



MEDICAL ARTIFACT DISPLAY - PIONEER MUSEUM

From the Riker Family of Physicians

Board member Bob Reynnells set up this interesting display from our accessions collection. He knew of Dr. Aaron Riker and his work here in the Pontiac area and at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital.

Connie Scafe, our Oral History Chairperson, interviewed Dr. Riker February 15, 1975, a month before his 80th birthday. He died on October 18, 1976. Connie says that taping personal memoirs is the most recent method of preserving history, particularly local history. The following story is based upon this interview of 1975 as reported in our OAKLAND GAZETTE dated July, 1982 by Connie Scafe.

The Riker family originally came from Holland (Van Ryker) and ultimately settled in Independence Township in the 1830's. Dr. Riker's grandfather, Dr. Aaron Riker, graduated from Albany University Medical School and became a typical "horse and buggy doctor". He practiced in White Lake Township, went to Fenton and was also surgeon for the Grand Trunk Railway. Dr. Aaron said his father, John, brother, Eugene, and he all graduated from U. of M Medical School. The Riker physicians were all active in furthering their education in prestigious schools and traveled in various parts of the world seeking out methods of health care.

Long before Dr. Aaron went to medical school he went out on calls with his father. He remembered his father taking \$10 to \$25 for an operation and sometimes as low as 50¢. Aaron was born in 1895 in the family home at the corner of Orchard Lake Road and Palmer. His father built the Huron Hotel and moved his office there. After his father's death his mother had the Riker Building built in Pontiac in 1928 in memory of his father.

Dr. Aaron Riker relates that he was instrumental in getting St. Joseph Mercy Hospital to locate in Pontiac in the early 1930's. He set up the eye, ear, nose, and throat clinic there and remained as Chief of that department for 40 years. (Some of these types of instruments are in our Museum display.) He stated that, "We doctors were responsible for Blue Cross coming to existence. It was supposed to help the indigent with incomes under \$1500 a year." He said that wherever he went he visited the hospitals to find new methods of medicine and stated, "Yes, I guess you could say my father and I made our mark in Oakland County."



Dr. Aaron Riker
Oakland County Physician

-Pauline Harrison

Local Historical Organization

HIGHLIGHTING: Northeast Oakland Historical Museum

Each month on the Oxford Bank statement just below the sometime line "Due to Insufficient Funds . . ." is the invitation, "Visit Historical Museum, Former Home of Oxford Bank, Hours: Saturday 1-4"

At the museum you will have the pleasure of meeting with 85-year-old Curator, Mildred Schmidt, in the former Oxford Savings Bank. The imposing stone building built in 1922 has a high ceiling, tile floor and walk-in steel safe. The safe is so large it now serves as Schmidt's office.

The museum is best known as the home of the radio Lone Ranger from station WXYZ. Brace Bemer, the "masked stranger" who entertained the country through the airwaves in the 1920's, lived here until his death in the 1960's.

The artifacts on display illustrate what everyday survival was made of and makes one happy to go home and hug their "Maytag". This does not detract from the interesting nostalgic experience afforded by the knowledgeable curator.

Location - M-24 in the heart of Oxford, MI
Based on an article published in the OAKLAND PRESS May 30, 1993
by Jim Dufresne.

Quotable -

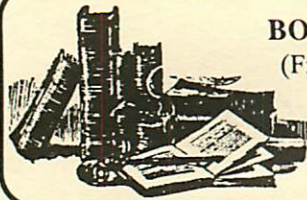
"To not have known what happened in the world before you were born is to remain a child."

-Hannah Grey
University of Chicago (Ret.)

Featured Insert in this issue,

**"Great Ships of the Great Lakes -
Pontiac's Name Preserved in Shipping"**

by C. Martinez



BOOK REVIEW F.Y.I.

