti-submarine trawlers or motor launches as extra escort. The New Northland, Elisabethville and Thysville were constantly on the move transporting services personnel between Bathurst, Freetown, Takoradi and Lagos.

The three ships played a large role in the transport of the British 81st and 82nd West Africa Divisions, thousands of men from Nigeria and Ghana, then the Gold Coast, who were organized and trained to fight with the 14th
Army against the Japanese in Burma. The 81st Division, formed in Nigeria in March 1943, was sent to India that August, while the 82nd followed between January and July 1944, to recapture Burma. In all, West Africa would supply some 200,000 men to the British Army and many of those who went overseas would not return until 1946.

After the CMB ships left, the *New Northland* continued to sail between Freetown and Bathurst, and Takoradi and Lagos, usually in convoy but sometimes on her own. When individually routed she was often shepherded by a flying boat, either a Sunderland from Freetown or a Liberator from Bathurst.

On the night of December 16, 1943, for example a Liberator from 200 Squadron RAF with a crew of eight took off from Bathurst and from a transcription of her operating records we have the following:

Convoy Escort. H/200 was airborne at 2010 hours to provide escort to the m/v [merchant vessel] *New Northland*. At 2059 hours SE contact was made from a distance of 2 miles from a height of 1500 feet on a convoy consisting of 3 vessels proceeding on a course of 024 degrees at a speed of 11 kts. in position 1255N 1712W, this proved to be the *New Northland* and escort.

On this voyage, the *New Northland* was accompanied by the 10,169-ton tanker *Esso Norfolk*, which had been completed in December 1942, and a naval escort. A couple of months later, on February 26, 1944, another flight would take off from Bathurst at 1318 hours. The *New Northland* having departed Bathurst the day before, it took two and a half hours for the Liberator to reach her before providing five hours escort as she steamed towards Freetown:

Escort to *New Northland*. Liberator N/200 provided escort to the *New Northland*, the vessel being met at 1542 hours and escorted until 2040 hours when the aircraft left for base.

The *New Northland* also made three voyages to Dakar, French West Africa (now Senegal), a distance of 496 nautical miles, in 1943 and 1944, after the French there had come over to the Allied side. Before her third such voyage, she underwent seven days repairs at Lagos, between June 13 and 20, 1944. In 1945, she would also make two longer voyages to Casablanca, 1,812 miles away in Morocco, one in March under escort, and the other in June, after the war in Europe had ended, this time on her own. Unlike her usual shorter voyages, Freetown to Casablanca took eight days in each direction.

One of the *New Northland*'s more notable passengers during this period was West Africa middleweight champion John De Graft-Hayford, from the Gold Coast, who during the second round of a friendly non-title bout held
on board, knocked out Far East welterweight champion Jack Pullan. De Graft-Hayford was serving with British forces in West Africa and after the war would become an officer. Years later, in 1963, as Air Commodore J E F De Graft-Hayford, he would become the first Ghanaian Chief of Air Staff of the Ghana Air Force.

The *New Northland* would see over five years' service on the West African coast, remaining for the rest of the war. A quarter of a century later, Clarke and CMB ships would once more sail together, under totally different circumstances. And HMS *Wellington* is still afloat today, on London's Embankment, where since 1948 she has acted as Headquarters Ship for The Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

**Shipbuilding Changes in Ottawa**

At the end of 1943, Wartime Merchant Shipping, headed by Harvey MacMillan, was disbanded and a new company, Wartime Shipbuilding Ltd, was formed to control both naval and merchant shipbuilding under David Carswell, who was also awarded an OBE in 1943. MacMillan returned to British Columbia, but Desmond Clarke stayed in Ottawa, where he had been appointed Special Assistant to C D Howe that May, and also began to spend more time on his own business. At the end of the war, Desmond would be awarded an OBE for his efforts while MacMillan would be made a CBE (Commander). William Percival, Clarke's superintendent, meanwhile, would be made an MBE (Member).

Towards the end of his term as Director General of Shipbuilding, on April 29, 1943, Desmond's wife Aline christened the Royal Navy frigate HMS *Parret* at Canadian Vickers in Montreal. Sister ship HMS *Lossie* was launched the same day and among the guests at the joint ceremony were Chief of Naval Staff Vice-Admiral Percy Nelles, T R McLagan, general manager of Canadian Vickers and later president of Canada Steamship Lines, and Desmond's uncles James and George Clarke from White Plains, New York. Both were "River" class frigates, for which Desmond had announced the first orders in December 1941. In this case, however, the ships had been ordered by the US Navy and assigned to the Royal Navy under Lend-Lease, and would serve in the Pacific. HMS *Parret* would last five years before being returned to the US Navy in February 1946, laid up and scrapped as war surplus, but HMS *Lossie* had a longer career.

From an insignificant business during the depression, the Canadian shipbuilding industry by war's end was expanding exponentially, and by war's end would include twenty-one major shipyards, four major outfitting establishments and sixty-five smaller plants. Whereas Canadian shipyards had produced only fourteen ships of over 150 feet in length, two of these for Clarke, between 1930 and 1939, their wartime output would include 281 destroyers, frigates and corvettes, 226 minesweepers, 254 tugs and 3,302
landing craft, on the naval side, together with 354 10,000-tonners, forty-three 4,700-tonners and six 3,600-ton tankers for the merchant navy, for a remarkable total of 4,466 vessels. Total payments to the Canadian shipbuilding industry would reach $1,185,000,000 by the end of 1945.

**The "North Gaspé" Returns To Bermuda**

While the *Jean Brilliant* had spent the whole year trading in the south, the *North Gaspé* had not made it to Bermuda in 1943, although in the course of the war she would sail there dozens of times. Her original 1942 Bermuda voyages would be followed by twenty-nine more in 1944 and 1945, until larger ships would finally be able to resume the service after the war.

