

CITY OF CLEVELAND III lay, all but forgotten, at Ojibway, but we have a report that in the spring of 1954, she parted her moorings and grounded, following which she was towed across the river and moored at Wyandotte, Michigan. She was acquired on July 12, 1954, by the Ventimiglia Demolition Company, of Detroit. Early in the month of May, Capt. Frank Becker, a Detroit tugboat operator, had been quoted in the local press as saying that the CLEVELAND might be burned in Lake St. Clair to "celebrate" Wyandotte's centennial, but Carl Ventimiglia, after purchasing the vessel, indicated that she would be cut down to a crane barge for use in the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. It is not clear how such a long and narrow hull could be useful in such a role, and we assume that the projected use was simply speculative. Contemporary press clippings seem to indicate that Ventimiglia's interest lay more in what could be salvaged from the hull, machinery and superstructure of the steamer.

Work on the stripping of CITY OF CLEVELAND III began at Wyandotte during the summer of 1954 but there was trouble. Frank Summerfield, of LaSalle, Ontario, was working on the CLEVELAND but allegedly was run off the ship at gunpoint and not paid for his work. One of the principals of the Ventimiglia firm was Windsor barber Clarence Jacobs, for whom there was an outstanding warrant in the U.S. in connection with the shooting of U.A.W. president Walter Reuther.

Meanwhile, Windsor City Council had given permission for Ventimiglia to move the CLEVELAND to Windsor's Ward Five dump site where there was a dock facing of sufficient length and with enough water for the mooring of the ship, Ventimiglia reportedly having become disenchanted with having to pay \$400 per day to keep the ship moored at Wyandotte. The McQueen Marine Limited tug ATOMIC towed the CLEVELAND from Wyandotte to the Windsor dump site on Thursday, September 9, 1954. McQueen records indicate that some 18-inch portlights from the CLEVELAND were incorporated into the McQueen tug A-burg, which at that time was being rebuilt from the HENRY STOKES of 1891.

Trouble reared its head again before long. About September 20, R.C.M.P. constables boarded the CLEVELAND and seized a gun which they said had been imported illegally into Canada. Then Frank Summerfield began legal action against the Ventimiglia firm for the \$4,000 worth of work for which he had not been paid, so on September 27, 1954, Deputy Sheriff Milton A. Rocheleau, acting as a marshal of the Admiralty, boarded the vessel, posted a warrant of arrest on her mainmast, and had all of Ventimiglia's workers thrown off the ship. The Ventimiglia firm then wired \$4,000 to Exchequer Court of Canada officials at Toronto and, on September 29, the warrant of arrest against the ship was withdrawn and work on the stripping of the CLEVELAND got under way once again.

The work had not progressed very far, however, when in the late morning of Wednesday, October 20, 1954, fire was discovered in the dynamo room of CITY OF CLEVELAND III. (The workers were later to deny that any cutting had been done in that area.) Fire extinguishers brandished by the workers failed to control the flames, and a bucket brigade was no more effective, so Carl Ventimiglia sent a man by car to find a telephone and call the Fire Department. The latter arrived with four pieces of apparatus but had to string a hose over a quarter of a mile from the nearest hydrant. (The press did not explain why they did not simply draw water from the river.) At about 12:35 p.m., the flames spread to bunker oil and the fire then spread rapidly and soon destroyed the entire wooden superstructure of the ship. Strong winds were blowing off the river and smoke billowed more than 1,000 feet into the air across the dump. Some 150 tanks of oxygen, located on and alongside the ship, exploded during the fire.

Windsor Fire Chief Hedley G. Coates attempted to call out the Detroit fire-tug JOHN KENDALL, and Ventimiglia agreed to pay the \$350 per hour fee, but it was determined that Windsor's contract for the use of the fire-tug had expired. Chief Coates was advised that he would have to make an appeal via