

PIERSON INDEPENDENT

The fall of 1988 was especially stormy on the Great Lakes. The long, hot and very dry summer rapidly gave way to a cold and wet autumn, and the lakes were raked by seemingly endless winds. Ships lost days waiting for the winds to subside sufficiently that the vessels might enter some of the smaller and more exposed ports, such as those along the shores of Lake Huron. It seemed especially appropriate for the autumn of 1988 to be windy, for that season marked the 75th anniversary of the Great Storm of November, 1913. No ships were lost on the lakes as a result of the storms of 1988, but such, unfortunately, was not the case in 1913.

One of the survivors of the Great Storm of 1913 was the steamer J.H. SHEADLE (I). In 1905, the Grand Island Steamship Company, an affiliate of the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, contracted with the Great Lakes Engineering Works, of Ecorse, Michigan, to build a 533-foot (overall) steamer, which was the WILLIAM G. MATHER (I)(25). This vessel proved to be extremely long-lived, later operating as (b) J. H. SHEADLE (II)(55), (c) H. L. GOBEILLE (65), and she is still in operation today as (d) NICOLET for the American Steamship Company. In 1906, with the MATHER operating successfully, the same owners ordered three more steamers from the Great Lakes Engineering Works. They were to be larger than the MATHER, with an overall length of 552 feet, and all would have very long careers. All three of the sister-ships would end their days under the Canadian flag, and the longest lived of the trio would be the steamer which is the subject of our feature, for she served for 73 years on the lakes.

The three new ships were named MICHIGAN, ISHPEMING and J. H. SHEADLE (I), and the latter was the last of the three to enter service. She was launched on Saturday, September 29, 1906. The steamer was 530.0 feet in length (between perpendiculars), 56.2 feet in the beam, and 32.0 feet in depth. Her tonnage was 6924 Gross and 5476 Net. She was powered by a triple expansion engine with cylinders of 23, 37 and 63 inches bore, and a stroke of 42 inches. Steam was provided by two single-ended, coal-fired, Scotch boilers, which measured 15'0" by 12'0". The engine was built for the ship by the Great Lakes Engineering Works and bore the builder's number 335. The boilers were manufactured by the Lake Erie Boiler Works.

The SHEADLE was the yard's Hull 22, and she was completed in time to enter service late in the autumn of 1906. She was enrolled at Marquette, Michigan, and was assigned registry number U.S.293628. She was named in honour of the secretary of the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company. Before going into service, the SHEADLE was painted in the usual Cliffs livery, with a black hull and forecastle, green cabins with red trim, and a black stack with a large red letter 'C'. On the bow in white letters appeared the ship's name, as well as the legend "The Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Co." identifying the owner. After a few years, the wording was changed to "The Cleveland-Cliffs Steamship Co." to reflect a corporate reorganization.

The SHEADLE had a full forecastle, with a closed steel rail for most of its length and an additional small raised section of rail right at the stem. The stem itself was straight and the anchors, carried well below deck level and suspended from hawsepipes, had their flukes tucked back into recessed pockets so that only the bottoms of the anchors normally were visible. On the forecastle head sat the texas cabin (which contained the master's office and accommodation), and immediately forward of the texas was the small, "turret-style" pilothouse with seven large windows in its rounded front. On the monkey's island above the pilothouse was an open bridge, from which most of the navigation was done. A waist-high steel "dodger", a canvas weathercloth and an awning provided the only shelter from the elements for officers on watch. The foremast rose up out of the texas.

An open rail ran down the shelter deck, and a closed steel taffrail was placed around the flush quarterdeck. It protected the after cabin, which was fitted with large windows and a clerestory. The two lifeboats were car-