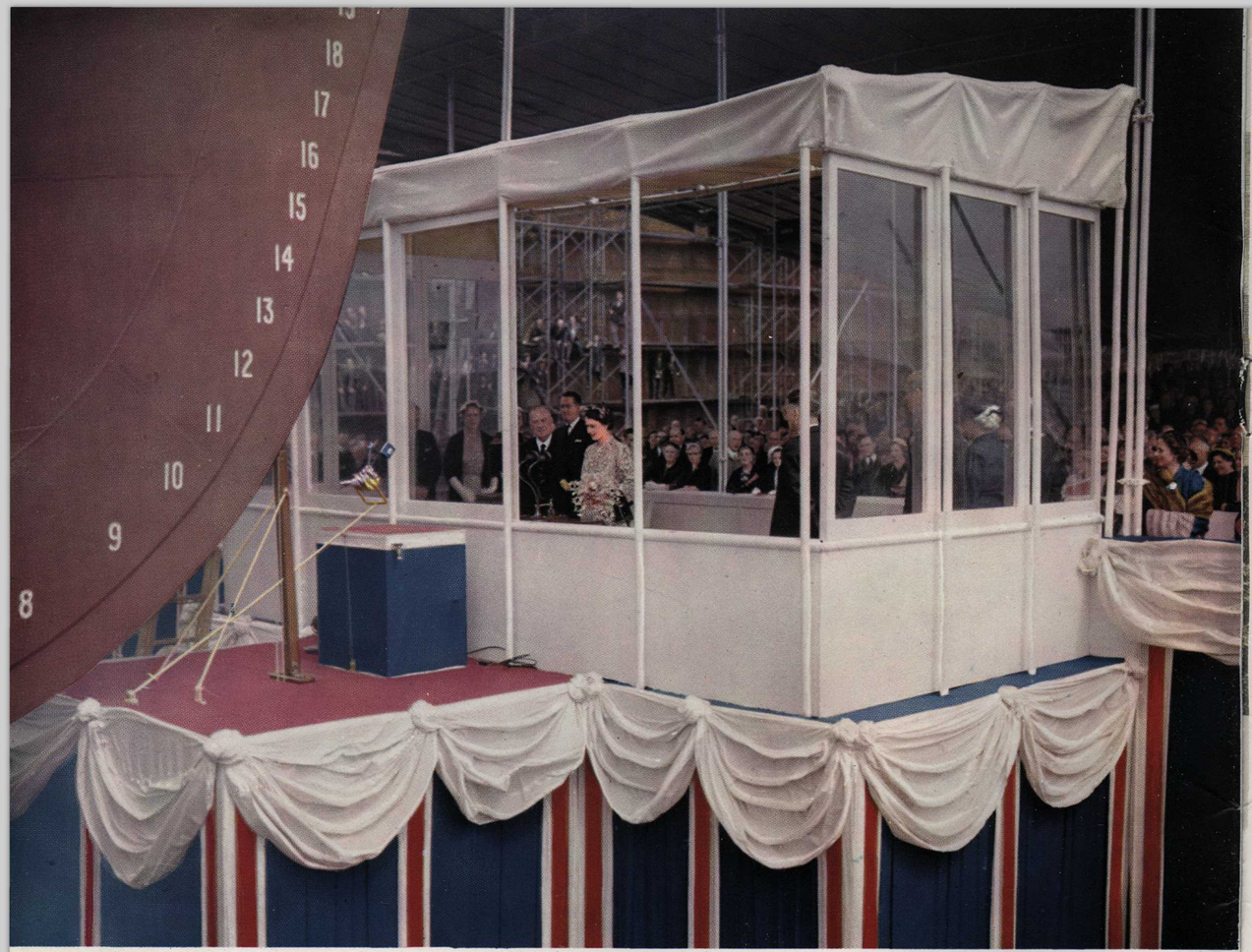
The EMPRESS OF BRITAIN

MURALS



The launching ceremony in June, 1955

The 26,000-ton *Empress of Britain*, newest and most modern of the Great White Empress fleet, was launched by Her Majesty the Queen in June, 1955, and takes her place at the head of a long line of ships that have flown the red and white chequered house flag of the Canadian Pacific since its inception seventy years ago. A gracefully streamlined vessel, she was built by the Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Limited, and replaces a Canadian Pacific flagship of the same name which was launched in 1930 and lost by enemy action in the last war.