(From the Wisner Library)

NEW HORIZONS IN COLLECTING

Cinderella Antiques (275 pages)

by John Mebane

The author describes "Cinderella Antiques" as those items which seem to have been touched by the wand of some fairy godmother and have suddenly become "discovered" or rediscovered, and whose values have started soaring or will soon begin to ascend. He goes on to explain that today's "Cinderella Antiques" are nearly all items of intrinsic merit. They may be inferior to antiques of long standing, but they possess sufficient virtues of their own to justify their preservation. In some cases, a part of this merit lies in the fact that they are a part of this country's history. Some even contributed to the progress of the country itself.

Mebane describes and gives the history of the various types of collections and almost reads like an interesting collection of historic novels. The many black and white pictures are clearly depicted and do much to bring the words to life. If one is not a collector, reading this book could surely lead to your being one.

— Pauline Harrison

EDITOR'S NOTE: We would like to encourage you all to write us of your collections so that we could present an article on our members who are so inclined, for a future GAZETTE issue. Perhaps we could also have a day for exhibiting your private collections.

— ACCESSIONS - From our Gracious Donors —

Betty Adams - Ox yoke/neck collar c1850's used by donor's grandparents on their farm.

Rex Lamoreaux - Formal gown worn by donor's mother, c1940's.

Susan Metzdorf - U.S. flag (small cotton), dated July 4th 1904.

Anne Limatta - U.S. 50-star flag, 3' x 5'.

Lillian Paull - Book on Historic Bridges in Michigan.

Faye Donelson - French Limouge c1840-1860, and round woven basket.

Mary J. Gray - Torch, passed by Associated Press at Presidency of J.F.K.

Leah M. Walker - Book, Historic Women of Michigan, sesqui centennial celebration.

Kim Moses - Old small tools.

Virginia Clohset - Dark-room lamp c1940.

Richard & Marge West - Photographic artifacts.

Elizabeth Adams - Card photographs of the Riker physicians (see article in this issue).

Pat Knudsen - Pictures from Elliott Mills.

John & Jennie Stapleton - Yearbooks from Pontiac High School.

Jamine Saputo - Booklet, Survey of Berkley.

— Our Thanks to the Folks Who Donated Monies —

- **Woman's Farm & Garden Association/Pontiac Branch** and **Faye Donelson** - Designated for the new library.
- **National Society of Colonial Dames of America in Michigan** - Non-designated funds.
- **Robert Reynnells, Charles Martinez & Gaylor Forman** - To purchase acid-free storage boxes for historic flags.
- **Alice Osmun** - Non-designated funds.
- **Connie Scafe** - For Guide Committee expenses.

ARCHIVAL DONATION

Mr. John W. Campbell visited the Society's October Board Meeting and presented a copy of his grandfather's extensive daily diary and journal. His grandfather was the son of Allen Campbell. Allen took up land in Groveland Township and is so documented in the *FIRST LANDOWNERS OF OAKLAND COUNTY*, published by the Oakland County Genealogical Society in Birmingham.

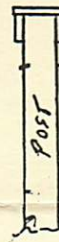


Virginia Clohset, OCPHS Chairperson of Manuscripts, shown accepting the donation for the Society's archival collections from Mr. Campbell.

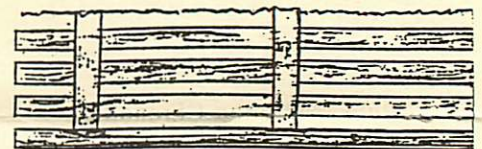
FENCE INQUIRY ANSWERED

(From Last issue)

We have an answer to our quest for information on the type and configuration of one of the former front fences at Pine Grove. Vernon Kath, son of the caretaker who once lived here at Pine Grove earlier in this century, recalls it being of wood with a cap running from post to post along its top. (See Kath's sketch below.)



End view



Side View

A board across the top of the post and a board on each side represented its construction . . . no angle, just squared.

