

GRAND ISLAND

In many of our recent issues, we have featured vessels that ran on the Great Lakes a very long time ago indeed, many of these being small, wooden-hulled passenger steamers. While we derive a great deal of pleasure from studying the often-elusive history of such long-gone ships, we realize that our readers have widely varying interests, and that many of you are more interested in rather more modern vessels, especially ones that you recall having seen yourselves when they were operating.

In fact, several of you specifically have requested that we feature in this issue one of the upper lake freighters that was scrapped during the purge of U.S. and Canadian fleets that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, and we are more than happy to comply with this request. We were somewhat at a loss to decide which steamer we should feature, and our final decision was purely an arbitrary one, with no particular reason for it. We hope that readers will enjoy our story of the steamer GRAND ISLAND, one of the earlier victims of the spate of overseas scrappings that followed the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The GRAND ISLAND began her life when she was laid down in 1905 as Hull 106 of the Craig Shipbuilding Company at Toledo, Ohio. The construction of the steamer was well underway when, during November of 1905, the Craig shipyard was reorganized as the Toledo Shipbuilding Company. Work on the new freighter was not interrupted, however, and she was launched into the waters of the Maumee River on Thursday, January 18th, 1906. She was christened EUGENE ZIMMERMAN.

The new steamer was 488.6 feet in length, 52.0 feet in the beam and 31.0 feet in depth, and her tonnage was recorded as 5630 Gross and 4772 Net. She was powered by a big quadruple expansion engine which had cylinders of 18, 26, 36 and 55½ inches diameter and a stroke of 40 inches. Steam at 225 p.s.i. was generated by two single-ended, coal-fired, Scotch boilers which measured 12'6" by 11'9". The engine was built for the ZIMMERMAN by the shipyard, while the boilers were manufactured by the Marine Boiler Works, of Toledo.

In due course of time, the steamer was completed, and she was enrolled under U.S. official number 202711. Her original port of registry was Rosford, Ohio, although this later was changed to Toledo. EUGENE ZIMMERMAN had been built to the order of L. S. Sullivan and Associates, of Toledo, and she was operated by the Toledo Steamship Company, which was managed by John Craig, also of Toledo. She was painted up in the colours normally used by the Craig fleet, with a black hull, white forecastle and cabins, and a black stack with a very wide white band on which appeared a large black ball. The foremast was buff, while the main was black.

EUGENE ZIMMERMAN was typical of most of the upper lakes bulk freight steamers that were built in the years immediately following the turn of the century. She had a straight stem and a counter stern, and her hull was given a pleasing, although not exaggerated, sheer. She carried her anchors suspended from hawseholes on either side of the bow, close to the stem and just above the loaded mid-summer waterline.

The ship was given a half-raised forecastle, and her small, rounded pilot-house sat on the forecastle head, in front of a small texas cabin that contained the master's office and sleeping quarters. There were five big, sectioned windows in the pilothouse front, with a very prominent steel sunvisor over the windows. An open navigation bridge was situated on the monkey's island atop the pilothouse, with a high steel "dodger" to protect the navigation officers from wind and spray. A canvas awning was hoisted over the open bridge when the weather was hot and sunny. The very tall and well-raked pole foremast rose up out of the texas, immediately abaft the pilothouse.