In the interior decoration, extensive use is made of laminated plastics, as panelling and as surfacing material for tables and other furnishings. Dining rooms, swimming pool, children's playrooms, passengers' suites, bars, lounges, galleys, crew's quarters—all parts of the ship have a share in the 100,000 square feet of Warerite used. And not only in standard patterns, for

Frontispiece: Gay carnival figures featured in the 1st Class Children's Playroom

C.P. Corporate Archives
Montreal.
June 3, 1983.

The Ringmaster colourful leader of the circus characters in the 1st Class children's Playroom

much of the panelling embodies original murals incorporated in the material during manufacture.

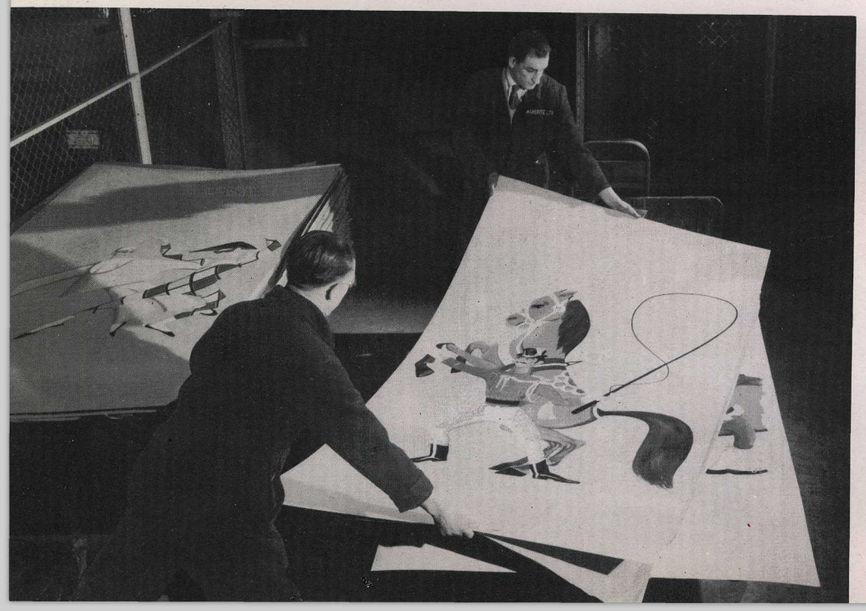
It is with these murals that this booklet is concerned. Only a few of them are shown, but serve, nevertheless, to illustrate the attractive nature of this specialised type of decoration.

The production of these colourful murals began in the London and Birmingham studios of Bakelite Limited with the receipt from the artists concerned of their original paintings and designs. Using specially prepared pigments and a special type of paper which had been thoroughly impregnated with a clear plastics resin, staff artists copied the originals, faithfully reproducing every detail of line and colour. Copying—seen in process in the picture on the right—is necessary for technical reasons, it being impossible to incorporate ordinary paper and artists' colours in a plastics veneer.

The completed copies were next sent to the company's Birmingham works, where each was stacked with a number of backing sheets and treated in giant heated presses — to emerge eventually as strong laminated veneers permanently incorporating the artists' pictorial work.

Artist Sydney Smith at work in the London Studios of Bakelite Limited

The pictorial veneers undergo further processing at the Ware Factory of Bakelite Limited



A Jester and Ballet Dancer add to the gaiety of the 1st Class Children's Playroom

Graceful dancing by a Pierrot and Harlequin depicted in the 1st Class Children's Playroom

From Birmingham, the pictorial veneers went to another factory of Bakelite Limited at Ware, Hertfordshire, for further processing, and from there they were delivered to the contractors for installation in the ship. There, as easy-to-clean, smooth surfaces, the artists' work will be protected from everyday wear and tear, and the effects of sea air, for years to come.