—V. Kath

Dr. John Halsey, State Archeologist, has noted:

Well-maintained fences were symbolic of public order. Because everyone feared the damage that would be done by wandering livestock, great social pressure was brought to keep one's fences well mended.

Halsey wrote, "Under the Lawn and Under the Parking Lot: Archaeology Around Historic Buildings", a paper presented at a MSU conference during Agriculture and Natural Resources Week, 1989.

— C. Martinez

HIGHLIGHTS



► Irma McMillan, Muriel Crossman, and Miriam Foxman of the Education Committee have been asking the Pine Grove touring school children to write letters about their visit. Irma has compiled a book of replies from the school children which will be on display at the Schoolhouse. Packages with helpful details for teachers to promote this are being provided for them.

► Christmas time at our Potpourri Gift Shoppe is offering satin pin cushions with old Wisner lace which are both charmingly historical and everyday useful. Lavon DeLisle and her Crafter Group have been busily sewing to meet with the demand so that they will be available at the Victorian Christmas Open House on December 5th. This Group welcomes all potential crafters to join them.

► This year's SUNDAY LECTURE SERIES has received gratifying responses. This Series consisted of:

Lecture #1 August 29

John Conde in "*Car Coming*"

Lecture #2 September 26th

Michael Dennie in "*Pine Grove Digs*"

Lecture #3 October 31st

C. Martinez in "*Memento Mori*"

Lecture #4 November 28th

P. Harrison in "*You've Come A Long Way Baby*", Fashion Chronology

► Sybil Little, Fashion Editor for the Oakland Press, recently visited the Wisner House and grounds with fashion models for the purpose of using our scenes at Wisner House and grounds as a background for the fall look of Luxury Fashions. It was a beautiful spread in color and appeared in the October 7th issue. The article itself was interestingly done and went into fashion history as it relates to today's offerings.

► Our old tired duplicating machine has been replaced by a new Xerox model which will greatly enhance Society operations.

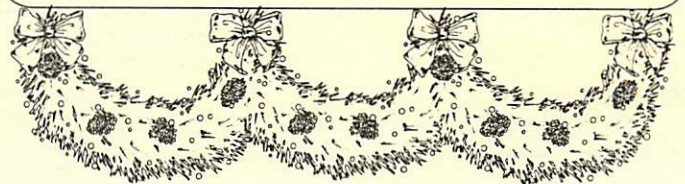
► Our equipment was discussed at a recent Board Meeting in order to more effectively update our operating methods. Items needed are 1) Video Camcorder, 2) Personal Computer. Responses to this need would be appreciated.

Holiday Greetings!

25th Annual Victorian Holiday Celebration

Ruth Priestly will be chairing this year's Annual Victorian Christmas Open House slated for Sunday, December 5th, hours from 12:00 to 4:00.

She would like to see many of you at the "Hanging of the Greens" on Wednesday, December 1st from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. to help with our decorations and partake of a nice, friendly "workers" luncheon.



► Plans for Annual Dinner are now being formulated to take place on a, hopefully, sunny Sunday afternoon. Invitations should reach you around April 1st, 1994, and we don't mean "April Fool!"

► Our library also seeks a benefactor (Angel) to help us purchase two microfilm reels of Pontiac newspapers during the critical decade of the 1850's. The cost is \$80 for both reels. Please help us make our area newspaper collection the best in Michigan. If you can support us with a contribution, please contact the office at 338-6732.

► The Metropolitan Detroit Presentation League was asked to repeat the popular Franklin Blvd. Historic Homes Tour in Pontiac. As representatives of OCPHS, the League asked us to again serve as Hosts in the Hospitality Room at the Huron Street YWCA where, in vintage costumes, we serve refreshments and put on our Historic Collection display. Bob Reynnells, Pauline Harrison, and Jean Milton coordinate this enjoyable task for them on November 21st.

