

"LOST" WHALEBACK FOUND AT LAST!

For a great many shipping observers and marine historians, the famous whaleback steamers and barges designed and built by Alexander McDougall were amongst the most interesting lake vessels ever constructed. Many of today's ship fans never saw a whaleback in operation, but something about the whalebacks' radical and yet peculiarly attractive design has attracted interest for decades and will continue to do so for many years to come.

While a great many photographs were taken of the whalebacks when they were in service, no doubt because of their extremely unusual appearance, some of these ships have proven to be very elusive and, as a result, some of our more avid historians have devoted considerable energy to the task of trying to uncover photographs of them. This is particularly true of some of the whalebacks which led "second lives" on salt water after their lake owners had no more use for them.

For many years, historians have been seeking any photograph of the whaleback barge 201 (U.S.59439) which was one of two such barges built off the Great Lakes. 201 and 202 were constructed by Hendren and Robins at Brooklyn, New York. Barge 201 was launched on April 30, 1890, and was registered at Marquette, Michigan.

As built, the 201 was 182.2 feet in length between perpendiculars (192.0 feet overall), 32.2 feet in the beam, and 16.6 feet in depth, with tonnage of 664.95 Gross and 631.71 Net. She was formally registered to the American Steel Barge Company (Alexander McDougall's firm which built and ran most of the whalebacks) on October 21st, 1890, but she spent her first few years operating entirely on salt water, as also did her almost-exact sistership, the barge 202.

In 1897, barge 201 made her debut on the lakes, along with 202, when both were brought into fresh water so that they could be lengthened at the Superior, Wisconsin, yard of the American Steel Barge Company. 201 was cut apart and her registered length (between perpendiculars) was increased by 61.4 feet to 243.6 feet. Her tonnage was increased to 948 Gross and 871 Net. By this time, her port of registry, which had been changed from Marquette to Duluth, Minnesota, very early in her career, had been changed again, this time to Buffalo, New York. It is interesting to note that, although the Gross and Net Tonnages of 201 and 202 were not identical as the barges were built, they were exactly the same after the lengthening, as confirmed by our copy of the 1899 List of Merchant Vessels of the United States.

After the lengthening, 201 and 202 stayed on the lakes for a decade, both being transferred on March 22, 1900, to the ownership of the Bessemer Steamship Company. On June 10 (June 7 for the 202), 1901, barge 201 was transferred to the Pittsburgh Steamship Company. Early in 1905, both barges were sold to off-lakes owners along with many other whaleback steamers and barges, as the "Steel Trust" fleet no longer had any need of them.

Both 201 and 202 were sold to the Baltimore and Boston Barge Company, the transfer of 202 being recorded on June 7, 1905, while that of 201 was noted on June 30, 1905. On February 24th, 1905, both barges had been recorded as being renamed, 201 becoming (b) CASSIE and 202 being rechristened (b) FANNIE. Both of the barges were returned to salt water, and FANNIE foundered in heavy weather off Barnegat, New Jersey, on January 24, 1908, with the loss of one member of her six-man crew.

CASSIE survived rather longer and, on March 28, 1910, she was transferred to the ownership of the New England Coal and Coke Company. On August 15th, 1917, the ownership of CASSIE was transferred again, this time to the New England Fuel and Transportation Company. She did not serve this new owner for long, however, as CASSIE stranded to a total loss near Sandy Hook, New Jersey, on October 24, 1917. All five of her crew members managed to reach shore safely.