

contract, of ore bound for the steel mills operated by Andrew Carnegie. The Bessemer Steamship Company generally did not buy used tonnage but rather had a large fleet of modern steamers and barges built for the trade in a very short period of time. They were extremely well-built vessels, and many of them were to enjoy very long lives.

The consort barges were built by various shipyards, but one yard that produced a substantial number of them (five for the Bessemer fleet alone) was that of F. W. Wheeler & Company at West Bay City, Michigan. Two of Wheeler's barges were built as the yard's Hulls 117 and 118, which were launched on Thursday, August 27th and Wednesday, October 7th, 1896, respectively. Hull 117 was christened JAMES NASMYTH and was enrolled at Duluth under U.S. official number 77231. Hull 118 was given the name SIR ISAAC LOTHIAN BELL and she also was registered at Duluth, but with official number 116741. As was his custom, Rockefeller named both vessels for inventors.

The NASMYTH and the BELL were virtual hull sisters, as shown by their dimensions as listed in the 1897 register of U.S. shipping. The BELL was shown as being 365.5 feet in length, 45.8 feet in the beam and 23.0 feet in depth. The NASMYTH's hull was exactly the same size except that her depth was shown as 23.2 feet. Tonnage for the BELL was reported as 3418.98 Gross and 3158.63 Net, while that of the NASMYTH was shown as 3422.64 Gross and 3162.29 Net. Each hull had two watertight bulkheads, three cargo compartments and 12 hatches set on 24-foot centres.

Each barge had a straight stem, a counter stern, and a pleasant sheer to her hull. There was a half-topgallant forecastle with a small, low cabin on the forecastle head which enclosed the towing winch, the towline coming on board via a large fairlead set right at the stem. There was an open pipe rail around the forecastle head and another around the open deck atop the forward house. A post-and-wire rail ran down the sides of the spar deck, and a closed steel bulwark ran around the after end. On the flush quarterdeck was placed a relatively small accommodations cabin, atop which was placed the small and squarish wheelhouse, which had three windows in its front and a window and door in each side. A tall and very thin smokestack arose just behind the wheelhouse. Only one lifeboat was carried, that being on the port side of the upper deck aft, and it was worked with radial steel davits. As originally built, each barge was fitted with two tall and heavy masts, one set just abaft the break of the forecastle, and the other about two-thirds of the way down the spar deck.

SIR ISAAC LOTHIAN BELL and JAMES NASMYTH were painted up in the usual Bessemer Steamship Company colours. They had ore-red hulls, white cabins and black stacks with the letter 'B' in white. The 'B', of course, on such little smokestacks, was much less visible than on the tall and heavy funnels sported by the steamers that towed these barges. It would appear that the BELL quite frequently was towed by the steamer SIR HENRY BESSEMER of 1896, while the NASMYTH frequently was consort to the MARIPOSA of 1892, although steamer/barge pairings seldom were "permanent".

The BELL and the NASMYTH appear to have operated successfully for Bessemer, and we have no reports of anything untoward happening to either of them whilst under Bessemer ownership. But they were not to run for more than four full seasons before there occurred the greatest upheaval ever seen in U.S. lake shipping. We have on several occasions in this publication described the events leading up to the formation, on February 25, 1901, by J. Pierpont Morgan and Elbert H. Gary, of the United States Steel Corporation and its lake shipping arm, the Pittsburgh Steamship Company. We will not go through the entire sequence of events again at this time, but it will suffice to say that, early in 1901, the Pittsburgh Steamship Company acquired the vessels of a number of other operators. On May 17, 1901, it acquired the entire fleet of the Bessemer Steamship Company, including a large number of whale-back steamers and barges which Bessemer had acquired from the American Steel