PROFILES ... From our Members

MEMBER PROFILE: Susan Metzdorf

BIRTHPLACE: Monroe, Michigan (Home town of General A. Custer)

PRESENT HOME: Auburn Hills, Michigan

CAREER: Elementary school teacher and Homemaker

MEANINGFUL EXPERIENCE: Teaching children and being a mother.

FAVORITE:

BOOK - CHOSEN

MOVIE - GONE WITH THE WIND (Saw it in 1950 when it was put on a religion "Black List" by some groups, because Rhett said, "Damn". We sure have come a long way, baby!

TV PROGRAM - Old Movies (Fred & Ginger)

HOBBY: Thimbles Collecting (6,000)

Also antiques, souvenir sterling spoons, marbles, antique Santa Clauses, and children's doll dishes. (May borrow for a display.)

SATISFACTORY ASPECT OF

OAKLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY: The people!

MAIL



To: Lillian Paull, OCPHS Librarian
Dear Lillian,

I so much appreciate your getting the history of the Strand Theater to me, and your ready response.

No wonder my husband, Ross, is one of your biggest fans! I am so impressed with your beautiful handwriting, which is now a lost art. What a treasure you are.

Many, many thanks,

Mary Lou Callaway

(See Strand theater article in this issue)

9/23/93

Dear Charlie,

Thank you for your cooperation in making the Farm & Garden group's day so pleasant.

Faye Donelson's talk was well received and the Carriage House was ship shape.

Annalee Kennedy

9/29/93

Dear Charles,

I was very appreciative of your taking time out of your personal schedule to give me a tour of the Pinegrove mansion.

I am looking forward to doing research in your library which looked so interesting, even at just a glance.

Sincerely yours,
Janet Burke

7/93

Note:

We enjoy reading the OAKLAND GAZETTE. Looks like you're going great guns!

Enclosed find check for Ice Cream Social tickets.

Anne & Dick Irwin

5/4/93

Dear Chuck & Pauline,

Thank you for including my "profile" and article in the latest GAZETTE. People do read! I've had several phone calls about it from friends who saw it, and I also have one Quilt Lecture to give as a result of it.

I also enjoyed all the other articles in this issue.

Lois Lance

(Please send in Profiles. We need more for our Gazettes) -Editor

Dear Mr. Martinez,

Thank you for the beautiful photograph of Pontiac. I telephoned and wrote everywhere including Canada, and only you could find anything on Pontiac.

Fortunately for Pontiac there are the French and Charles Martinez! Below the photograph I credit the artist and your Historical Society.

Many thanks,
Reine Mikesell
Executive Secretary, Alliance
Franco-Américane Du Midwest
Chiago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Martinez,

Thank you for all your help in researching the Wooden Horse Inn as a stagecoach stop.

Take care,
Michelli Mirand

MARY LAYNE
MARKETING & PUBLIC
RELATIONS

Oct. 14, 1992

Dear friends,

Thank you very much for the kindness you showed our students on our trip to Pine Grove. They enjoyed themselves, and learned new things.

As an educator, I appreciate groups whose ambition is to preserve the past, and educate our children from historical places.

Dan Gilbert, Instructor
Shalom Baptist School
3400 Morgan Rd., Orion, MI 48359

P.S. Please let us know of other activities at Pine Grove.

PONTIAC THEATRES: PAST & PRESENT

by Mary Lou Callaway

The Strand Theatre in Pontiac is one of the city's historic buildings nominated to the Michigan Register of Historic Districts.

Built in the 1920's, it served primarily as a movie house until it closed after a run of X-rated films in the 1970's, notes Lillian Paull, Oakland County Historical Society's librarian. Lillian researched the origins of the Strand Theatre recently. Today, the Strand is newly renovated, presenting a live theater season of musicals and dramas in cooperation with Detroit's Attic Theatre.

Now the only surviving theater with a full stage, the Strand is a fine example of a Renaissance Revival cinema and performing arts theater seating 677 with a horseshoe shaped balcony and a 24-foot deep stage.

