

into open warfare.⁶ The conflict between the longshoremen and the sailors ranges far beyond this narrative, but at its core it left a deep rift at a time when solidarity was needed most.⁷

The Lake Carriers' Association and the New Order

With the expansion of the bulk material trade on the Lakes and the rise of unionizing efforts after the 1860s, vessel owners sought ways to retain control of their fleets. The modern Lake Carrier's Association grew from the April 1892 merger of the Cleveland Vessel Association of 1880 and the original Lake Carriers' formed in 1885. The new entity had a stated purpose to improve navigational aids and sailing rules, to foster communication between owners, and to address labour issues. Though nominally reliant on the work of an executive committee of owners, in practice the large membership of independent-minded owners stymied much of their work. The greatest successes of the association came from its ability to lobby members of Congress for bills and appropriations to aid navigation.⁸

The 1890s depression revealed the financial instability and the extent of overbuilding across a range of industries. Fewer larger firms remained by the end of the decade. In Minnesota's Mesabi Iron Range, the Merritt family found themselves locked in a struggle with John D. Rockefeller for control of their ore empire. The Merritts were among the first to attempt having a dedicated vessel fleet to transport Mesabi and Gogebic Range iron ore, but the sheer scale of their efforts overwhelmed their financial and managerial abilities.⁹ Within this changed environment Rockefeller's principle lieutenants, Frederick Gates and Lamont Montgomery Bowers, created the Bessemer Steamship Company. The ore hauling fleet utilized vast amounts of data regarding fuel consumption, travel time, unloading time, and to introduce improvements to the technology of their vessels. Though captains and owners had long been concerned with expenses, this new data-driven method reflected the shift towards a highly structured transport system coupled to high volume cargoes with relatively small per trip profit based in season-long contracts. Demurrage penalties built into contracts also meant that any delay then ate into the profits pushing captains to maintain schedules, avoid delays, and to move the process along as fast as possible.¹⁰ The expansion of managerial

6 "Attempt to Form a Local Branch of the International Sailor's Union Was Spoiled by Firemen," *Duluth Evening Herald (DEH)*, 31 March 1900.

7 For an extended discussion see Russell, *Men Along the Shore*, and Hyman Weintraub, *Andrew Furuseth, Emancipator of the Seamen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

8 George J. Ryan, *Lake Carriers' Association History* (Bloomington, Indiana: Xlibris LLC, 2017), 15–17.

9 Paul De Kruif, *Seven Iron Men* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1934); C. Roger Pellett, *Whaleback Ships and the American Steel Barge Company* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018), 103–117; David Allan Walker, *Iron Frontier: The Discovery and Early Development of Minnesota's Three Ranges* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979), 174–178.

10 Vessel charter for Barge 115 between American Steel Barge Company and John D. Rockefeller, 15 September 1893, Rockefeller Archive Center, Sleepy Hollow, New York, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller, RG2, Series C, Business Interests, FA312, Box 52, Folder 439; Frederick