

Both stack and mainmast were heavily raked, in proportion with the foremast, and were surrounded by a number of prominent ventilator cowls. The two lifeboats were set atop the aft cabin. The boilerhouse, at the forward end of the aft cabin, had indented sides (another similarity with the Mitchell boats) and there was no rail around the bunker hatch set in its top.

For many of the years during which Cummings owned WESTERN STAR, the steamer was operated for him by D. Sullivan and Company, of Chicago. It was during this period that, on November 28, 1905, WESTERN STAR encountered very severe weather conditions on Lake Superior whilst she was upbound for Fort William, Ontario. (The late autumn of 1905 brought to the lakes some of the worst weather ever encountered on our inland seas, perhaps second only to the conditions which occurred in November of 1913.) WESTERN STAR was driven some 125 miles off her course, and was cast on the beach at Fourteen Mile Point, near Ontonagon, Michigan. The vessel remained ashore until she was pulled back into deep water on December 1st, 1905, by the canal-sized freighter VIKING.

On October 11, 1912, WESTERN STAR was sold by the Cummings Estate to Emory L. Ford, of Detroit, Michigan, who transferred her to the ownership of his Cadillac Steamship Company, Detroit. She was placed under the management of Herbert K. Oakes and his Franklin Steamship Company. By this time, the steamer had been given a new upper pilothouse (very similar in shape to the lower cabin), and she was now painted up in the Franklin livery. Her hull was black, while her forecastle and cabins were white. Her foremast was buff and the main was black. The stack was black with a silver shield, on which was carried a large, black letter 'F'.

On the morning of Friday, September 24, 1915, WESTERN STAR was en route from Toledo, Ohio, with a cargo of 7,000 tons of coal for Little Current, Ontario. Groping her way through the morning mist of the North Channel of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, WESTERN STAR stranded on the infamous Robertson's Rock, located near Clapperton Island. The steamer quickly filled and sank at an acute angle, her bow in only twelve feet of water but her stern covered by ninety feet of water. The crew managed to reach shore safely in the steamer's lifeboats, and there was no loss of life.

The owners of WESTERN STAR abandoned the steamer to the underwriters, who then signed a "no cure - no pay" salvage contract with the Great Lakes Towing Company, of Cleveland, Ohio. The Towing Company sent a full salvage team to the scene, led by the famous wrecking tug FAVORITE (II). An enormous cofferdam was built over the after end of the steamer, but this first salvage effort failed when the cofferdam collapsed during the pumping operations.

WESTERN STAR was left on Robertson's Rock for the winter, as the onset of inclement weather conditions made continuation of the salvage work impossible. On June 17, 1916, FAVORITE returned to the wreck scene with the lightering barge T. F. NEWMAN and other tugs and salvage equipment. During the summer months, a second cofferdam, of more sturdy construction, was built around the stern of WESTERN STAR, but before pumping efforts could begin, bad weather developed and the cofferdam was upset. Once more, work was discontinued and WESTERN STAR spent her second winter on Robertson's Rock.

The Great Lakes Towing Company still believed that WESTERN STAR could be salvaged, and the company's equipment was brought back to the wreck site in the spring of 1917. The salvors then constructed what to this day is believed to have been the largest salvage cofferdam ever built, employing 73 tons of steel strut rods, 430,000 feet of timber and 220,000 square yards of canvas.

Pumping was begun and, on Tuesday, September 18, 1917, almost two years after the accident which sent her to the bottom, the stern of WESTERN STAR was brought to the surface. The G-tugs took WESTERN STAR in tow and moved her to Ecorse, Michigan, to be inspected at the yard of the Great Lakes