

road. The name chosen for the steamer honoured The Pillsbury Company, the well-known flour-milling firm, which was also a major client of the Soo Line. The ship was intended to carry, amongst other goods, bagged Pillsbury flour. Both PILLSBURY and WASHBURN were built to service a route between Gladstone, Michigan, and Buffalo, New York. (Gladstone Harbor is located near Escanaba, but today is not used by commercial shipping.)

It is interesting to note that, although PILLSBURY's hull was laid down nineteen days after her sister WASHBURN, she actually cleared the shipyard on her maiden voyage one day earlier. However, the ships were built side-by-side and were launched together in one big ceremony on the same day, June 25, 1892. The ceremonies were attended by a multitude of invited dignitaries, including many guests representing the Soo Line Railroad.

PILLSBURY was 320.0 feet in length, 42.0 feet in the beam, and 25.0 feet in depth, with tonnage registered as 2234.49 Gross and 1571.65 Net. She was powered by a big triple-expansion engine with cylinders of 23, 37 and 62 inches diameter and a stroke of 42 inches, which produced Indicated Horsepower of 1,400 at 78 revolutions per minute. The engine was built for the steamer by S. F. Hodge & Company, of Detroit. Steam at 160 p.s.i. was produced by three single-ended Scotch boilers, which were coal-fired and were built for the ship by the Lake Erie Boiler Works at Buffalo. Some sources indicate that the boilers each measured 11'4" diameter by 13'1" length; the 1899 "Great Lakes Register", on the other hand, shows the boilers as measuring 11'6" by 13'0", with a total of six furnaces, having a grate surface of 132 square feet and a heating surface of 5,379 square feet.

PILLSBURY was a typical whaleback steamer in her outward appearance, except for some minor changes associated with her different ownership and her design for the package freight trade. She had a normal whaleback hull, with flush decks and a turret at the bow which contained, amongst other things, the access downward into the deck crew's accommodation in the hull forward. As usual with a whaleback, the anchors (one of them of the "mushroom" type) were carried on deck astride the turret, with the chains leading up from below through the turret and then out through an interesting three-ring fairlead arrangement at the tip of the vessel's bow. The pole foremast was stepped immediately abaft the forward turret.

The deck was completely open, with a movable open rail around it for safety purposes. There were eight large, flush hatches on 24-foot centres, which gave access from above into the ship's single cargo hold. (One of the failings of the whaleback design was that the cargo hold was one large area, without the protection of watertight bulkheads, and this feature contributed to the loss of many of the vessels, particularly those that were involved in collisions.) Because PILLSBURY was intended for both the bulk and package freight trades, she was equipped with a 'tween deck in her hold, and access to it was given by means of four large cargo ports in each side of the hull. Davits were placed in pairs down the deck, one on each side over each port, to assist with the opening of the big curved doors. Wooden hatches in the 'tween deck allowed for the loading and unloading of bulk cargoes which were carried in the lower hold area.

Aft, there were three large spar deck turrets, which supported the after cabins. At the forward end of the upper deck aft was located the pilothouse, which in typical whaleback fashion had its forward corners cut off at an angle of about 45 degrees. The after mast, really nothing more than a post to carry the riding lights, rose from the pilothouse roof which also served as an open navigation bridge. The pilothouse itself was raised about half a deck level above the rest of the upper cabin for improved visibility. The relatively short and heavy stack, with whistle set at its front and a steam 'scape pipe behind, was located just behind the pilothouse, and the lifeboats were carried aft on the hurricane deck. A tall jackstaff carried the colours at the after end of the main cabin. Light was admitted to the interior of the cabin by a number of rather large windows.