After a single voyage between New York and St John's in December 1943, the *North Gaspé* arrived at Boston on January 7, 1944, in St John's-Boston convoy YD.2, and would not return to the St Lawrence until four months later, when she left Boston on May 17 in Boston-Halifax convoy BX.108 on her way back to Montreal.

On her fifteen Bermuda voyages that winter, the *North Gaspé* usually sailed to Hamilton, but also made a number of voyages to St George's. When she arrived on her second voyage, from Baltimore on January 27, 1944, she just missed former fleetmate HMCS *Prince Henry*, which had been in Bermuda until just the day before, embarking 250 British school children who had been evacuated during the blitz to take them home. The *North Gaspé* departed for Baltimore on the 28th and three days later the new corvette HMCS *Lindsay* arrived from Halifax for three weeks working up off Bermuda before proceeding to Europe. The *North Gaspé* next arrived from Norfolk, on February 5, and sailed again for Baltimore on the 6th. She made three voyages to Bermuda that month.

On March 16, the *North Gaspé* left Norfolk for Bermuda, departing Cape Henry at the same time as Merchants & Miners' *Berkshire*, bound for Boston. The *Berkshire* had been on the Miami-Nassau run in 1941 before the *Jean Brilliant* took over in 1942. On all three March arrivals at Bermuda, on the 13th from Baltimore and 20th and 27th from Norfolk, the *North Gaspé* made quick turnarounds, heading out to sea again on the same day she unloaded to collect her next cargo. Previously, she had usually remained in Bermuda overnight before returning to the mainland. On arrival at St George's on April 11, the *North Gaspé* was met by star shells from the minesweeper USS *Engage*, which had not been able to raise the *North Gaspé* by radio.

There were other Canadians in Bermuda as well. The crew of the *North Gaspé* met several fellow Québécois from Marine Industries' dredging division in Sorel, busy deepening the shipping channels at Hamilton and St George's. Like themselves, they were under contract to the US Government, preparing
for the new US Naval Air Station being built in Bermuda.

As well, the Royal Canadian Navy had opened an anti-submarine training facility in Bermuda as early as 1939, and 119 Canadian warships would train there during the war. In August 1944, the RCN opened a naval base, HMCS "Somers Isle." The depot ship HMCS *Provider* and two Fairmile motor launches were also in Bermuda for anti-submarine patrols. The *Provider* was one of two sister ships delivered by the Marine Industries shipyard. The other, HMCS *Preserver*, along with her own Fairmiles and other escorts, was assigned to Red Bay, Labrador, to protect the Strait of Belle Isle during the navigation seasons of 1943 and 1944.

In the following season, the *North Gaspé* arrived southbound at Boston on December 20, 1944, in convoy XB.137A, and would return from there on May 2, 1945, in convoy BX.160. During those nineteen weeks, she performed a New Year's voyage to St John's, and made fourteen trips to Bermuda between January and April. Near the end of that season, on April 26, 1945, she gained the distinction of being the smallest ship out of forty to arrive at Hampton Roads in GUS.82, a Mediterranean convoy that she and two "Liberty" ships joined at Bermuda.

At slightly less than 200 feet, the *North Gaspé* was shorter, but beamier, than the "Flower" class corvettes of North Atlantic escort fame. She was also smaller than Canada Steamship Lines' *Cascapedia*, which had run to Bermuda in 1917-18. But this modern little motorship served the Americans well for four full winter seasons.

**Wartime Service to Newfoundland**

The Newfoundland run remained a dangerous one because of the threat of U-boat attack and also an initial shortage of naval escorts. Although Clarke's own ships were no longer available and there was great demand for canallers for overseas service, the company still managed to obtain at least one canaller to maintain its Corner Brook service. Ships with cargo handing gear were needed for the Corner Brook service and these were in short supply, but the Shipping Controller allocated tonnage where it was needed. Because of the port's importance for both industry and the military bases in Newfoundland, Clarke was always able to obtain the ships it needed to operate its vital Corner Brook service without interruption. Canallers that served Corner Brook regularly between 1942 and 1944 included the *Birchtton* and *Cedarton*, both of which had served Clarke before the war, and the 1,739-ton *Keydon* and *Surewater* and 1,796-ton *Trenora*, owned by Keystone Transports, from whom Clarke also chartered ships. These ships came and went by way of Sydney-Corner Brook convoys.

No record seems to remain of the actual vessels Clarke used to Corner Brook in the early part of the war. From a wartime Canadian Pacific Railway
circular, however, we learn that in 1944 it was offering "sailings from Montreal to Corner Brook every two weeks commencing with the s.s. Keydon, Montreal cargo acceptance dates April 25-26th." The Keydon, built at Blyth in 1923, could carry about 3,000 tons of cargo and came from the same stable as the Trevisa and Keystate used in 1938. Although she had started the war in the Caribbean bauxite trade, by 1942 she began appearing in Newfoundland and she was now running for Clarke. A measure of the amount of shipping required comes from the fact that before the war Newfoundland's purchases from Canada had amounted to less than $8 million worth of goods a year but by the end of 1944 this had reached $43 million annually. Over the same period, its exports to Canada rose from $2 million to almost $7 million.

The passenger service, meanwhile, had ended soon after the outbreak of war, as not only had the New Northland started operating on shorter cruises for Raymond-Whitcomb, but the Gaspesia had begun to turn around at Natashquan rather than carrying onto Corner Brook. From Natashquan, the Gaspesia returned to Montreal, leaving chartered ships to carry the Newfoundland cargo.

As Clarke ran the Keydon and other ships to Corner Brook, canallers also undertook other duties in the St Lawrence. In 1944, for example, the 1,745-ton Judge Kenefick, owned by the Upper Lakes & St Lawrence, was armed and allocated to shuttle pulpwood from Forestville to Quebec for Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper Mills.

