

the demolishing of the sunken steamer's superstructure, and the moving of the hull the amazing distance of between four and five miles from the spot where she sank!

As soon as the hull was located on April 24th, 1918, in a position with only seven feet of water over the deck, salvage operations were begun. Had it not been wartime, it is unlikely that salvage would have been considered, but the steel industry was vital to the war effort, and every available vessel was needed to carry iron ore. The first three attempts to raise the CORT failed. The fourth attempt proved successful, however, and the hull was refloated on September 22, 1918. It was towed to a position near Bar Point, on the Canadian side of the mouth of the Detroit River, where temporary patching of the hull was accomplished. On September 25th, HENRY CORT was towed over to the yard of the Toledo Shipbuilding Company, where permanent hull repairs were put in hand. That work finished, the CORT was towed on October 17, 1918, to Conneaut, Ohio, where the Pittsburgh and Conneaut Dock Company (an affiliate of United States Steel) undertook the complete reconstruction of the steamer's superstructure.

When HENRY CORT returned to service in 1919, she sported a much altered appearance. A trunk approximately three feet high was built the full length of the deck, from the tip of the bow to the stern, and into it were built eight new standard-type hatches. Alterations to the hull included the fitting of four watertight bulkheads.

A much larger "turret" (no longer rounded) was built near the bow, with the foremast stepped at the after end of the turret. An entire new triple-deck cabin structure was erected aft, with all of the turrets there removed. The crew accommodations were contained in the lower two decks of this house, while an entirely new steel pilothouse was placed on the boat deck. Immediately behind the pilothouse was placed a new mainmast, and on each side of it rose a very large and prominent ventilator cowl. Just abaft the ventilators was the new stack, relatively short and not very thick. The coal bunker hatch was located just forward of the cabin on the second deck of the new structure.

This rebuilding of the CORT gave her an appearance unique amongst the lake whalebacks, in that the deck trunk vastly altered the shape of her upper hull and the new cabins gave her a much more substantial profile. When the steamer went back into service, her dimensions were registered as 315.9 x 42.3 x 24.2, 2394 Gross and 1465 Net. There were no changes to the machinery, although it undoubtedly required considerable refurbishing after being submerged for the better part of a year in muddy Lake Erie. The entire reconstruction appears to have been successful, and the CORT operated, apparently without incident, for most of another decade.

The Pittsburgh Steamship Company frequently used HENRY CORT and JAMES B. NEILSON as icebreakers. Their hull shape made them well suited for that service in that, with their spoon-shaped bows, they were able to ride right up on top of heavy ice formations, with the weight of the hull then smashing downward to break apart the ice. In the spring of 1927, while she was breaking ice in western Lake Erie, HENRY CORT stranded on Colchester Reef, not far from the site of her sinking a decade earlier. The CORT was seriously damaged in the grounding, and she was abandoned where she lay to the underwriters as a constructive total loss.

Salvage operations were begun without delay and proved to be successful. On June 8, 1927, the underwriters sold the ship to the Lake Ports Shipping and Navigation Company, of Detroit, which was an enterprise of Andrew H. Green, Jr. The steamer was repaired and refitted at the Lorain yard of the American Shipbuilding Company, and she was re-registered at Detroit. She re-entered service on June 29, 1927, looking not much different than she had before the stranding, with the exception of the fact that two deck cranes had been installed in order to enable the CORT to engage in the scrap trade. Her hull was painted red, her cabins were white, and her stack was all black.