

THE BEAKHEAD

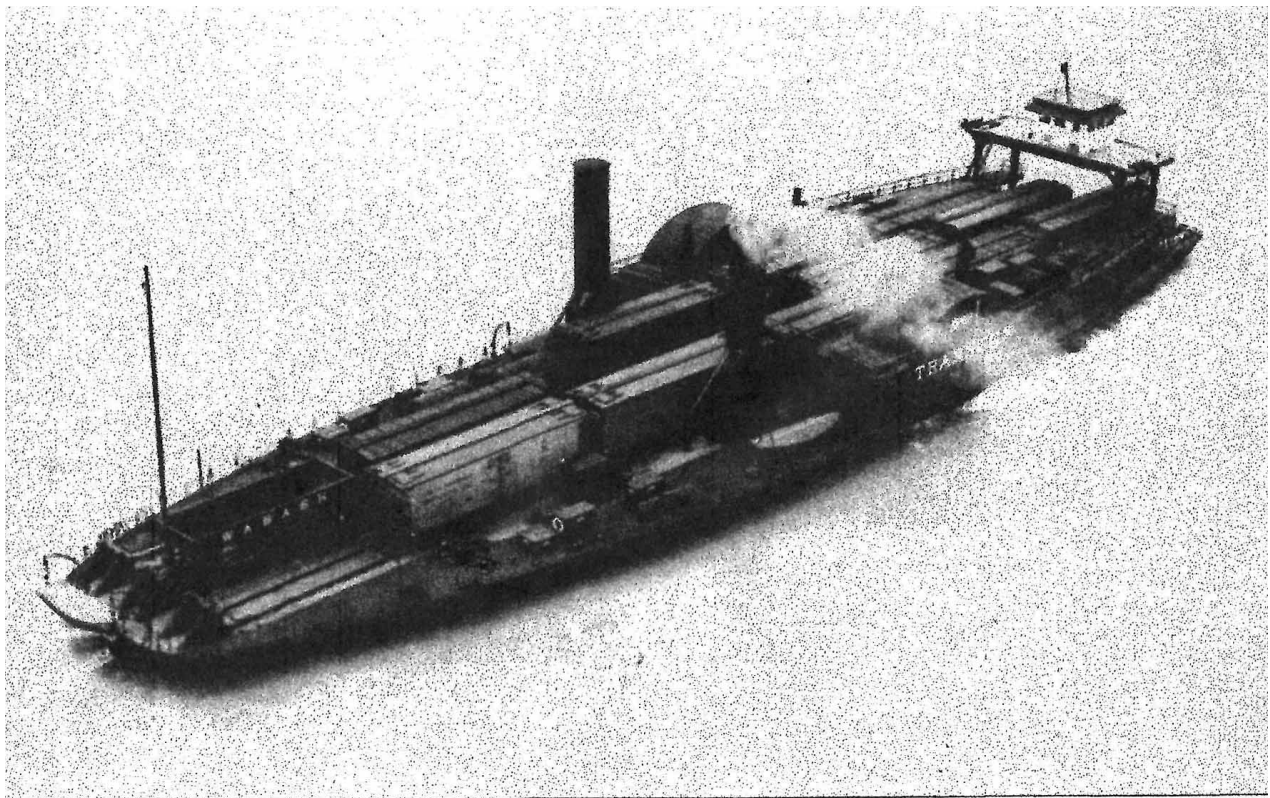
Connecticut Marine Model Society The Build of the Great Lakes Ferry Transfer II, 1888

Having been an avid model railroader, from 6 years old (watching my Dad build a few Ambroid R.R. kits), to 75. I have always wanted to bring the model railroading to integrate with the model ship building. But over the years, your building time is in reality just to a collection of kits awaiting the future. I was fortunate enough to retire at 62 and the first thing I did was print my Bucket List (The top 25 ranked projects over the years) to make a choice and get started. And then it hit me, at 63: it "ain't gonna happen."

My "collection" spanned 40 years of railroad and ship modeling. If you watched MASH, the prophet Charles Emerson Winchester said: I do one thing, I do it very well, and then I move on." . I hope I am a little humbler than Charles, but it has some merits: And I have always believed in "If you have done the very best that you can do, it has come out just as good as it was supposed to." I have always known that there is a learning curve to modeling. So, the first thing I did was join the CMMS, and it goes very well.

I like dioramas. They tell a story. Looking for my next project this summer, I pulled some books I had on my shelf:

Michael Krieger's "Where Rails Meet the Sea , America's Connections Between Ships & Trains," MetroBooks, 1998, ISBN 1-56799-597-7.



George W. Hilton's "The Great Lakes Car Ferries," Montevallo Historical Press, Inc, 1962 reprint in 2003, ISBN 1-9658624-3-7.

Arthur C. Lucy F. Federickson, "Pictorial History of the C & O Train [Yes, this is ice!](#) and Auto Ferries and Pere Marquette Line Steamers," Lakeside Printing Co., Revised Edition 1965.

No. 1: A latter picture of Transfer II (service 1888 to 1940). Shown are 3-rails.

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Some History that made me start a build of **Transfer II**, 1888

The River Car Ferries:

Note: George Hilton's book is my main source, and rather than paraphrase, I will quotation all of the word for word passages. Without this book, there would be no model

The operation of the car Ferries on the Great Lakes begins in the early 1850's.