Other Newfoundland Operators

Many operators were engaged in wartime trade between Montreal and Newfoundland. As we have seen, Newfoundland Railway Steamships had bought F K Warren's Moyra to run between Montreal and St John's, and in 1944 it was also using the 1,238-ton Sprucebay, chartered from the Tree Line Navigation Co. The Moyra caught fire on May 14, 1945, whilst en route from Montreal to Newfoundland, and was beached near Beauport, Quebec. Later sold to Norwegian owners, she was the last ship of the Inter-Provincial Steamship Lines. Newfoundland Railway Steamships also acquired the canaller Northton in 1943, a ship that had been in the same convoy with the Carolus when she was lost in 1942. The Northton would remain with them until 1946.

As wartime managing agent for Newfoundland Railway Steamships, Montreal Shipping had opened an office in Halifax to serve this trade. This was in addition to the Botwood office, which handled the Anglo-Newfoundland ships. Commenting on 1943, "A Montship Story" said: -

Coastal activities increased throughout the war. The company's busiest period saw it operating some 30 vessels for the account of various
principals, including the Newfoundland Railway, Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company of Grand Falls and the Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper Company.

With the Americans having bought the Belle Isle, Newfoundland Canada Steamships was now running a thirty-year old canaller, the 1,914-ton Lucius W Robinson, between Montreal and St John's under command of Capt John Ivany, a Newfoundlander. Chartered from Hall Corporation, she had been transferred from US to Canadian registry in 1939. Newfoundland Canada also chartered Canadian National's Connector, which had been running to Jamaica, for the Halifax-St John's service, and occasionally used her in the St Lawrence as well. The last time she had traded to Newfoundland had been as the Canadian Sapper in the 1920s.

Job Brothers of St John's ran the 321-ton Seneff, a refrigerated vessel converted from a former armed trawler, between Montreal and St John's and there were sailings from Halifax and Charlottetown by the Shaw Steamship Co, which early in the war had chartered canallers for its Great Lakes-Newfoundland service after Norwegian ships became unobtainable. Two of these, Canada Steamship Lines' 1,906-ton Hastings and Paterson Steamships' 1,940-ton Sarniadoc, had each made a number of voyages for Shaw in 1940.

Many other ships worked for the Canadian Government and British Ministry of War Transport, chief among these being Canadian National's Lady Rodney, which regularly carried troops between Halifax and St John's and occasionally Goose Bay. On one Halifax-Goose Bay voyage, in June 1944, she also called at Corner Brook.

The St Lawrence Services in Wartime

On the Gulf of St Lawrence, the North Gaspé, Gaspesia and Sable I continued passenger and cargo services and other tonnage was acquired or chartered wherever it could be found. The Sable I also continued the winter service, but by now she had dropped her summer calls at Rimouski, sailing directly to Baie Comeau instead. And the Gaspesia opened up a new navigation season at Montreal when she became the first ship of the year to arrive there, on April 18, 1944.

By this time, only the North Gaspé offered cruises, described as vacations that "will enable you to take up that wartime job again with fresh energy and renewed morale." The remaining cruise offerings were her 6- and 7-night voyages to Gaspé and the Magdalens. The fare for the 7-day cruise was $70, or $56 in spring and autumn, while the 5½-day cruise still $55, or $44 in the off-season.

The "Vagabond Sailings" brochure no longer included sailing dates and
Clarke's narrative now acknowledged the war: -

No wartime vacation offers greater interest and relaxation for tired mind and body than a Clarke "Vagabond" voyage along the calm, picturesque waters of the beautiful Gulf of St Lawrence. Although the main Clarke fleet of cruise ships is at present engaged on war service, the trim and modern motorship North Gaspé sails regularly through the summer and autumn to ports along the south shore of the St Lawrence. ...

Life on board ship is given over to real relaxation. Clarke steward service and cuisine, despite wartime conditions, are still up to pre-war standards.

Meanwhile, although regular passengers were still accepted to and from the North Shore, with the build-up of military activity there, Clarke's "Vagabond Sailings" brochure now contained the information that: -

The steamers Gaspesia and Sable I maintain a regular freight-and-passenger service to the north shore of the St Lawrence. Due to limited accommodation, cruise passengers cannot be accommodated on either of these ships.

Building new airports and defence installations on the North Shore, particularly a Canadian base at Sept-Iles for the RCAF and a new US emergency air field at Mingan, complete with dock, midway between Presque Isle, Maine, and Goose Bay, meant that all the accommodation on these ships was needed for workers, regular travellers and defence personnel. Lucien Simard, a sailor on the Jean-Eudes, a 141-ton goélette that had been built in 1942 and operated on charter to Clarke, had these memories from 1944: -

I was sailing on a ship that was transporting airplane fuel and cement. The high-octane fuel was placed in one compartment, cement in the other, and the rest of the fuel was put into barrels on the deck. It was for the planes and to build the base in Longue Pointe de Mingan. That was a base the Americans were building in order to fly over the St Lawrence River and monitor for submarines that could have made their way down the river...

We weren't even allowed to light a match in the room unless the portholes were completely covered. We were in utter darkness. All along the Gaspé coast all the way to Newfoundland, you were in complete darkness. During the war, the houses located all the way down the Gaspé coast had to cover their windows. The submarines were torpedoing the ships only 5-10 miles offshore.

The Mingan base was completed by the McNamara Construction Co,
who had dredged the harbour at Nassau and built Prince George Wharf, and whose personnel now also had the experience of building Goose Bay. In a yachting voyage just after the war, Sidney Dean commented on the Mingan dock in his "All the Way by Water": -

Mingan Dock, as we could observe, is a good job, a credit to American pile-drivers, bulldozers and trucks, as well as American engineers and Canadian workmen. The workmen were paid on the USA wage scale, and they did appreciate it! Contrariwise, local fish and fur magnates are still cursing. They complain the Yankees have demoralized permanently the local labor market.

The dock is sheltered from most winds and there is plenty of water, but this summer it was still military-minded. Heavy planes to and from Europe were dropping off for minor repairs or gasoline.

