

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
H O R T O N S T E E L W O R K S , L I M I T E D

In the Water Tower, issued in July 1921, the Chicago Bridge and Iron Company officially announced the change in the name of their Canadian subsidiary from the Canadian Chicago Bridge & Iron Company to the Horton Steel Works, Limited. The name was chosen as a tribute to the late Horace E. Horton, the founder of the Chicago Bridge & Iron Company, the parent company.

The Canadian Company was organized in the early part of 1913 and the plant located and built at Bridgeburg, Ontario, in the fall of the same year.

Previous to the organization of the Canadian Company, considerable work was done in Canada by Mr. George T. Horton whose interest in the Dominion was first aroused when he secured a contract for the erection of a standpipe for the town of Picton, N.S. in 1901. Two years later another contract was secured for a tower and tank at Edmonton, Alberta. A short time later an order was received from the Canadian Pacific Railway for elevated tanks at Montreal and Winnipeg. After this, an increasing amount of business was secured, and the desirability of having a fabricating plant in Canada became apparent.

Mr. George T. Horton took great interest in the development of the Canadian company and personally came to Toronto and set up a small plant on rented property. Here a considerable number of towers and tanks were fabricated and erected under his direction.

In 1912, Mr. M.J. Trees, now executive Vice-President of the Chicago Bridge & Iron Company, came to Canada to assist in the securing of contracts. The railroad business was booming at that time, and he obtained orders for a large number of railway tanks. The Canadian Northern was building extensions, the Canadian Government was building the Transcontinental, and the Grand Trunk Pacific was getting ready to build from Winnipeg to the Pacific.

Orders were secured for a large number of tanks in the fall of 1912, and in January and February of 1913, and it was evident that in order to get them out a larger shop would be required. The tanks were to be erected during the summer of 1913, and this meant that the utmost speed was required to organize a company, decide on a location for the plant, and construct the plant.

The location of the plant was more of a problem than was expected. It was apparent that the plant should be located in the Niagara Peninsula in order to be as close as possible to the source of raw material and to their plant in Eastern United States, which is at Greenville, Pa. in order that the Canadian plant could draw on its stock in emergency. Sites at Welland, Niagara Falls and Thorold were investigated, but no satisfactory site at reasonable cost could be found. Finally the suggestion was made that the possibilities at Bridgeburg should be looked into. Mr. George T. Horton and Mr. R.H. Murray, then General Manager of the Chicago Bridge & Iron Company, who were endeavouring to locate a site, decided to go to Bridgeburg but they went with little hope of success, because

they naturally assumed real estate values there would be much inflated on account of being across the river from Buffalo. But much to their surprise and gratification they found a better site there than they had discovered at any of the other places and at a price which about met their ideas of what was right. This land was level and located so that two railway connections were possible. A deal was closed at once for the purchase of the property.

A plant was built in 1913 adequate to the needs of that time. Mr. C. C. Gregory took charge of the construction of the plant and acted as superintendent until about 1925. The plant more than doubled its size from 1913 to 1921.

The policy of management changed in December 1919. Formerly it had been directed from New York and Chicago. Mr. C.H. Scheman was made General Manager at Montreal where a contracting office was opened. In 1921 Mr. Scheman moved to Bridgeburg and Mr. G.S. Sangdahl was placed in charge of the Montreal Office.

Mr. Ezra Shull was shop foreman from 1913 to 1924 and on C.C. Gregory's departure was made shop superintendent. He left our employ in 1928. Mr. G. Fitch Cady became the superintendent in January of the same year.

In 1922, Mr. L.C. McMurtry joined the organization and later became superintendent of erection succeeding S.C. Wolfe in 1924.

On December 23, 1923, a fire which started from an overheated stove, burned down the Main Shop. Plans had already been made to build a new one, 360' x 90', and accordingly a steel building was erected during the spring of 1924. An additional 360' were added to it in 1928.

Mr. Manock came from Chicago in April 1924 to assume the duties of Manager of Operations in the plant. Shortly after this the company purchased the Des Moines Steel Plant in Chatham, Ontario. C.S. Boyd, S. M. Head, A.P. Blackburn and G.H. Crase formerly employed with Canadian Des Moines Steel Company joined our company. The Horton Steel Works opened a Sales Office in Toronto, with G. H. Crase in charge. A. P. Blackburn took over management of the sales office at Montreal, due to Mr. G. S. Sangdahl being transferred to the Cleveland Sales Office of the Chicago Bridge & Iron Company.

The later years of development have been gradual and steady and the details are quite as familiar to most of you as to the writer. Business from 1925 on became increasingly steady until 1931, when the bottom seemed to drop out of everything. We built two oil tankers, in 1935, "The Bruce Hudson" launched first, and the "Transiter" which came later, evolved methods of ship building in welded construction which later proved to be pioneering examples in the fabrication of welded ships, i.e. welding up sections of the vessel in the shop and transporting them to the shipyard.

In February 1936, Mr. W.R. Manock was made Vice-President and Managing Director, succeeding Mr. C.H. Scheman who went to our New York Sales Office. During this same year F.B. Booz of our Sales Force in Fort Erie moved to Montreal taking over the management of the Montreal Sales Office from A. P. Blackburn. G. H. Crase at this time was made General Sales Manager.