"Between 1919 and 1926, four major Pontiac theaters were built. Besides the Strand they were the State, Orpheum and Oakland. The Strand has withstood the test of time because it was solidly built. The Oakland was predominately a vaudeville house until the mid-1920's, having the largest stage in Pontiac. The stage was described as big enough to present the original road show of 'Ben Hur,'" Lillian learned.

There was also the Eagle Theatre, the only one with a direct tie to Pontiac's pioneering days and The Rialto, next to what is now the Pike Street Restaurant. The pieces of Pontiac theater history are not easy to weave together. Lillian found a 1987 story from The Oakland Press by Grace Lawson. "Downtown Pontiac was a magnet for the rest of the city and surrounding areas some 40 to 50 years ago. Movies cost only five or 20 cents," the article says.

(Mary Lou Callaway is a "Senior Voices" columnist for the Oakland Press.)

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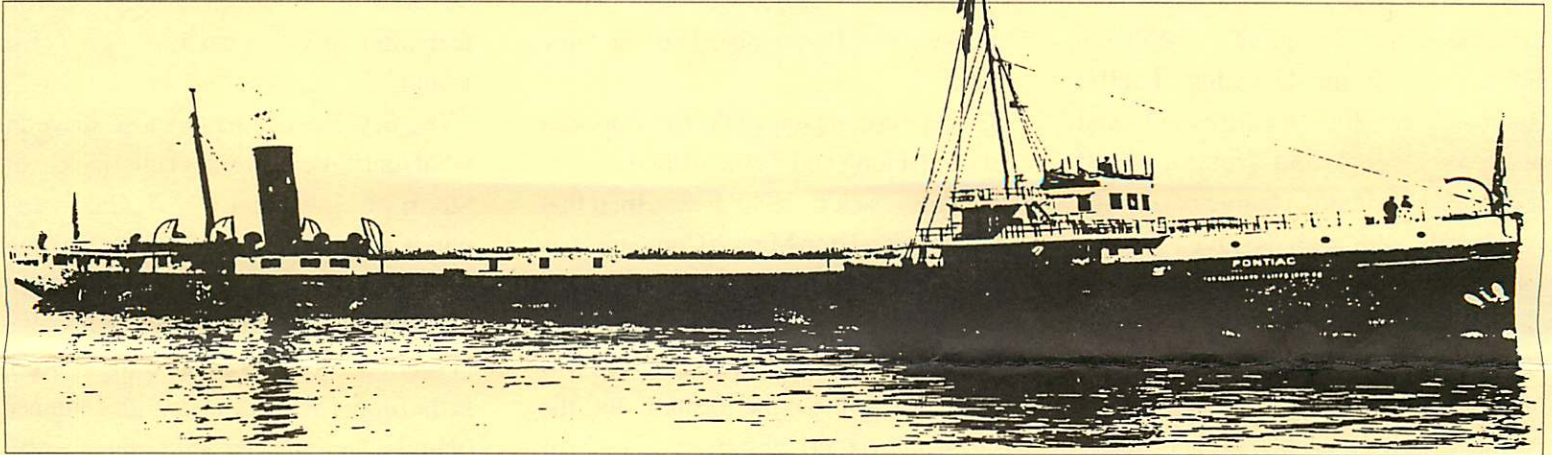
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GREAT SHIPS OF THE GREAT LAKES

Pontiac's Name Preserved in Great Lakes Shipping, Part 1



The ore carrier *Pontiac* (1) was the flagship of the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company fleet, sailing the Great Lakes for some 28 seasons. Photo courtesy of Dossin Great Lakes Museum.

By Charles H. Martinez

While on a recent visit to Canada, this writer stopped at the Moore Museum in Mooretown, Ontario. There, I found a photo of a Great Lakes freighter by the name of "Pontiac". Curious as to its history, I began a search for information that led me by twists and turns to two marine museums, several libraries, and the corporate offices of the world's largest producer of iron ore pellets. Part 2 of the story, together with a list of sources consulted, will appear in the next issue of the *Oakland Gazette*.

