

even that is a very poor dockside view of her which makes her look even more homely than she really was.

The history of NATIRONCO can be traced back to 1892, when she was built as PIONEER (I). A steel-hulled steamer, she was constructed at Wyandotte, Michigan, as Hull 107 of the Detroit Dry Dock Company. She was 241 feet in overall length, 226.5 feet between perpendiculars, while her beam was 35.2 feet and her depth was 14.2 feet. Her tonnage was calculated as 1123.63 Gross and 774.82 Net. Her single screw was driven by a triple expansion engine of 1,155 Indicated Horsepower, which had cylinders of 22, 33 and 54 inches diameter, and a stroke of 42 inches. Steam was provided by two coal-fired Scotch boilers which measured 12'0" by 11'6". The machinery was all built for the vessel by the Dry Dock Engine Works, the shipbuilder's own engineering affiliate, and PIONEER's engine bore its builder's number 169.

PIONEER was enrolled at Marquette, Michigan, under U.S. Official Number 150589. Originally she was owned by the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, Cleveland, of which Jasper H. Sheadle was manager, but as this company's shipping operations expanded, she was transferred to the affiliated Grand Island Steamship Company. PIONEER could often be seen towing a barge which was considerably larger than the steamer herself.

A brief history of the Cleveland-Cliffs organization might be of interest to the readers. The original company, known as the Cleveland Iron Mining Company, was established in 1849 and was incorporated in April of 1850. It pursued the mining of iron ore in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and in 1869 became involved in vessel operations when it acquired a half-interest in the sailing ship GEORGE SHERMAN. In 1872, M. A. and H. M. Hanna, who were stockholders in the mining company, formed the Cleveland Transportation Company for the purpose of hauling iron ore for the Cleveland Iron Mining Company.

The Cleveland Transportation Company was commonly known on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes as "The Black Line", because its freight vessels were the first on the lakes to have black hulls. The company, however, suspended operations in 1889, and its ships were all sold.

In 1890, the Cleveland Iron Mining Company merged with the Iron Cliffs Company, of Marquette, and the new corporation was known as the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company. Over the years, this firm had at least sixteen lake shipping affiliates which either were direct subsidiaries owning vessels, or were firms from which "Cliffs" chartered ships; the best known of the subsidiaries was the Cleveland-Cliffs Steamship Company. Although the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company remains in existence today, the last of its vessel operations were suspended in 1981, the year after the company lost its ore-float contract with the Republic Steel Corporation.

How did PIONEER come by her name? She was one of the first steamers built new for the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company after its incorporation, and she also was one of the first few lake vessels to be built with a steel hull. Those two things qualified her as a "pioneer" on the shipping scene, but in addition, she may well have been the first craneship (as we know the term) on the lakes. She carried three small cranes on her deck for the handling of pig iron and steel products, and in this respect she resembled CADILLAC (I), a steamer of similar dimensions but entirely different appearance, which was built for the Cliffs fleet that same year (1892) by the Chicago Shipbuilding Company.

There is, however, another probable derivation for the name PIONEER. In its early years, the Cliffs organization named some of its ships for the sites of its iron mining and other operations. The Pioneer Furnace Company had built the first blast furnaces in Michigan's Upper Peninsula back in 1857, and this firm was acquired by the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company not long before the construction of the steamer PIONEER. It seems likely that the ship's name was intended to honour this new Cliffs acquisition.