Children love colour, and there is no doubt that they will be delighted to meet the gay circus characters depicted on the walls of the 1st Class playroom. The originals were the work of Miss Jan Bruce and include a ringmaster, clowns, and a host of colourful personalities dear to the hearts of all young people. Some are shown in this booklet.

For the very young, the cupboards surrounding an aquarium will hold definite appeal, as the pictorial panels embody the letters of the alphabet. One of these panels is illustrated later in this

Yet another permanent "resident" of the 1st Class Children's Playroom is this boisterous clown complete with hobby-horse

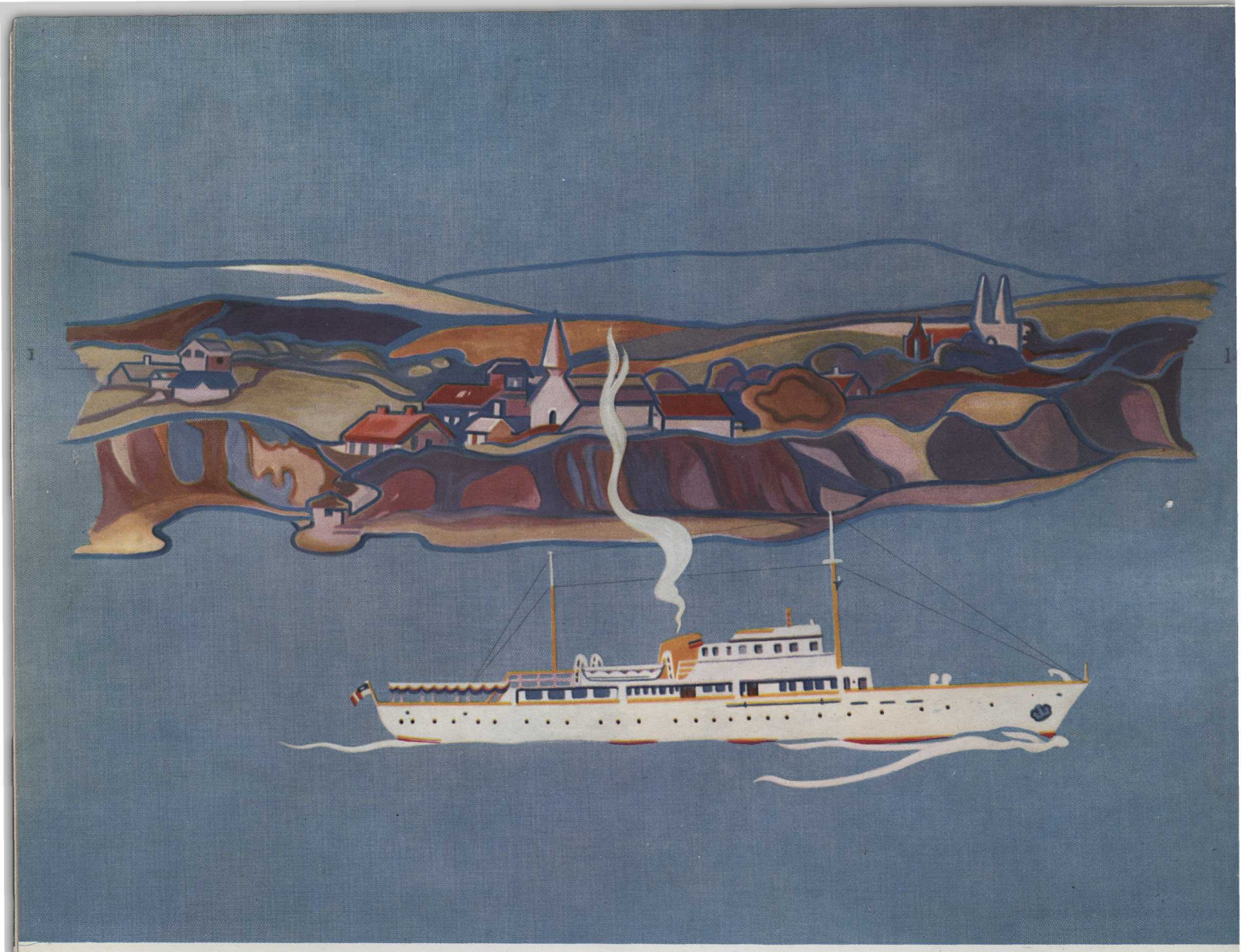
This semi-aerial impression of Ottawa is one of four large murals decorating the walls of the Tourist Dining Room