Because of this wartime activity, the "Vagabond Cruises" brochure had become "Vagabond Sailings," but nonetheless cruises were still being offered in the North Gaspé, which now claimed an additional accolade:

The North Gaspé has performed yeoman service for several winters on wartime duties, playing a notable part in the transportation of men and supplies along the Atlantic coast; she has won a host of new friends among the Allied armed forces.

Trim and smart as ever, the North Gaspé is a gallant yacht-like motorship at your holiday service!

Despite her wartime service, or perhaps because of it, the word yacht seemed to have stuck wherever she was described now.

**Passenger Fares**

The Gaspesia and Sable I carried on the North Shore service from Montreal, with the Gaspesia sailing as far as Natashquan and the Sable I continuing to Blanc-Sablon. Fares had also changed. Where there had been more than a 25 per cent premium on the Gaspesia voyage pre-war, the two ships were now common-rated. A wartime summer round voyage fare of $78.75 to Natashquan compared to $61 pre-war in the Sable I and $75 in the Gaspesia, a 5 per cent increase on the Gaspesia but 29 per cent on the Sable I. And the round voyage fare to Blanc-Sablon, served by the Sable I, was $103.95, and to Mutton Bay, the end of the line in 1938, $96.60, compared to $74 pre-war. While the Mutton Bay fare had risen by 30 per cent the full round voyage fare had gone from $74 to $103.95, or more than 40 per cent. Compared to her previous discounted fares it seems the Sable I had become a bit of a money-earner.
On the South Shore, meanwhile, except for the Magdalen Islands, alternative rail or highway service was available to most points the North Gaspé served, so Clarke was able to carry on this one-ship cruise service for the balance of the war. While fare increases on the Sable I had been steep and those on the Gaspesia moderate, the North Gaspé lay somewhere in the middle. Her Gaspé cruise had cost $50 and the Magdalens voyage $60 when new, but the fares were now $55 and $70, respectively, up 10 and 16.7 per cent. All ships also now charged a War Revenue Tax of 15 per cent.

Wartime Navigation

As the war carried on, Léo Chouinard gives us an account of how this affected the North Gaspé’s summer service. This included a trip to Corner Brook, about twenty hours steaming beyond the Magdalen Islands, to pick up a cargo of salted herring: -

In St Lawrence waters, we felt safe, not knowing that several ships had been torpedoed. We suspected that something was going on, because we were escorted by motor launches, mini-corvettes called Fairmiles. What's more we would receive orders to remain at dock, whether at Gaspé or at Cap-aux-Meules.

During one return to Quebec with calls at the Magdalen Islands and Corner Brook, Newfoundland, we took on a full load of barrelled herring for Montreal. In the middle of the night, my brother Georges, then second officer, noticed at a distance of about half a mile a large vague white object. The sighting lasted for only a few seconds as we were running at full speed. What to make of this phenomenon? It couldn't have been an iceberg, in this season, in the Gulf of St Lawrence. Together with the captain, they concluded that it must have been a German submarine roving the North Atlantic...

In the summer of 1944, we had a hard time keeping the schedule. The senior officer responsible for navigation in the Gulf of St Lawrence stopped us often, especially at night, at Gaspé and the islands, because of the always possible threat of torpedoing. Fairmiles sometimes escorted us from the Saguenay as far as Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands. There was little communication between ships without radio contact. There was only wireless, used mainly aboard Atlantic liners. The navy knew all, we nothing.

Land-sea communications were almost non-existent. It was impossible for us to know the weather forecasts, so important to mariners. We had no instrumentation except the good old barometer that indicated low pressure areas and anti-cyclones.

A minor disruption in North Gaspé’s wartime service also occurred
during the season of 1944, when she had serious engine trouble on the Gaspé coast and had to be towed into Mont-Louis by navy Fairmiles.

Backing up these three ships, the Lower St Lawrence Transportation Co provided a supplemental service on the shorter runs from Rimouski and Matane to North Shore ports located between Bersimis and Sept-Iles. But during 1943, the Jean Brillant remained in southern waters for the full year.

HMCS "Prince Henry" Converted to Landing Ship

One of the many projects that ultimately fell under Desmonds responsibility was the conversion of HMCS Prince Henry, once his own North Star, from an armed merchant cruiser into a landing ship in 1943, a job that cost $450,000.

Although Clarke had sold the North Star to the government in March 1940, its interest in the ship had not diminished, particularly as she had been transformed into one of Canada's largest warships. As part of her preparations for the Allied invasion of Europe, the Prince Henry went to Burrard Dry Dock Co Ltd in North Vancouver to be converted into a landing ship infantry (LSI), a job that began on March 6, 1943. Redesigned to carry four 20-ton landing craft on each side, she was also re-armed, as was Prince David, with two high angle/low angle double-mount four-inch guns, two single Bofors and ten Oerlikons for anti-aircraft protection, and repainted in camouflage colours. The Prince Robert meanwhile became an anti-aircraft cruiser.

Robert Darlington and Fraser McKee commented on the Prince Henry's new internal arrangements in their book "Three Princes Armed: Luxury Liners to Warships." In addition to providing accommodations and messing for her officers and men and the permanent crews of her eight landing craft: -

The interior of each ship was greatly altered, recognizing her new role of carrying and landing up to 450 soldiers complete with weapons and packs. Housekeeping changes included large mess-decks served by a cafeteria and expanded storerooms for the necessities of life.

HMCS Prince Henry recommissioned at Vancouver on January 6, 1944, under command of Capt Val Godfrey, RCN, and en route to Britain stopped in Bermuda to pick up returning school children, who she would take to the Clyde. As with her earlier commanding officers, Godfrey was a career navy officer and had also served in HMCS Prince David in Alaska. Enlisting in 1913, he had trained in submarines and had been in command of the destroyer HMCS Champlain in September 1933 when she had spent a fortnight alongside at Victoria Pier, where the Clarke ships docked in Montreal. Godfrey would stay with the Prince Henry until April 1945. He would be mentioned in despatches and awarded the OBE for his service in armed merchant cruisers,
as well as the US Legion of Merit. Godfrey had already featured in the wartime film "Commandos Strike at Dawn," filmed in BC and released by Columbia Pictures in BC in January 1943, as commander of HMCS Prince David.

