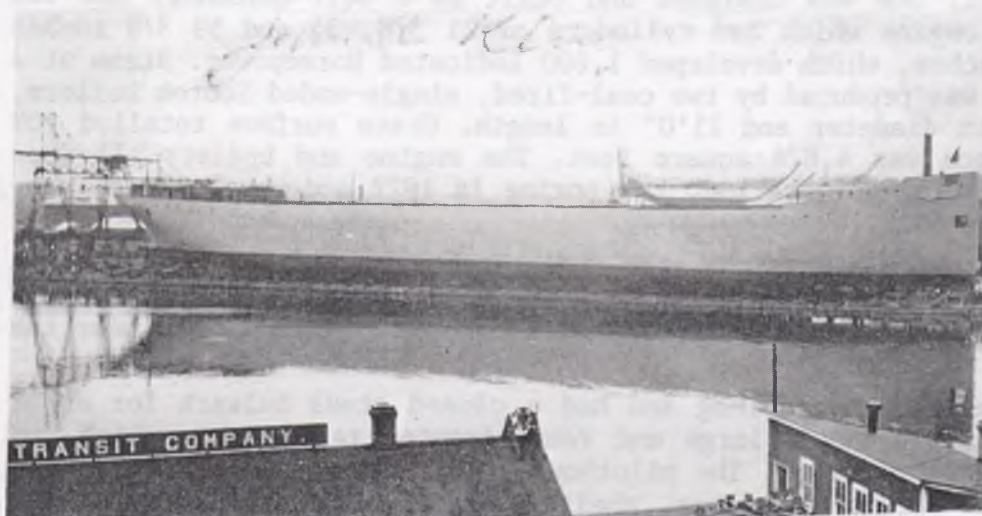


## JOHN A. KLING

In casting around in search of ships to feature in these pages, our attention often is grabbed by unusual vessels, or by those for which we recently have seen unusual or spectacular photographs. The latter is the case in respect of our currently featured vessel and, in addition, your Editor, as a young boy, witnessed an incident involving the ship that has lived on in memory ever since. And so, it is only natural that we should bring forward her story to the members, some of whom will remember this vessel with fondness.

The vessel in question was the self-unloading steamer JOHN A. KLING, which was built as Hull 204 of the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Corporation at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, in 1922. For an account of her launch, we can do no better than to quote from the "Door County Advocate" of Friday, August 11, 1922. "Amid the cheering of thousands and the shrieking of whistles, the big freighter JOHN A. KLING, built at the yards of the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Corporation, slid gracefully down the ways and into the water of the Manitowoc River at exactly 11:55 this morning. Long before the launching was scheduled to take place, the banks on all sides of the river affording an excellent view of the boat were thronged with people. Automobiles jammed the roads for blocks and blocks. As the time for the big ship to be dropped into the water approached, it was plainly to be seen that all were very much interested.



JOHN A. KLING is on the launch ways in this photo from the collection of Ralph Roberts. Note the grey hull paint.

"As the ropes (sic) were cut away and the JOHN A. KLING started on her initial voyage, she was christened by Mr. Peter Reiss, president of the company for which the steamer is being constructed. The ceremonies were elaborate and fitting. The steamer KLING is the largest ship ever built in Manitowoc and it will be delivered, when completed, to the Rockport Steamship Company, of which Mr. Peter Reiss of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, is president. The vessel is of the self-unloading type and the cargo is handled by means of a system of belts

and conveyors, swinging a boom 120 feet from the side of the boat. The vessel is 452 feet long overall, 56 feet beam and has a depth of 30 feet 4 inches. It is equipped with a triple expansion marine engine and two Scotch marine boilers with forced draft. During its construction, several hundred men were employed on this boat and it is now being rushed to completion with the idea of putting it into actual service early this fall."

The same paper reported on Friday, October 6, 1922: "With the owners of the boat aboard, the steamer JOHN A. KLING, the largest ship ever built in this city, was taken out in Lake Michigan for a trial trip this week. The run was several miles out and return. A record in ship construction here was made in the building of the KLING, less than four months elapsing from the time the keel was laid until the boat was launched. The lowest lengthwise member of the framework was laid on April 7 and on August 7 (sic) it slid from the ways. A few hours after the launching, the freighter was towed down the river to the boiler works docks, where work on (installing) the boilers and machinery was started. The JOHN A. KLING was built for the Rockport Steamship Company in which the Reiss Coal Company, Sheboygan, is interested. Capt. John Bestan will be the master of the ship and R. Bestons will be chief engineer. The KLING will make several trips before navigation closes. It will probably carry coal from lower lakes ports to Lake Michigan cities the balance of the season. The KLING is of all steel construction."

According to John O. Greenwood in his "Namesakes" series, "John A. Kling was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on August 20, 1864, and was educated in the public schools. He began working with the firm of Davis & Kling in 1886 and remained there until 1889. This company