booklet. Like all plastics veneers, the panels are easily cleaned and no-one will have to worry about the amount of handling to which they will be subjected. This advantage will be particularly noticeable in the case of those panels which form the cupboard doors.

Into another children's room—in this case the Tourist nursery—and one is surrounded by all that is traditional in the story of the Wild West. Pioneers, cowboys, redskins, Mississippi steamboats—these, and more, are there to inspire the imaginations of the children, and create the atmosphere for many a game of 'Cowboys and Indians.' The mural depicting a steamboat on the Mississippi is appropriately positioned in front of a mock-up of a steamboat bridge, complete with wheel; so that, apart from catering for the more warlike elements, the nursery will provide scope for those who fancy themselves as youthful copies of 'Steamboat Bill.'

Eating is a pleasant business, best done in quiet surroundings such as those in the Tourist dining room, where four murals of London, Liverpool, Ottawa and Quebec play a part in the decoration. Designed by R. M. D. Robertson, they are semi-aerial views, subdued in tone and colour, and include all the landmarks familiar to visitors. One of the murals, of Ottawa, is illustrated above.

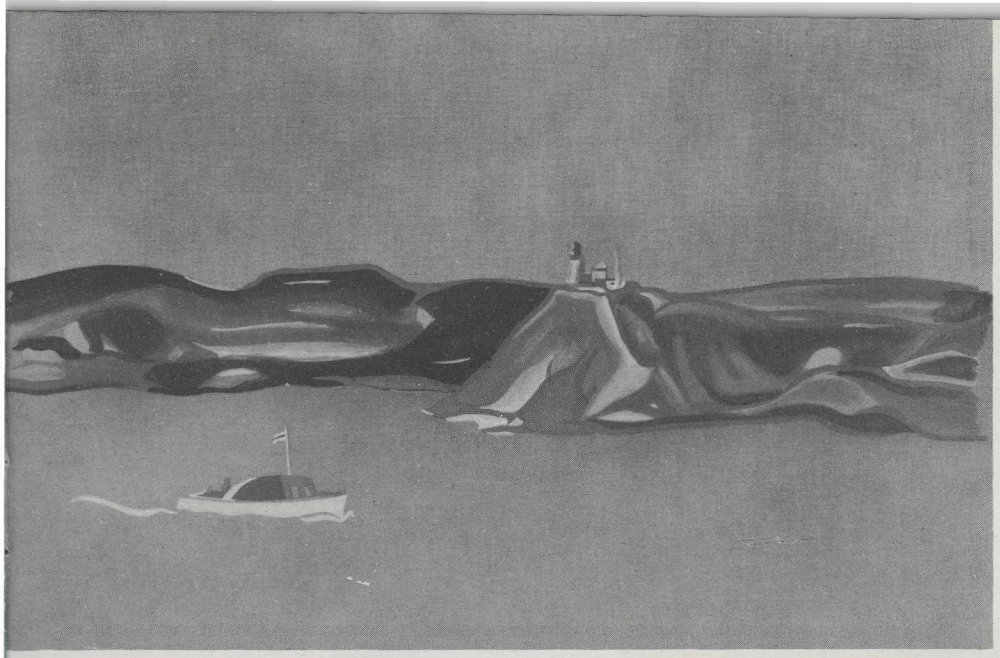
In the same dining room, and contrasting with the four modern murals, are reproductions of eight eighteenth-century engravings depicting the journey from Liverpool across the Atlantic and up the St. Lawrence River to Ottawa from Quebec. Two of the pictures are shown later in the booklet. All were made by incorporating photo-prints of the engravings in the laminated veneers during manufacture, and apart from adding interest to the Atlantic crossing, they bring a touch of old-world dignity to the decoration.

