

The development of passenger and freight traffic also followed the Canadian water routes from Quebec and Montreal up the St. Lawrence River to Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, and from York, as Toronto was then called, to the Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, via Lake Simcoe. On these routes, however, an elaborate system of portages was required - the Niagara portage particularly was very slow and expensive - and no improvement in this system took place until canals were built to bypass the rapids and the other obstacles to navigation.

We find that the first attempt to build a canal in Canada was made in the early part of the eighteenth century. The Sulpician Order attempted to construct a shallow canal to by-pass the Lachine Rapids, but due to a lack of funds, the project was never completed. The first successful project was the series of locks and canals built by the Royal Engineers between 1779 and 1783 to provide 2-foot draft navigation between Lake St. Louis and Lake St. Francis.

The advent of the steamship to Canada in the early 1800's brought about a real improvement in transportation on the St. Lawrence and on the lakes, but it was still necessary to resort to various time-consuming expedients to surmount the obstacles on the waterways. Frequently stage coaches and flat-bottom "Durham" boats were used in the portaging operations in conjunction with the steamships.

Only minor canal works were carried on from time to time until 1821 when the building of a 5-foot canal at Lachine was undertaken, and in 1825 when private interests embarked on the building of the Welland Canal to provide eight foot navigation between Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. Since then, Canada has been engaged, almost without interruption, in the extension and development of her system of canals, the main purpose being to provide navigation facilities from Montreal through to the Great Lakes.

And now in 1958, we find ourselves engaged, with the United States, in the construction of one of the greatest engineering feats of the day, the St. Lawrence Seaway, a vital part of the St. Lawrence - Great Lakes waterway which has rightly been described as the world's greatest inland navigation system. This waterway extends more than 2,000 miles from the Atlantic Ocean to the western end of Lake Superior and overcomes a difference of 600 feet in water levels.

When the Seaway is completed and opened for navigation next year, we shall have a waterway in which we can take great pride because the new locks are to have 30 feet of water over the sills and all channels, including even the Welland Canal, will have been dredged to a depth of 27 feet.