

accommodations) on the boat deck. A small, squat smokestack with a jauntily raked top rose from the aft house, and behind it but forward of the doghouse was positioned the slender pipe mainmast. A lifeboat, worked with luffing davits, was placed on either side of the funnel.

Each ship was re-registered at Montreal and the new dimensions of BLACK RIVER were recorded as 373.0 (383'6" overall) x 44.6 x 21.5, 3587 Gross and 2484 Net, while PIC RIVER was 373.0 x 44.6 x 22.1, 3569 Gross and 2480 Net. As rebuilt, each had three 100-foot holds, three bulkheads watertight to the freeboard deck, and six hatches, each 31'10" by 30'1" that were suitable for handling both pulpwood and rolls of newsprint.

Chosen by Q & O to power the vessels were two 1931-built Burmeister & Wain diesel engines which were recovered from the wreck of the Danish passenger vessel ENGLAND, which had been sunk by torpedo during World War Two. Each of the engines was six-cylinder, four-stroke, direct-reversing and of 1,650 braking horsepower, 21 5/8 inches diameter and 35 7/16 inches stroke. Each of the former barges received one of these two engines, which proved to be quite serviceable despite age and salt-water immersion, to power her single screw. These engines would serve their "new" ships for more than a quarter of a century.

BLACK RIVER was the first of the two conversions to be completed, and she entered service on October 20, 1952. She was able to haul three cargoes of grain, two of newsprint and one of coal before she laid up for the winter at Thorold on December 12th. Her first season of service was, however, marred when, on November 17, 1952, her master, Capt. Jack Tyson, age 52, died of a heart attack aboard his ship whilst she was crossing Lake Superior, bound from Thorold to Fort William. An employee of Q & O for 25 years, he left behind his wife and two five-year-old fraternal twin children.

The shipyard at Port Weller worked away on PIC RIVER during the following winter and she ran her trials on Lake Ontario on April 8, 1953. She was placed in commission on April 11, taking a cargo of newsprint out of Thorold for Chicago six days later. She would load nine cargoes of newsprint, eight of pulpwood, seven of coal and five of grain before she went to winter quarters at Thorold on December 14th. She had been drydocked at Port Weller from November 28 through the 30th for the replacement of her original four-bladed propeller with a three-bladed screw, and we would assume that BLACK RIVER underwent the same change, although we have no record of it.

At the time of these two ships' entry into service, the Q & O fleet had a number of canallers in service, but the 1902-built HERON BAY (i), (a) AGAWA (i) (29), (b) ROBERT P. DURHAM (40), (d) FEDERAL HUSKY, also originally a barge but rebuilt as a steamer in 1907 and acquired by Q & O in 1939, was the only other upper laker. Although many others would be acquired in later years, BLACK RIVER and PIC RIVER would prove to be the most dependable of the lot, serving for so many years as self-propelled vessels that many observers would forget the fact that each had served as a barge for more than fifty years before the dieselization.

BLACK RIVER and PIC RIVER stayed for a while with the company's usual cargoes, and over her self-propelled years, BLACK RIVER carried 191 loads of newsprint, 79 of pulpwood, 61 of grain, 52 of coal, 42 of soybeans, 42 of corn and 41 of wheat. PIC RIVER handled 174 loads of newsprint, 79 of grain, 73 of pulpwood, 60 of coal and 41 of corn. But the company found that there were many other cargoes which ships of their size could handle and, over the years, PIC RIVER and BLACK RIVER handled such varying other commodities as fire clay, pig iron, salt, pitch, coke breeze, iron ore, barley, malt, steel, grinding balls, soda ash, aluminum, rutile (titanium dioxide), rye, zinc, sand, flax, "skulls", bauxite, stone, ferrous chrome, splice bars, groundwood, calcium chloride, slag, sorghum, gluten feed pellets, fluorspar, turbine casings and even trucks. There were very few ports at which BLACK RIVER and PIC RIVER did not call over the years, for the huge variety of