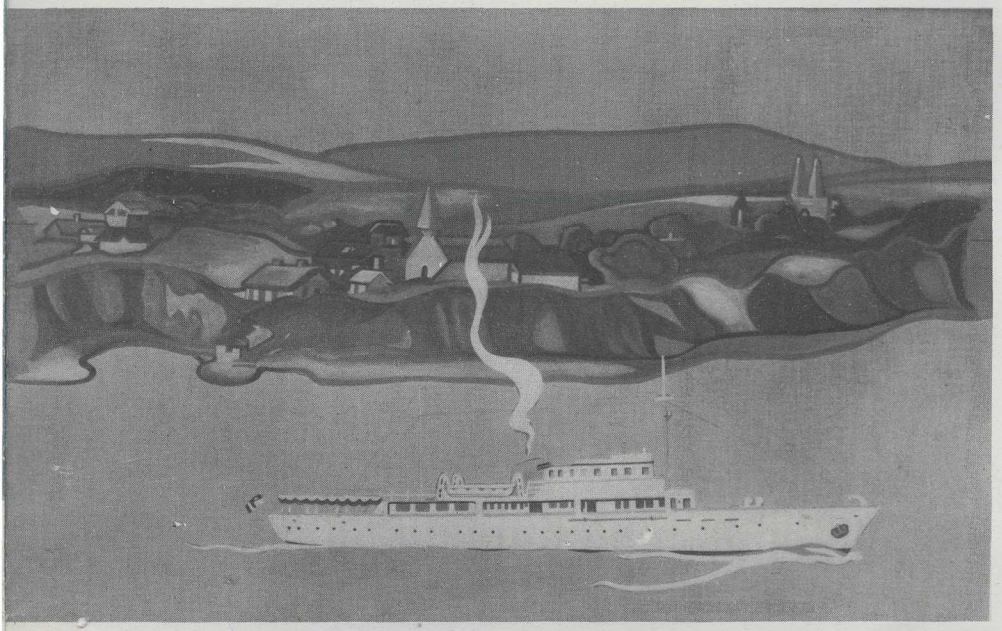


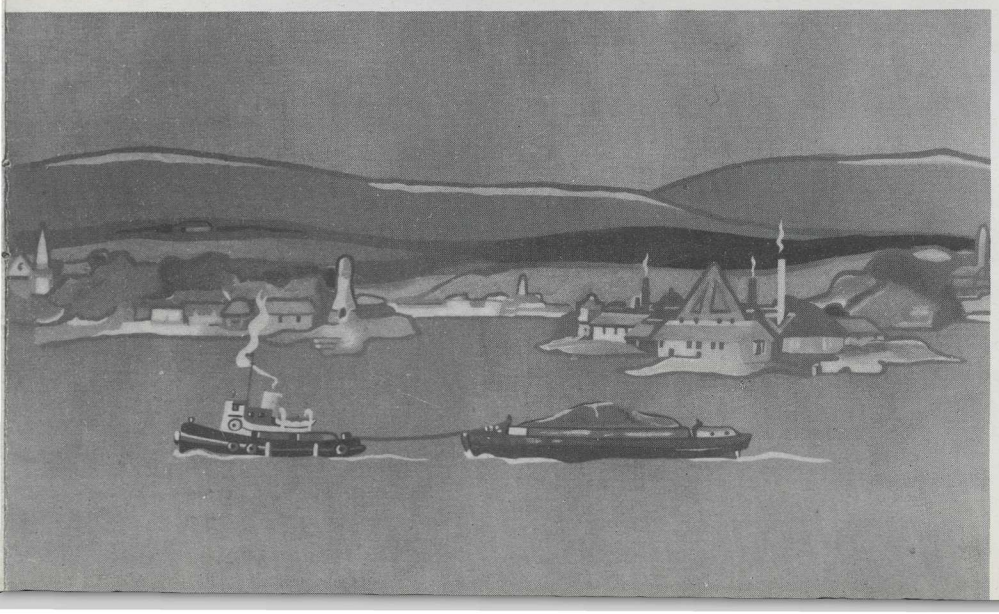
One of the most interesting effects achieved by the use of plastics murals is to be seen in the swimming pool. On either side of the pool stretch the banks and background scenery of parts of the St. Lawrence River, while at the far end of the pool the scene is of open sea and sky, completing the illusion that one is looking out into the Atlantic from the river's mouth. The *Empress of Britain* herself is part of one of the murals, and although the pool water is calmer and warmer than the waters of the St. Lawrence, one might easily imagine oneself to be swimming in the river itself.

