

most of the big barges wound up in the Paterson fleet. Two that did not were BLANCHE H. and MERLE H. which, along with the tug SATINLEAF, were sold in 1949 to the Quebec and Ontario Transportation Company Limited, of Montreal. The Q & O, as it was known, was part of the Chicago Tribune syndicate and was a direct subsidiary of the Ontario Paper Company Limited, of Thorold, Ontario, which produced newsprint for the famous Chicago newspaper. Ontario Paper recently had acquired the pulpwood holdings of the Pineland Timber Company Ltd., of Heron Bay, Ontario, which were located beyond the north shore of Lake Superior, and it was felt that the two barges and the tug, which could be acquired very economically, would be of use in transporting the wood down to the Ontario Paper mill at Thorold.

The barges soon were painted up in Q & O colours, with black hulls, white forecastles, bulwarks and cabins, and buff stacks, with a black smokeband and below that a red band over which were superimposed the closely spaced white letters 'Q' and 'O' linked by a white ampersand. By this time, each of the barges had a small, wooden, winchman's house placed atop the forward deckhouse; it looked more like a shack in the woods than a ship's deckhouse, and it probably was added during the last years of the Johnson operation. Beside it was mounted a small steam whistle which was used for communication between the barge and the vessel which was towing her.

In May of 1949, SATINLEAF towed the two barges to the Collingwood shipyard for drydocking. When the barges emerged from the shipyard, each went for a load of pulpwood from northern Lake Huron. The first load was taken on MERLE H. from Cockburn Island to Thorold, while the second was of 2,000 cords of wood taken by BLANCHE H. out of Meldrum Bay. On June 30, 1949, Roy Snider's "Waterfront" column in "The Telegram", Toronto, reported that SATINLEAF had been renamed (b) ROCKY RIVER, while BLANCHE H. was rechristened (c) BLACK RIVER and MERLE H. had become (c) PIC RIVER. All three of these new names honoured small rivers which flowed through the recently acquired Pineland Timber holdings inland from Heron Bay.

ROCKY RIVER jockeyed the two barges on downbound trips from Heron Bay or ports on Lake Huron's North Channel to Thorold. Bound back up out of the Welland Canal, they often had loads of finished paper for the Tribune presses in Chicago and then sometimes coal from South Chicago to the ports of Georgian Bay. On occasion, ROCKY RIVER would have both barges in tow at the same time. However, it was awkward having the one tug juggle two barges, and a second tug was needed to assist when canalling at the Welland or the Soo, or when making port, and it did not take Q & O long to realize that this operation was totally impractical. Accordingly, the company drew up plans to convert BLACK RIVER and PIC RIVER to self-propelled bulk carriers, and a contract for the conversions was let to Port Weller Dry Docks. ROCKY RIVER delivered both barges to the Port Weller shipyard in the late autumn of 1951, after which the wooden-hulled tug was sold off to Foundation Maritime Ltd., of Montreal.

The reconstruction included the building of a closed steel bulwark and a large texas cabin on the forecastle head and, above it on the bridge deck, a big, squarish pilothouse which had five windows across its front and three windows and a door on each side. Aft the pilothouse was a small chartroom which had one window on each side and two large windows facing aft down the deck. There was a prominent sunvisor across the front of the pilothouse and down the sides, and a closed steel rail ran around the forward end of the bridge deck. The new foremast, a short steel pipe, rose immediately abaft the chartroom. Large anchor pockets were built into the hull just abaft the stem, replacing the hawseholes from which the anchors previously had been suspended.

Aft, the old cabins were removed and the stern was chopped off back to the last perpendicular. A new cruiser stern was constructed, with a large deckhouse on the flush quarterdeck and a large "doghouse" (for additional crew