The Normandy Landings

Once in the Clyde, the Prince Henry underwent final modifications at John Brown & Company at Clydebank and was prepared to take part in the D-Day landings in Normandy. She next proceeded to Southampton, where on June 2 at Berth 37 she embarked the 528th Flotilla landing craft, and 227 of the Canadian Scottish Regiment of Victoria, plus 99 other troops before going to anchor in the Solent, off Cowes, to await D-Day.

Prince Henry was headquarters ship for Force J1, twenty-two merchantmen destined for Juno Beach under escort of destroyer HMCS Algonquin. In addition to the Prince Henry, landing ships in Force J1 included the 11,951-ton Union-Castle liner Llangibby Castle, with eighteen landing craft, plus half a dozen British cross-channel packets and two Dutch North Sea ferries, each with its own outfit of six or eight landing craft to take troops to the beaches.

On June 5, HMCS Prince Henry led her formation out from the Solent and across the English Channel. Although no longer a cruise ship, the meals she served her troops that voyage, before they went into combat in the morning, were well above the usual military standard. After a choppy crossing, the Prince Henry arrived at Juno Beach at 6:06 am on the morning of D-Day, June 6, anchoring about seven miles off the hamlet of Courseulles. There, she waited to launch her landing craft and commence the invasion of occupied France. Offshore lay rocky shoals so rather than try to find a gap in them the Canadians chose to land ten minutes after the rest, letting the higher tide take them over the shoals. All but one of Prince Henry's landing craft managed to return - the unlucky one had been mined. The others were hoisted back on board while fifty-six wounded were taken below to the sick bay. The Prince Henry would make five more channel runs as the Normandy landings proceeded, three with American and two with British troops, taking 3,704 fighting men to France by mid-July.

On June 19, a fortnight after the initial landings, a very business-like photo of Prince Henry in her new guise as a landing ship appeared in Canadian newspapers. Under the heading "Beauty to Battlewagon," it commented: -

Once a sleek, swift passenger liner, HMCS Prince Henry is shown here as she was converted to take part in the invasion of France. The long promenade decks where peace-time passengers strolled have been cleared away and in their place are powerful davits supporting assault
landing craft. It was from the *Prince Henry* and her sister ship, the
*HMCS Prince David*, that assault landing craft, manned by Royal
Canadian Navy personnel, were launched on D-Day to hurl the first
wave of Canadian soldiers against the beaches of Normandy.

Hundreds of ships took part in the landings, among them a fleet of 126
coasters and short-sea ships that loaded mainly in London. Included in this
fleet were nine St Lawrence River canallers. One of these was the *Winona*,
the ship that had once run to St John's together with the *New Northland* and
had survived the decimation of convoy SC.7 in 1940. The *Winona* was one of
four Canada Steamship Lines canallers that participated in the Normandy
landings. Also at Normandy was the Belgian trooper *Thysville*, which had
been working with the *New Northland* from Freetown.

Of the 300 large cargo ships that took part, thirty-three were 10,000-
ton "Fort" class ships, Canadian-built equivalents of the American "Liberty"
ships. Eighteen were Canadian-owned and on bareboat charter to the British
Ministry of War Transport, while the remainder had been financed by the
United States Maritime Commission and provided to the UK under Lend-
Lease. Most of the "Forts" loaded in the Thames and many took troops with
them. A few also left from Hull. The thirty-three "Fort" ships alone could
carry the equivalent of almost 10,000 railcar loads of vital equipment,
supplies and ammunition to the Normandy beachhead.

In addition to *HMCS Prince Henry* and *Prince David*, the Royal
Canadian Navy supplied eleven destroyers, eleven frigates and nineteen
corvettes, plus numerous minesweepers, motor torpedo boats and landing
craft active on D-Day and thereafter. Of these, seven Canadian motor
torpedo boats were lost on the day of the landings.

One of the Canadian corvettes, *HMCS Lindsay*, escorted a convoy of
nine merchant ships from Milford Haven in Wales to the beaches of
Normandy, seeing action with German E-Boats in the English Channel on the
way. On June 9, she became the eighteenth Canadian corvette to arrive at
Normandy, firing countless salvos at the German gun emplacements ashore.
*HMCS Lindsay* had but one commanding officer, Lt Vic Thomson, from her
commissioning in November 1943 until being decommissioned in 1945. Like
Capt Val Godfrey in the *Prince Henry*, he came from Victoria, but unlike
Godfrey, he had only joined the navy in 1941, at the age of 25. Although
*HMCS Lindsay* was damaged in a collision with the destroyer *HMS Brilliant* off
the Isle of Wight in January 1945, forcing her to return to Canada, Thomson
was awarded the Croix de Guerre by France and commended "for gallantry
and devotion to duty in the operations which led to the successful Allied
Landings in Normandy" and "for gallantry, skill, determination and undaunted
devotion to duty during the landing of Allied Forces on the coast of
Normandy." Within eighteen months of the landings at Normandy, *HMCS
Lindsay* would find herself playing a new peacetime role with the Clarke
Steamship Co.
To the Mediterranean

On July 24, 1944, the Prince Henry and Prince David left Southampton for Naples via Gibraltar to take part in Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France. Under an American admiral, Prince Henry became the headquarters ship for "Sitka," one of the invasions four assault groups, and during the landings in mid-August 1944 she took 1,493 troops from Corsica to the Riviera beachhead. Toronto's "Globe & Mail" would say of this command structure on September 29, 1944: -

Historically unique for the RCN was the occasion on which Radm T E Chandler, USN, made a Canadian warship - the Prince Henry - his flagship ... It was the first time a Canadian or British warship had acted as flagship for an American Admiral.