Near the end of his comprehensive biography, *Pontiac and the Indian Uprising* (1947), Howard Peckham wrote of the many ways in which the name of that famous Ottawa chief had been preserved. Among them "Pontiac" had been bestowed on seven U.S. towns including the county seat here and its adjacent township, a body of water in White Lake Township, a popular automobile, as well as a county and a lake in the province of Quebec, Canada. Absent from Peckham's list, however, was any reference to a notable ship or boat bearing the name of that illustrious native American.

Research shows a pair of Great Lakes freighters and at least one inland waterway passenger vessel were so christened. The latter operated on the Grand River between Grand Haven and Grand Rapids in 1859. She seemed to have been a favorite among excursionists. A letter to the editor of the *Grand Haven News* on March 16 of that year stated:

Monday morning last found me on board the *Pontiac* en route for this place. Between the river scenery - and Capt. Park's courteousness and affability, one can scarcely help enjoying the ride.

On November 23, 1859 the *Detroit Free Press* carried a story that had appeared three days earlier in the *Grand Rapids Enquirer* telling of an accident that had befallen the vessel. It said the *Pontiac* had been rammed and sunk on the Grand River by an unnamed steam ferryboat. Fortunately, the damage was not extensive as the report went on to say that the raising and repair of the *Pontiac* already had been completed. No mention was made of *Pontiac's* size nor of any injuries or loss of life that might have resulted from the collision.

In contrast, a wealth of detail is available on a pair of Great Lakes freighters that also sailed under the name of "Pontiac". These ships faithfully plied the Great Lakes transporting millions of tons of cargo for a combined total of 96 years. *Pontiac* (1) was built at Cleveland, Ohio in 1889 under the designation "hull number 5" for the old Cleveland Iron Mining Company. She became a steel hulled, bulk freighter of 2298 gross tons with a 300-foot length that made her one of the largest ore carriers of her day. With justifiable pride the company designated *Pontiac* (1) the flagship of its fleet. Marine artist, Howard F. Sprague, was commissioned to immortalize her sleek lines on canvas. Engravers, in turn, copied his work to illustrate stock certificates which were then issued by several Cleveland-based firms. As a result, *Pontiac* (1) became the local symbol of waterborne commerce. Today, Sprague's painting graces the walls of Jim Peters' Maritime Traffic Office at Cleveland-Cliffs corporate headquarters.

(continued on back)

It may have been company pride instilled in its employees, but interpreted by others as arrogance that nearly and prematurely brought *Pontiac* (1) to a watery grave. On the morning of July 14, 1891, *Pontiac* (1) was downbound on the St. Mary's River, having locked through the Sault on her way from Marquette to Cleveland with her usual cargo of iron ore. At Wilson's Bend she met the Canadian Pacific Railroad steamship *Athabasca* upbound with passengers and freight. What happened next is still a matter of dispute. Apparently, the signals given by the passing vessels were misunderstood and the *Athabasca* struck the port bow of the *Pontiac* (1) with such force that she sliced through the ore carrier nearly to amidships. As the *Athabasca* backed off and swung clear, the *Pontiac* (1) began to sink. Luckily, the river was relatively shallow there, so that as her cargo deck came awash her keel touched bottom. With receipt of a telegram from Sault Ste. Marie, *The Detroit Tribune* was able the next day to give its readers a damage report on both vessels.

Everything forward on the *Pontiac*, including cabins, bridge and pilothouse were smashed. A large portion of the *Pontiac's* upper works were lodged on the *Athabasca's* forward deck and were in that position when she reached here. (Sault Ste. Marie.) The *Athabasca's* bows were badly damaged, but she is not leaking and will continue on her trip to Port Arthur.

