

These vessels being owned in Canada, swelled the number of Canadian steamers that passed through the Canal. Thus in 1870 there were issued at Port Colborne, 3275 let passes, from which should be deducted 1012 given to tugs, and 150 to scows and rafts, or 1162; leaving 2113 as the number granted to vessels actually engaged in the trade. In 1871 this system was changed, and a season let-pass was issued to each tug; the whole number of let-passes issued at Port Colborne that year being 2767; of these 105 were for tugs, and 89 for scows and rafts, or 194 to be deducted, leaving 2573 for vessels with cargo.

This shows an increase of 460 eastward bound vessels last year, and an addition to the tonnage as above stated.

The Canal Commissioners in their letter, dated 24th February, 1871, to the Honorable the Secretary of State, appear to have mistaken the tugs used on the Canal for freight vessels passing through it, as on page 36 the following statement is made:—

“It is also equally noteworthy that the American steamers passing through the Welland, though less in number than the Canadian steamers, are of a larger class—in fact, of the largest capacity of the Canal. For instance, the number of American steamers going through in 1870, was only 878, whilst those belonging to Canada amounted to 1199. But the tonnage of the former was, in the aggregate, more than double that of the latter.”

An examination of the records kept at Port Colborne of the down trade for 1871, shows, on the contrary, that the average load carried by American steamers and steam barges through the Canal, was 392 tons, and that of the Canadian steamers was fully 424 tons; whilst the proportion of the Canadian steamers carrying from 400 to 550 tons cargo, far exceeded that of the American steamers.

As no great change took place in these respects in the seasons of 1870 or 1871, it is quite clear that the statement referred to, cannot be accepted as fairly representing the relative tonnage capacity of the Canadian and American vessels engaged in the trade.

It may also be observed, that in making comparisons between the traffic from the West on the Erie Canal with that on the Welland, it is obvious that reference should be had to Buffalo and Port Colborne only; and as the trade on the New York State Canals embraces the whole internal movement of that country, it would be manifestly unfair to contrast it with the downward business done either on the Welland or St. Lawrence Canals.

The largest aggregate movement on the New York State Canals was in 1868, but as already stated, the largest eastward trade from Buffalo, was in 1862, whilst the traffic by way of the Welland Canal continues gradually to increase.

The requirements of trade and its active competition have rendered it imperative, that the cost of transport between the producer and the consumer, should be reduced to the least possible rates, and for the most part a very slight difference in this respect will soon determine the course which business will take.

It is well known that large vessels can carry freight profitably, at less rates than smaller ones, still, although large propellers can go to Buffalo to better advantage than others of less size can go to Oswego, yet, the latter, by being able to continue their course about 170 miles further without breaking bulk, enables the Port of Oswego to compete with that of Buffalo on nearly equal terms, even after a reduction of 50 per cent. has taken place on the tolls of the State Canals.