

cargoes they carried took them to almost every lake and major St. Lawrence River port, either for loading or for discharge.

BLACK RIVER and PIC RIVER operated generally dependably and safely, although they did have their scrapes in ports and canals, and they generally started early and ended their seasons late, which meant that they ground their way through ice on a routine basis. News clippings attest that one or other of them usually was amongst the first ships upbound out of the Welland Canal each spring, battling her way through Lake Erie ice. Before long, their hull plating was well bucketed from such hard use, and their ribs were standing proud.

PIC RIVER suffered propeller shaft damage on Lake Erie on September 26, 1965 when she struck an unidentified object. She underwent repairs at Port Colborne that took from the 26th until October 1st. In 1972, PIC RIVER suffered damage to her starboard lifeboat when she brushed up against the cargo transfer crane barge WILLIAM H. DONNER, which then was working at Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She never was involved in any serious accident whilst under Q & O ownership, nor was BLACK RIVER, although the latter, as a barge, went aground in the North Channel at Little Current on November 2, 1950, blocking the rail and road bridges there, but she was pulled free after an hour and a half by ROCKY RIVER.

BLACK RIVER and PIC RIVER carried their usual Q & O colours for some twenty years but, during the 1970s, there was considerable experimentation by the company before a new stack design was determined. At first, the stacks became apple green with a white band and a blue top, and then they briefly became blue with a white band and a black top. Still later, funnels were painted black with a broad white band between two very thin blue bands, and with a stylized pine tree in blue on the white band. This latter design was used by the fleet through until it ceased operations at the close of the 1983 navigation season.

But despite their age and hard use, the two sisterships kept coming back into service each year. PIC RIVER had been the last commercial vessel to use the old "Long Reach" of the Welland Canal between Port Robinson and Port Colborne at the close of the 1972 season. But age was catching up with her and she was the first of the sisters to be retired by Q & O. PIC RIVER's last cargo was a load of 209,030 bushels of barley from Thunder Bay to Toronto for Canada Malting Ltd., and she arrived with this cargo at Toronto on October 17, 1978. Following the unloading of the barley, the vessel remained briefly at Toronto while a sale for scrap to United Metals Ltd., of Hamilton, was finalized, following which PIC RIVER sailed under her own power to Hamilton. The new owner renamed her (d) PIC R. and held her untouched (except for the painting out of the Q & O stack colours), probably in the hope of reselling her for further service. No buyer ever was found for her, however, and the dismantling of the ship was commenced at the Strathearne Avenue scrapyards at Hamilton during the spring of 1984. The first of the pair to be retired, she was the last to be scrapped.

BLACK RIVER ran one year longer. Her last cargo was a load of 5,771 tonnes of pitch (a nasty cargo, indeed) loaded out of Detroit on October 9, 1979, for Baie Comeau, Quebec. Following the delivery of that load, the vessel was sold to Marine Salvage Ltd., Port Colborne, and she sailed upbound light for her new owner's Ramey's Bend scrapyards at Humberstone, where she rested but briefly. She managed to avoid the breakers' torches and soon was resold to the Cayman Shipping Corporation, of Georgetown, Grand Cayman Island, which renamed her (d) TUXPANCLIFFE and put her under Panamanian registry. She was moved to the Law stone dock on the east side of the northerly entrance to the power canal at Humberstone (opposite the Robin Hood elevator) and there she was fitted out for the new owners. (Some sources have identified the new owner as the Carib Sud Corporation of Panama, but this may simply have been the operator of the ship, rather than the owner.) She departed her Humber-