The originals of these murals were the work of R. M. D. Robertson, and some idea of their colourful composition can be obtained from the pictures on these pages.

A large map of North America, the Atlantic, Great Britain, and part of Europe covers three walls of the lounge section of the Tourist Cocktail Bar and shows Canadian Pacific shipping, rail and air routes. Also included in the design are the Canadian coat-of-arms and the coats-of-arms of Canadian cities. Part of the map, which was designed by W. W. Lendon and Clement Cooke is reproduced overleaf.

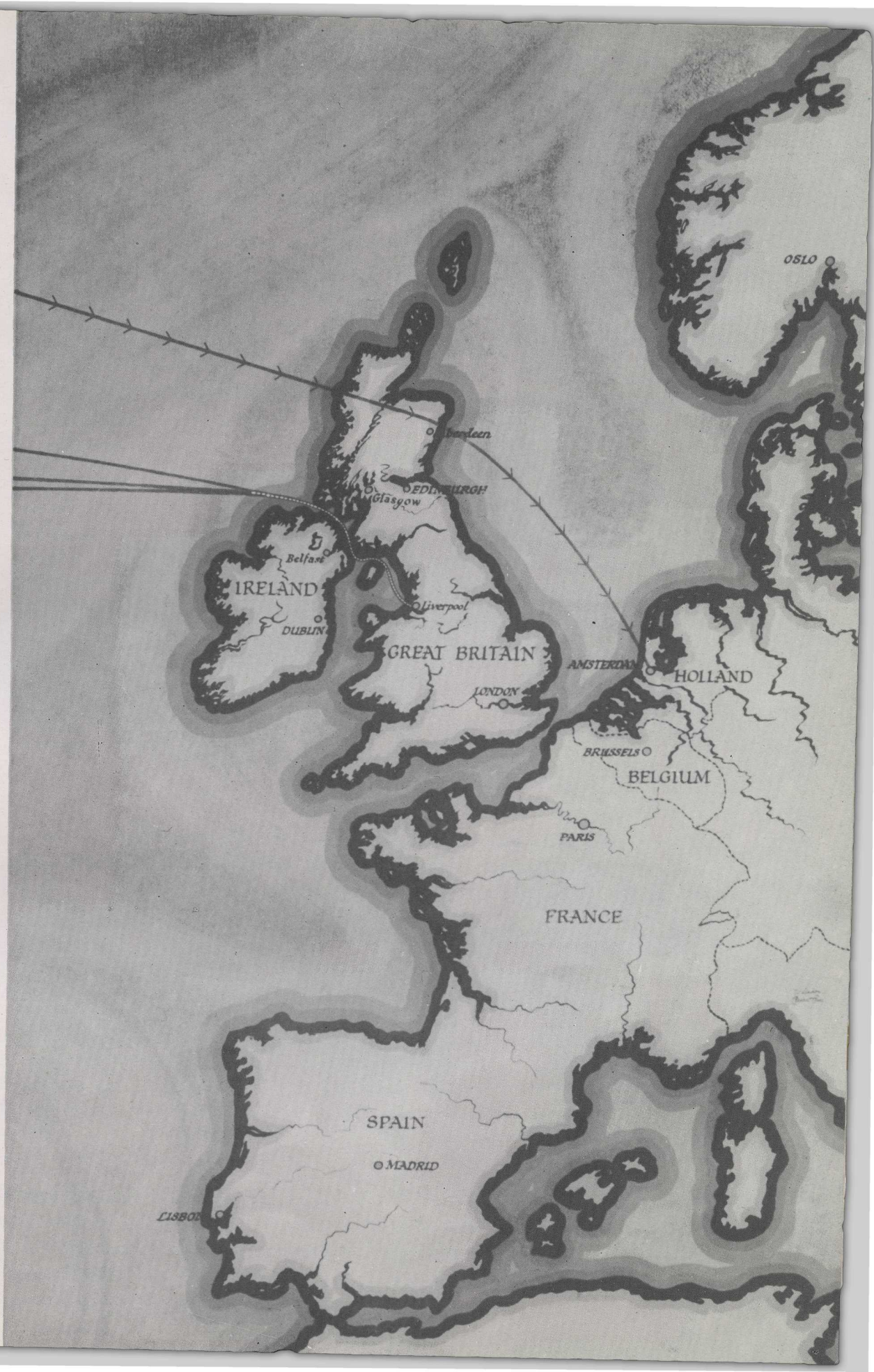






These sections of a large mural, in which the *Empress of Britain* herself is featured, form part of the imaginative decoration of the swimming pool, where both banks of the St. Lawrence River are pictured. Another mural from this set is shown on the opposite page.

Part of the pictorial alphabet decorating a cupboard in the 1st Class Children's Playroom



A section of the colourful map which covers three walls of the Tourist Cocktail Bar

Two of the reproductions of eight eighteenth-century engravings which form part of the decoration of the Tourist Dining Room

The table tops in the bar, also produced in Warerite Plastics, are decorated with designs based on the coats-of-arms shown on the map, and an interesting feature is the use of actual metal foil as part of the designs.

Reeds and water lilies are predominant in the 256 sq. ft. of mural decorating the 1st Class Garden Lounge. The design was by Taylor and Marr Ltd. and is set against a background of Warerite Stardust pattern in grey on ivory. Part of the mural is reproduced on the inside back cover.

