

Barge Company.

Thus it was that JAMES NASMYTH and SIR ISAAC LOTHIAN BELL came to be part of the largest single fleet of vessels ever to operate on the lakes under the United States flag. The new company gave them very distinctive and pretty colours, painting their hulls dark green, their cabins a straw yellow, and their stacks all silver. The crews, however, had a great deal of difficulty keeping the ships clean when they were painted this way and so, after just a few years, the Pittsburgh Steamship Company began to give each of its vessels a black smoke band at the top of the funnel. In addition, after 1905, the hulls became ore red while the cabins were painted white with dark green trim. The BELL and NASMYTH would carry these colours for as long as they would remain with the fleet and, in fact, almost the same colours are worn today by the ships operated by the fleet that is successor to the "Steel Trust" operation.

As far as we know, the BELL was involved in only one major incident during her "tinstack" years, while the NASMYTH had two, both of them in the same year. There was heavy ice on Lake Superior in the spring of 1905 and, beset in the ice, JAMES NASMYTH managed to strike her towing steamer WILLIAM R. LINN (40), (b) L. S. WESCOAT [U.S.81597].

In the second of her 1905 mishaps, the NASMYTH came out of the incident unscathed, while her towing steamer suffered greatly. This event occurred during the autumn of 1905, when the lakes were wracked by a series of storms that caused far more vessel damage and loss than did the Great Storm of 1913. The fleet that suffered the greatest losses during this autumn was that of the Pittsburgh Steamship Company, many of whose steamers and barges came to grief on Lake Superior during late November. Loaded with iron ore, JAMES NASMYTH cleared Duluth at 3:30 p.m. on Monday, November 27th in tow of the 450-foot, 1899-built steamer MATAAFA, (a) PENNSYLVANIA (00) [U.S.150810], which Pittsburgh Steamship acquired in 1902 as part of the fleet of the Minnesota Steamship Company.

Four hours later, when off Two Harbors, the steamer and barge were hit by the worst storm ever to occur on western Lake Superior, and after the tow made almost no headway in some ten hours, the decision was made to return to Duluth. Realizing that it would be impossible for both vessels of the tow to make it through the Duluth entry in the formidable weather conditions, the master of MATAAFA put the barge to anchor early in the afternoon of November 28th, and the NASMYTH rode out the storm in safety, although she took quite a tossing. However MATAAFA, trying to make the pierheads on her own, failed to do so. She was wrecked within 600 feet of shore, and nine of her crew members were lost.

The "Duluth Evening Herald" of Friday, November 16, 1906, reported: "Big Hole in Barge. Cleveland, Nov, 16. - The barge I. L. BELL (sic), which was sunk in collision with the steamer SEGUIN at Port Huron, Wednesday, has a hole twenty feet long in its side. It lies in seventeen feet of water at Fort Gratiot. A bulkhead will have to be built around the break before the boat can be floated."

On Thursday, November 22nd, the same paper noted: "Libel Filed on SEGUIN. Buffalo, Nov. 22 - The Canadian steamer SEGUIN is held at Gratwick on a libel filed by the Pittsburg (sic) Steamship Co. for \$25,000 for sinking the barge ISAAC BELL (sic). The SEGUIN is owned by J. B. MILLER, of Toronto." We have no other information about this incident, but the BELL obviously was raised and repaired. SEGUIN (20) [C.94763], (b) MAPLEBORO (25), (c) CITY OF MONTREAL (ii)(26), (d) ARVIDA, was an iron-hulled package freighter built in 1890. She lasted into the late 1930s, when she was scrapped at Sorel.

In 1924, JAMES NASMYTH was rebuilt at Fairport, Ohio, with sloping sidetanks in her holds, and her tonnage was revised to 3010 Gross and 2807 Net. It is reported that SIR ISAAC LOTHIAN BELL got the same treatment at Conneaut,