

One of those present at the launch of the WOLVIN was Gen E. M. Richardson, who supplied the paint for the new steamer. Augustus Wolvin wanted the largest ship on the lakes to look the part, and so she was painted in totally unusual colours. Her hull was a yellow-orange colour, while her deckhouses were white. Her smokestack was an olive-green with a broad white band. Her masts were painted the same shade as her hull. Many were the admirers of the WOLVIN, both privately and in the press, but there were those who, instead of admiring the WOLVIN for her size and innovative construction when she entered service, referred to her as an ugly ship. We do truly believe, however, that they were referring to her peculiar livery rather than her construction.

Much was made of her large size in the press during her completion, and it was said that there were many Lake Erie ports to which the WOLVIN would not be able to trade. In fact, the only route that she would not initially be able to serve would be the ore run up the Cuyahoga River at Cleveland, whose bends would not then accommodate a ship of her length. That situation would, however, soon be remedied.

The WOLVIN raised steam for the first time on May 20, 1904, and she then was towed down the Black River at Lorain where, on May 25 at the B&O Railroad docks, she was loaded with 10,250 tons of coal bound for Duluth. (That was a record, but still the shipyard had hoped that she would be able to take on 12,000 tons for that trip.) A strike of masters and pilots was underway at the time, and many vessels either were laid up or were commanded by non-union masters. The WOLVIN's maiden voyage was delayed by the strike but, however, she finally set out from Lorain for Duluth on June 10, 1904. Commanding her for that trip was Capt. J. W. Norcross, a longtime crony of the Wolvins, who later was to work with Roy Mitchell Wolvin as managing director of Canada Steamship Lines Ltd. during its formative years. He was long to be infamous for his "creative methods" of vessel management.

The maiden voyage went well, with much press coverage and with a horde of technicians aboard to look after any adjustments that might be needed. For instance, the ship anchored in the St. Clair River for repairs to her steering gear. She finally made it to Duluth and unloaded her cargo. She then sailed for Two Harbors, Minnesota, where on June 19, 1904, she loaded an unprecedented 10,894 tons of raw iron ore (hematite) consigned to the Lackawanna Steel Company at Buffalo, New York.

"The Evening News" of Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on June 13, 1904, reported: "The big steamer AUGUSTUS B. WOLVIN, the largest boat afloat on fresh water, made her initial trip up the [St. Mary's] river today. A. B. Wolvin, the father of the great craft, was on board, and as she came slowly into the Poe Lock a large crowd of people were on board to see her. She is in command of Capt. Joseph W. Norcross.

"The WOLVIN can be easily picked out from among the other big boats on the lakes both by her size and color. She is painted a dull yellow and marine men have dubbed her the 'Yellow Kid'. The boat attracted more attention than any freighter that has come up the river in years. In the crowd on the lock walls were numbers of people carrying cameras, and as a result pictures of the new boat will be numerous in a few days. [We never have seen any of those photos allegedly taken on her maiden Soo lockage - Ed.]

"In the building of this gigantic boat the makers have been to considerable pains to provide for facilities for loading and unloading with rapidity. She has 33 hatches, which occupy about all the deck space. As a result ore and coal can be loaded or unloaded very fast."

The WOLVIN operated quite successfully for the Acme Steamship Company with few untoward incidents, although a ship of her size could not avoid scrapes in the canals and at docks. She sometimes was confused in press reports with the 242-foot steamer A. B. WOLVIN (U.S.107563), which had the same namesake