The pictures in this booklet cannot, of course, do more than give an impression of the gay and colourful way in which laminated plastics have been used in the *Empress of Britain*. Neither can they hope to show the extent of this usage. In all, 138 pictorial panels were installed, while many square feet of standard Warerite material were used for surfacing ceilings, doors, window linings, dressing tables, bureaux, and other furniture. Even the ship's life-jacket notices and other notices throughout the vessel are incorporated in laminated plastics for permanent protection.

Bakelite Limited, manufacturers of Warerite Plastics, are proud that their materials should have been chosen exclusively for these extensive applications, and to have been associated with the artists concerned in the production of the murals.

Part of the delicately-fashioned mural which enhances the walls of the 1st Class Garden Lounge

Owners . Canadian Pacific Steamships Limited.

Shipbuilders . Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. Ltd.

Architects . A. McInnis Gardner and Partners.

Acknowledgements are made to those responsible for the installation of WARERITE Plastics throughout the *Empress of Britain*.

LOCATION	*INSTALLATION*
Swimming Pool	**Trollope & Sons (London) Ltd.**
Tourist Cocktail Bar Tourist Restaurant	**Waring & Gillow Ltd.**
Tourist Nursery 1st Class Garden Lounge 1st Class Verandah Bar 1st Class Children's Playroom 1st Class Clubroom	**Hampton & Sons Ltd.**
Bathrooms, Showers and Toilets	**A. McEwan & Co. Ltd.** **Hamilton & Forbes Ltd.** **R. Shedden & Co. Ltd.** **Timber Units (Glasgow) Ltd.**
Muster Station Notices Washing Machine & Extractor Notices	**Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd.**
Printed Labels	**Marconi International Marine Communication Co. Ltd.**
Beauty Parlour and Hairdressing Salon	**William Mason & Sons Ltd.**
Special Staterooms	**Bath Cabinet Makers Ltd.**

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