Miraculously, no one was killed and only two were injured in the collision. The Cleveland Iron Mining Company filed a \$242,000 claim against the owner of the *Athabasca* for the lost cargo and damage to its vessel. Repairs to the *Athabasca* reportedly amounted to \$20,000. An investigation of the incident found Captain J.F. Foote, master of the *Athabasca* negligent and at the insistence of the insurance firm representing the Canadian Pacific Railroad he lost his command. Nevertheless, many held the opinion that Captain Lowes, master of the

Pontiac (1), had attempted to intimidate Captain Foote by ignoring whistle signals and recklessly speeding past the Canadian vessel on previous occasions. Ultimately, the *Pontiac* (1) was raised by the Reid Wrecking Company at a cost of between \$40,000 and \$50,000. She was then towed by the tug, *Sea Gull* to Cleveland where the two arrived September 19 of the same year.

The parent company of the two *Pontiacs* has had a long and distinguished history that dates back to 1849. It was then that the Cleveland Iron Mining Company was formed to mine and market ore from the recently discovered Marquette Range in the Upper Peninsula. At first, the ore was smelted near the mine location and the pig iron loaded aboard vessels for shipment. With the completion of the Soo Canal in 1855 it became more practical to transport the ore down to Lake Erie ports where the steel-making industry was beginning to coalesce. In fact, the first iron ore shipped through the Canal (August 17, 1855) was carried aboard the *Columbia*, a vessel owned by the Cleveland Iron Mining Company.

Needing more vessels to compete in this market, the Cleveland Iron Mining Company joined forces with Hanna Garretson & Company, another early ore shipping firm, and became co-owners of a respectable size fleet. The business prospered and a year after the first *Pontiac* was built, Cleveland Iron merged with the Iron Cliffs Company of Marquette. The result of that union was the Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company. In 1985 another merger and reorganization produced Cleveland-Cliffs Inc., whose dominant business is the production and sale of iron ore pellets. Today, Cleveland-Cliffs is the world's largest producer of these pellets, but her freighter fleet is gone, having been phased out in 1984.

Following its collision with the *Athabasca* in 1891, the *Pontiac* (1) was repaired and returned to service. She next entered a relatively long, uneventful, and profitable period of cargo hauling for her

owner. In the autumn of 1905, *Pontiac* (1) with Captain Thomas E. Murray in the pilothouse joined the steamer *Centurion* in a futile search for the iron ore carrier *Kaliyuga* along the east and north shore of Lake Huron. The *Kaliyuga* was never seen again although some wreckage believed to be hers was found shortly thereafter in Georgian Bay near Cove Island.

The first *Pontiac* had a close shave in what maritime historians call "the Great Storm of November 1913". Gale force winds, snow, and mountainous waves destroyed 18 vessels and stranded another 19 on the lakes. The storm pushed *Pontiac* (1) across a portion of the Simmons Reef in the Straits of Mackinac. With a number of hull plates cracked and water entering her compartments, she limped into the harbor at DeTour in the Upper Peninsula.

In 1916, the *Pontiac* (1) was sold to the Crescent Transportation Company of Cleveland and renamed the *Goudreau*. Her demise came shortly thereafter when on November 23, 1917 she was caught in a blizzard that swept Lake Huron. Her rudder was carried away and without steering, she was thrown on the tip of Lyal Island reef at the mouth of Stokes Bay on the Bruce Peninsula. Her crew was able to escape when the storm abated and report her plight. As it had done 26 years before, Reid Wrecking Company sailed forth in an attempt to save the vessel. But this time it was too late as the storm resumed, pounding the *Goudreau* into a total wreck. It wasn't until the perilous days of World War II with scrap metal at a premium that attention was given the corpse. In 1942, she was cannibalized by a salvage team. Today only the rusted bottom plates of the old freighter *Goudreau née Pontiac* (1) remain to serve as her monument.