Indeed, late in 1944, long after the North Star had been requisitioned by the RCN, Clarke was advertising this achievement in newspapers in the United States. In the "Chicago Sun" on December 3, for example, it noted that the Prince Henry had "recently served in the Mediterranean as flagship for Rear Admiral Chandler, the first occasion in history for a Canadian ship to serve thus." This was the second time that the Prince Henry had worked for the US Navy, the first time having been in the Aleutians.

The Prince Henry and Prince David would remain in the Mediterranean until March 1945, seeing service in Greek, Italian and Egyptian waters. Prince Henry would perform nineteen voyages carrying 8,562 passengers, mainly British, New Zealand and Greek troops, Greek civilians and Italian prisoners of war. During the liberation of Greece she embarked her largest passenger load ever, when on December 27, 1944, she took 1,700 Greek civilians and troops on a night passage from Preveza north to Corfu.

F L Fraser's Maple Leaf Steamship Company

Frank Leslie Fraser Sr, who had started his fruit shipping operation from Jamaica and Cuba to Norfolk in 1932, had died in October 1939. His son, Frank Leslie Fraser Jr, had taken over the family business at the beginning of the war and was now a plantation owner, shipping bananas not only from Jamaica but also from Baracoa, Cuba, where he was president of the Fraser Fruit & Steamship Co SA. Many of these shipments went to the old Merchants & Miners Line pier in Norfolk for account of the West India Fruit & Steamship Co.

As the war developed, Fraser had lost many of his ships, mainly because they were requisitioned for war service but also because some of the vessels that he had chartered had been lost to enemy action. Fraser had
therefore looked to Canada for replacement tonnage, and formed the Maple Leaf Steamship Co Ltd in Montreal to own them. He had already purchased the *Louis Hébert* from Clarke subsidiary La Compagnie de Navigation Charlevoix-Saguenay freight operation in 1942. Still registered in Quebec, she had struck a submerged object off Cap San Rafael, Dominican Republic, on January 15, 1944, and sunk with a cargo of empty bottles.

When he came to Canada in 1944, therefore, it was to acquire three more of Clarke's wartime fleet, adding to his own fleet one steel ship, the *Miron L* and two wooden ones, the *Charlenest* and *Père Arnaud*. To expand the capacity of the *Charlenest* and *Miron L*, Fraser enclosed their main decks, thus giving them more cargo space for carrying fruit, and installed sideports for easier loading. He did this with most of the small ships he acquired in Canada, and with the increased cubic capacity they could carry larger cargoes of fruit, a commodity that could not be shipped on deck.

Aside from the ships he obtained from Clarke, his Maple Leaf Steamship Co bought four from other operators in 1944-45. These were the 133-ton *J de V*, acquired in Quebec, the 770-ton *Patdoris* from Ontario, and the 339-ton *Dominion Shipper* and 295-ton *Rio Casma*, acquired from Eastern Canada Coastal Steamships Ltd in Saint John, New Brunswick. Fraser needed ships badly, so much so that in 1943, he had even acquired a hull dating to 1895 when he purchased the 333-ton former Great Lakes ferry *Arrow* from Norfolk owners, converting her into a diesel-powered fruit carrier at Jacksonville.

**War-Built Goélettes**

Clarke would never have been able to release these vessels to Fraser if Quebec's own goélette owners, particularly in Charlevoix County, had not mounted a wartime building program of their own. While three new goélettes had been built in 1939, only one was completed in 1940. But three were delivered in 1941, a record six in 1942 and three more each in 1943 and 1944, bringing the total to nineteen new goélettes constructed in Quebec over this period.

This gave Clarke and other charterers, particularly the forest products companies, access to a pool of new cargo-carrying vessels, mostly about 100 feet long and able to carry between 250 and 350 tons of cargo. Quebec & Ontario Transportation purchased one of them, the 150-ton *Notre-Dame-des-Neiges* of 1942, for use by the Quebec North Shore Paper Co in Baie Comeau. And on her completion in 1944, Anglo-Canadian Pulp & Paper chartered the 150-ton *Mont-Blanc* for three seasons' work as a supply ship for its woodlands operation at Forestville.

As to Clarke, with the *Mont-St-Joseph* and *Mont-Notre-Dame* having proved reliable, they stayed with Capt J A Z Desgagnés, who built one of the
largest of the wartime goélettes, the 201-ton *Mont-Royal*. Able to carry 380 tons of cargo, Clarke used her to replace the *Père Arnaud* on the Lower North Shore run. While the *Mont-Royal* was not fitted to carry passengers like the *Père Arnaud*, she did have significantly more cargo capacity.

With Capt Desgagnés in command, the *Mont-Royal* left the Clarke piers in Montreal for her maiden voyage in late September 1944, soon after the second Quebec Conference. On her way to Blanc-Sablon she got caught in a serious autumn storm, with two of her crew trapped in the forecastle and Capt Desgagnés and another crew member unable to leave the wheelhouse, or any of them get a meal, for twenty-six hours. This was her first real test as the *Mont-Royal* was a new development in goélette design, built with a full forecastle instead of a flush deck forward. This not only made her more seaworthy but also provided better protection for deck cargo in bad weather.

At the same time, a shortage of engine parts caused by the war meant that Desgagnés had had to replace the German diesel installed in the *Mont-Notre-Dame* with an American one. The German engine, from Motoren-Werke Mannheim, would be stored until after the war, when it could be re-installed in another new goélette.

**The U-Boats Return**

The increased possibility of aircraft detection had meant that the St Lawrence had remained free from U-boat attacks during 1943. By now the air bases at Mont-Joli, Sept-Iles and Summerside were well into their stride. However, with the St Lawrence open once again to ocean ships in 1944, U-boats did return once more, that autumn. The introduction of the schnorkel breathing device, which allowed them to stay submerged for longer periods, meant less chance of detection.

