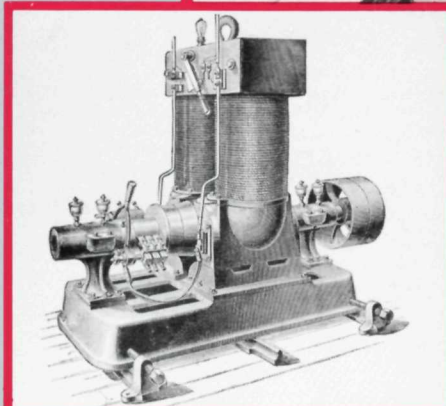

TECHNOLOGY IN TRANSITION: THE 'SOO' SHIP CANAL 1889-1985



Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada

Canadian Parks
Service

Service canadien
des parcs

Robert W. Passfield

The Sault Ste. Marie Ship Canal was built, 1889-1895, in a period of rapid technological transition. It was an age marked by the introduction of new technologies, the adaptation of existing technologies to novel applications, and colossal undertakings that dwarfed earlier attainments in a wide variety of engineering fields. Wood, iron, and stone began to give way to structural steel and concrete, hydro-electric power emerged as a viable alternative to steam and hydraulic power, and a new polyphase a.c. lighting and power technology began to pose a serious challenge to an established d.c. lighting and power technology.

At Sault Ste. Marie, Canadian public works engineers built the world's first electrically powered ship lock, the first North American canal to be totally illuminated with electric lighting, and what was then by far the world's longest lock.

The 'Soo' Ship Canal introduced new technologies into Canadian canal construction and adapted an existing electrical power technology to a novel application. In its design evolution, colossal scale, construction and operation, the Sault Ste. Marie Ship Canal mirrored its age — an age of technology in transition.

Canada
