

departed Detroit on Sunday, June 21, 1942, bound for Duluth to load iron ore for Conneaut, Ohio.

Following in quick succession after the FRASER, the Great Lakes Engineering Works launched its Hulls 288 and 289, ENDERS M. VOORHEES (U.S.242023) and A. H. FERBERT (U.S.242024), on April 11th and May 22nd, 1942, respectively. Meanwhile, over at AmShip at Lorain, the yard's Hulls 824 and 825, BENJAMIN F. FAIRLESS (U.S.242260) and IRVING S. OLDS (U.S.242261) were launched into the Black River on April 25th and May 22nd, respectively. That A. H. FERBERT and IRVING S. OLDS were launched on the same day was no coincidence, for that day had been declared National Maritime Day, and the two launchings were staged simultaneously for the encouragement of the war effort. It must be remembered that, when these vessels were designed, the United States was not directly involved in World War Two, but that the events at Pearl Harbor had intervened and the country was an active participant by the time the five ships were launched and christened.

Our quotation from the "Detroit Free Press" identified Leon Fraser, the man for whom the first of the vessels was named, so perhaps we should mention the origin of the names of the other ships in the class. Enders McClumpha Voorhees came to U.S. Steel in 1937 as its vice-chairman, finance, and was chairman of its finance and executive committees from 1938 until his retirement in 1956. Ferbert, of course, was president of the Pittsburgh Steamship Company at the time of the construction of the new vessels. Benjamin F. Fairless (in whose honour the east coast Fairless Works was named) became president of the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation (a U.S. Steel affiliate) in 1935, and in 1937 was named a director of U.S. Steel and its president. He became chairman of the board in 1952 and retired in 1955. Irving S. Olds became a member of the U.S. Steel finance committee in 1936, was the corporation's special counsel from 1938 through 1940, and he served as chairman of the board from 1940 until he retired in 1952. Messrs Ferbert and Olds, in particular, were longtime associates of J. Pierpont Morgan, Jr., son of one of the principal founders of the United States Steel Corporation and its leader for many years after the death of his famous father.

The five new "tinstackers" performed admirably during the war, hauling their tonnage commitments without major downtime, except for the deck cracking difficulties noted earlier. Their normal trade route during the war was the carriage of iron ore from either Duluth or Two Harbors to the steel mills at Gary, South Chicago, Lorain or Conneaut. Occasionally they would back-load stone for the mills, and sometimes coal for the steam locomotives of the Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range Railway, which hauled the ore from the mines to the loading docks at the lakehead.

The FRASER, VOORHEES, FERBERT, FAIRLESS and OLDS were so much in advance of any other vessels in the U.S. Steel (or any other) fleet that they commonly were called the "Super-Dupers", a name which bore tribute to their superiority in the ore trade. As time went on, this nickname was shortened a bit, and it became commonplace to refer to them as the "Supers". In official company parlance, they were called the "AA" Class. In the same manner, the CLARKE sisterships were referred to as the "AAA" Class, while anything older or smaller than the "Supers" was simply "A" Class.

By the 1950s, the five sistership steamers were hauling in excess of 2.45 million gross tons of iron ore annually, but there was less coal for the Iron Range as steam locomotives gave way to diesel on the railroad. As the Korean War strained cargo capacities once again, four new ships joined the U.S. Steel fleet, the PHILIP R. CLARKE, CASON J. CALLAWAY and ARTHUR M. ANDERSON of the straight-deck "Triple-A" Class, built at Ecorse and Lorain, and the self-unloader JOHN G. MUNSON (II), which was built the same year (1952) at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, for the Bradley Transportation division of the U.S. Steel operations.