A few weeks before their return to the St Lawrence, on September 3, 1944, the *U-541* managed to put a torpedo into Bowater's canaller *Livingston*, sister ship of the 1942 victim *Waterton*, off the Cape Breton coast. En route from Boston and Halifax to St John's with general cargo, the *Livingston* lost 13 of her 27 crew and a gunner, while the corvette HMCS *Shawinigan* rescued 14 survivors.

The first ship to be hit in the St Lawrence was the frigate HMCS *Magog*, which was escorting an inbound convoy on October 14 when she was torpedoed by the *U-1223* about five miles off Pointe des Monts. The blast destroyed about sixty feet of her stern, killing three of her crew in the process. HMCS *Shawinigan*, the same ship that had rescued *Livingston*'s survivors, managed to tow the crippled frigate into Godbout, and her injured were flown out in a Canso flying boat. The *Foundation Franklin* then towed the *Magog* to Quebec, where they arrived on October 17.
On November 2, the Canadian-built 7,130-ton wartime cargo ship *Fort Thompson*, was proceeding downstream on her own with a load of grain for North Africa when the *U-1223* sent a torpedo her way about six miles off Matane. Built for the US War Shipping Administration, she had been assigned on lend/lease to the British Ministry of War Transport under the management of Glen & Co Ltd of Glasgow. Although damaged, she survived the attack and made it safely to port. The *Fort Thompson* would be the last merchant ship to be torpedomed in the Gulf of St Lawrence.

On the night of November 24, however, it was the turn of HMCS *Shawinigan*, which was torpedomed by the *U-1228* while patrolling the Cabot Strait in search of evidence of U-boats prior to escorting the Newfoundland Railway's 1,421-ton *Burgeo*, the ship that had replaced the *Caribou*, to North Sydney. Ninety-two men were lost with the *Shawinigan*, a ship that had played an important role in the Battle of St Lawrence. As well as rescuing survivors of the *Donald Stewart* and the *Livingston* and assisting the disabled HMCS *Magog*, she had participated in the search for HMCS *Raccoon* in September 1942 and had been part of the convoy escort when *Carolus* was lost that October. Not a single member of the *Shawinigan*’s crew survived when she became the last victim of the Battle of the St Lawrence, a battle that had occurred in two distinct periods more than two years apart.

"Cruise Ships at War"

In an effort to keep the Clarke name in front of the travelling public, the company had published a press release in September 1943, detailing as much as they could say about how its ships were participating in the war. The contents of this release appeared as advertisements in 1943 and 1944, headed "Cruise Ships at War": -

Clarke ships are at war! Our cruise liner *North Star* is now an auxiliary cruiser on task duty against the enemy. Recently this gallant Canadian vessel served as Flagship for an American admiral in naval operations preceding the Allied invasion of southern France. Her former cruise mates, *New Northland* and the *North Gaspé* and *Jean Brillant*, serve in various Allied theatres of war.

The former *North Voyageur* became a hospital ship and was sunk by enemy action off Crete. In home waters, the *Gaspesia* and other vessels of our fleet help keep new war bases and isolated regions in the Gulf of St Lawrence in touch with their sources of supply.

Our men and women, too, are serving in all branches of Canada's fighting forces, especially at sea, and in essential civilian services. All are keeping alive the fine Clarke tradition of service at sea, enriching their training with war experience.
Despite wartime difficulties, our ships are also maintaining vital civilian steamship freight and passenger services in the Gulf waters. We plan to resume, after the war, our popular summer cruises to Labrador and the Gulf of St Lawrence, and our winter cruises to Nassau and the West Indies. In the meantime, Clarke ships and men continue to fight and work for Allied Victory!

This text had first appeared in the "New York Times" on October 17, 1943, and by 1944 the company's brochures were promising "Post-War Summer Cruises to Labrador and Newfoundland" and "Post-War Winter Cruises to the West Indies." Desmond Clarke even sent a cable to Jamaica Tourist Trade Commissioner F H Robertson on the event of a conference in Jamaica to discuss the possibilities for post-war tourism that opened on May 10, 1944. Read to the convention second, after greetings from US Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Desmond's message indicated a wish to return: -

Very sorry unable attend your Tourist Trade Convention. On account of our pre-war service from Miami to Jamaica sponsored by the Tourist Board of the Jamaican Government we are anxious to operate this service again in the post-war and would appreciate receiving post-war plans formulated at your tourist convention. Please accept on behalf of Clarke Steamship Company our best wishes for a successful meeting.

Less than a month after this convention the once North Star that had performed this service was landing troops on the beaches of Normandy. Among those attending in Jamaica were Pan American Airways and Royal Mail Lines, but along with Clarke, others that could not attend included Canadian National, Cunard White Star, Furness Withy and United Fruit. Meanwhile, Clarke still maintained a New York office, but in smaller premises at 377 Fifth Avenue, where it had been earlier in the 1930s. It must have been some change for the company agent to greet the little North Gaspé in Brooklyn as opposed to the much grander North Star at the Cunard White Star docks in Manhattan.

The Windsors Travel in the "Jean Brillant"

Nassau's No 111 OTU would remain active until May 1945, and one of its arrivals that January was RAF flyer Tom Kayes, who later ended up flying Liberators and Sunderlands in the Far East. He too travelled in the Queen Elizabeth and then the Jean Brillant, and the contrast could not have been greater. His account of his arrival at Nassau was again given to the Scottish Saltire Branch of the Aircrew Association: -

Arriving in New York, we were whisked off to Camp Kilmer, a US Army Station where we had food and change of clothing. About a week later, a train journey took us to Miami, then a crossing to No111 OTU, Nassau on 7th February 1945. We learned that two days earlier
(5/2/45) two Liberators had collided in mid-air. Thankfully, we had missed this dramatic introduction!

Meanwhile, the Windsors had sold their Gemini in Miami the previous November. And just as it was a Canadian ship that had brought the them to Nassau in 1940, so it would be a Canadian ship that took them away in 1945. On May 3, after the end of his term as Governor, the couple boarded the Jean Brillant, still operating for the Government of the Bahamas, for the crossing to Miami. Owen Platt talked about the Duke's last days as Governor in his book "The Royal Governor and the Duchess": -

As planned, the announcement was made on the 15th and occasioned some surprise having, quite remarkably for Nassau, been kept a secret successfully. On the 3rd of April, the Duke addressed the legislature for the last time, blissfully unaware that this would mark his last official engagement ever for his former country, and concluded with the words, "I shall carry away with me only recollections of harmony and understanding."...

As the Windsors sailed off into the west on board the good ship Jean Brillant, back in Nassau the colony began to rearrange its affairs...

Michael Bloch also mentioned their voyage in the Jean Brillant in his book, "The Duke of Windsor's War," continuing the story after the Windsors disembarked: -

Having slipped away from Nassau at dawn on the 3rd on board the Jean Brillant, the Duke and Duchess spent a quiet week with friends in Palm Beach. It was there that they celebrated VE Day on the 8th. On the 13th they arrived in New York where they stayed for the next four months, having been advised not to return to Europe until the autumn.

Although he was no longer Governor, this would not be the last voyage the Duke would make in a Clarke ship. Indeed, he so enjoyed his voyage to Florida in the little Jean Brillant that he gave Capt Tremblay an engraved gold cigarette case as a memento of the voyage made together.

From Miami, where they left the now-familiar Jean Brillant on May 4, the Windsors would remain in the United States except for a fishing holiday on New Brunswick's Miramichi River in July. At the end of summer, on September 15, 1945, they finally left New York for Le Havre in Moore-McCormack Lines' Argentina, now operating as a US Army Transport Service troop ship, to settle in France.

**The War is Over**

The Germans finally surrendered on May 5, 1945, and Victory in
Europe (VE) Day, when it was celebrated on May 8, found the Jean Brillant in Nassau, still in wartime grey but dressed overall, with all flags flying.

Meanwhile, Léo Chouinard recounted how the crew of the North Gaspé learnt about the wars end in his book: -

Returning from the south in May 1945, before tying up at Halifax, we learned that the war was over, with [Germany's] surrender. What happy news! Do I have to say that the crew was overflowing with joy? Once again we would be able to sail in complete peace, all lights lit. At Halifax, the townspeople came down to the docks, air raid sirens howled their joy, fireworks exploded, and so on...

After having sailed during all these war years in dangerous waters, often carrying highly explosive cargoes and left without escort in the middle of the Atlantic, we had been very lucky not to have disappeared to a German submarines torpedoes.

While the North Gaspé was in Halifax, the Jean Brillant in Nassau and the Gaspesia and Sable I sailing the North Shore, wherever Clarke ships and men were, they were now able to look forward to resuming their peacetime lives. On May 25, the Port of Montreal was able to issue its first daily report on vessels in port since September 1, 1939. Among the ships in port that day was the Gaspesia.

The North Gaspé, Gaspesia and Sable I were all busy in the Gulf of St Lawrence when Victory in Japan (VJ) Day arrived on August 15. A sad note followed almost three weeks later, however, when on September 4 James Clarke, publisher, manufacturer and one of the original financiers of the Clarke Steamship Co, died at his home in White Plains, New York, at the age of 93. Clarke ships were instructed by Desmond Clarke to fly their flags at half mast in recognition of his passing.

The Fleet in 1945

At war's end, the main Clarke fleet consisted of but three ships, the North Gaspé of 1938, which had also been serving Newfoundland and Bermuda for the Americans, and the Gaspesia and Sable I, now both over thirty years old. These three totalled 2,636 gross tons and had berths for 105 passengers. Compared to the 1939 total of six ships of 13,240 gross tons, with berths for 642 passengers, this was more than an 80 per cent drop in both tonnage and passenger capacity since the North Star and New Northland had left Clarke ownership in order to take up their war duties.

As HMCS Prince Henry, the former North Star completed her RCN duty by acting as an escort for convoy MKS.90G, nineteen merchant ships, from Malta and Gibraltar to the UK in March 1945. As well as "Forts," "Parks" and
"Liberty" ships, the convoy included Constantine's *Briarwood*, the ship that had had the scrape with the *Empress of Britain* near the Saguenay in 1932, carrying a cargo of West African bauxite. Reaching Sheerness on March 27, and then the East India Docks in London on April 15, *Prince Henry* was then placed on loan to the Royal Navy.

Originally intended for the Pacific war as HMS *Prince Henry*, after the surrender of Japan she was no longer needed there. Instead, after a refit, she left Portsmouth with a British crew on December 3, 1945, to become an accommodation and headquarters ship for Flag Officer, Western Germany, at the German naval base of Wilhelmshaven. She remained in this role only briefly however, returning to the UK in February 1946. Her last Royal Navy captain, Acting Cdr Richard Stannard RNR, originally of the Orient Line, had won the Victoria Cross while commanding the armed trawler HMS *Arab* during the evacuation of Norway in May 1940 and had later commanded destroyers. Canada soon sold the once *North Star* to the British, and she gave fifteen years' more service. The rest of her story can be found in the appendix entitled "The Further Careers of the *New Northland* and *North Star.*"

The *New Northland*, meanwhile, was still in West Africa, completing her trooping duties for the British Ministry of War Transport. She would not return to the UK until a year after the war ended, leaving Lagos for the last time in June 1946. Unlike the *North Star*, her conversion had been into a troopship rather than a warship, so she stood more chance of returning to civilian service than did the radically altered *Prince Henry*. Indeed, on her return to Liverpool the British magazine "The Shipbuilder" described her as a "successful and popular ship" during her time in West Africa.

While Clarke's cruise business had been virtually eliminated when war broke out, it had been able to offer token "wartime cruises" in the *North Gaspé* and, unlike most American coastal operators, it had been able to hold on to its passenger and cargo trade in the Gulf of St Lawrence, owing mainly to the fact that there were no railways or highways to the North Shore. Now that the war was over, steps would soon be taken to rebuild the fleet.