"The earliest railways to operate car ferries on the Great Lakes [St. Lawrence River excluded] were all predecessors of what is now. the Canadian National Railways. The first of these was the Buffalo & Lake Huron Railway Company...to run from Buffalo, New York, to Goderich, Ontario...They hoped that a direct railway to Goderich would shorten the distance between Buffalo and Lake Superior ports or Chicago...." (Hilton, p. 13-14)

In the meantime, The Great Western Railway of Canada was opened for traffic from Suspension Bridge to Windsor but with 5' 6" gauge track, soon to be realized as a mistake. In the middle of the 1860's they began to lay a third rail to its ferries with the standard American 4' 6" gauge to allow interchange at Detroit. In 1872 the Great Western Railway was converted entirely to the American gauge.

The ferries were mostly two rail, and Grand Trunk decided to add a third rail, to the American standard, to allow Interchange. The Illustration **No. 1** is 3-rail but **Transfer II** at 1888 was two-rail. Same hull, just rails closer together

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“Since this created a greater increase of interchange with the American railroads, the company expanded its car ferry fleet considerably adding three ferries in a three-year period.” The first was **Transfer (1)**:

TRANSFER (I) C - St. p. long overall

242' X 43' X 14.3' Wood 1222 GT

Note: **TRANSFER (I)** was 244' long overall, and 75' wide over the guards

Built: Waterville, Jenking Bros., 1873

Engines: N/A

Boilers: N/A

Capacity: Three tracks, 21 cars.

Disposition: Hull declared unseaworthy, 1888. Engines removed; hull sold December 4, 1888, to John Lane of Windsor for use as a floating dry dock.

Michigan Central R.R. Great Lakes Ferry

TRANSFER (I) had two pilot houses, fore and aft, metal sheathing of 1/8" X 3/16" where she was exposed to ice, In 1875, during the month of February was the coldest month on record and the worst winter in local history, she broke a rudder in the ice and In an effort to return to "base" she became fast

Note: Propeller arrangements proved of no use in the ice in the winter. The propeller was made of wood with one at both ends of the hull. In 1873, Great Western Railway sold **Transfer** to the Michigan Central Railway in a heavy pack ice for two weeks, Most of her freight was drawn off on sleighs across the ice

By January 1878, she was averaging 35 trips per day. The traffic was steadily rising. In April of 1878, a telephone cable was laid under the river "to aid the dispatching for *ferry*. Michigan Central Railroad," In 1880 purchased a second ferry, the **TRANSPORT**, a larger ferry, and iron built. Note: she served the Detroit River for more than half a century. In 1884, a similar *ferry*, **MICHIGAN CENTRAL**, was built, Age and wood, took the reins with steel and iron. (**Hilton, pp.30-36**)

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The first steel hull among the Great Lakes car ferries

“ She was one of the few ships ever propelled by both paddle wheels and a screw. The great Victorian liner *Great Eastern* is the principle example of such propulsion.” (Hilton, p.32).

TRANSFER (II) US 145503

265' X 75.2' (overall) X 12.2' Steel., St. p. & sc. 1511 GT

Built: Cleveland, Cleveland Ship Building Co., 1888, Hull No. 3

Engines: Wheels, two horizontal condensing, two cylinders, 28: X 48”.

Screw: Horizontal, two cylinders, 28” X 36”. Total 239 NHP. Converted to compound 1904.

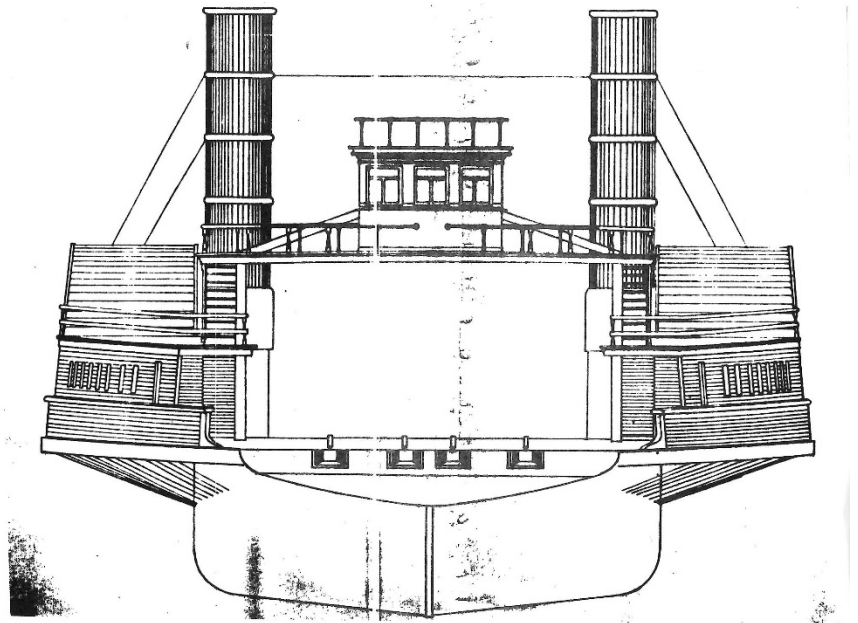
Boilers: Original: Four firebox, 11’6” X 16’, 85 pounds pressure.

Reboilered: Fore firebox, John Brennan, Detroit, 1917.

Capacity: As built, Two tracks, later to Three tracks, 21 cars.

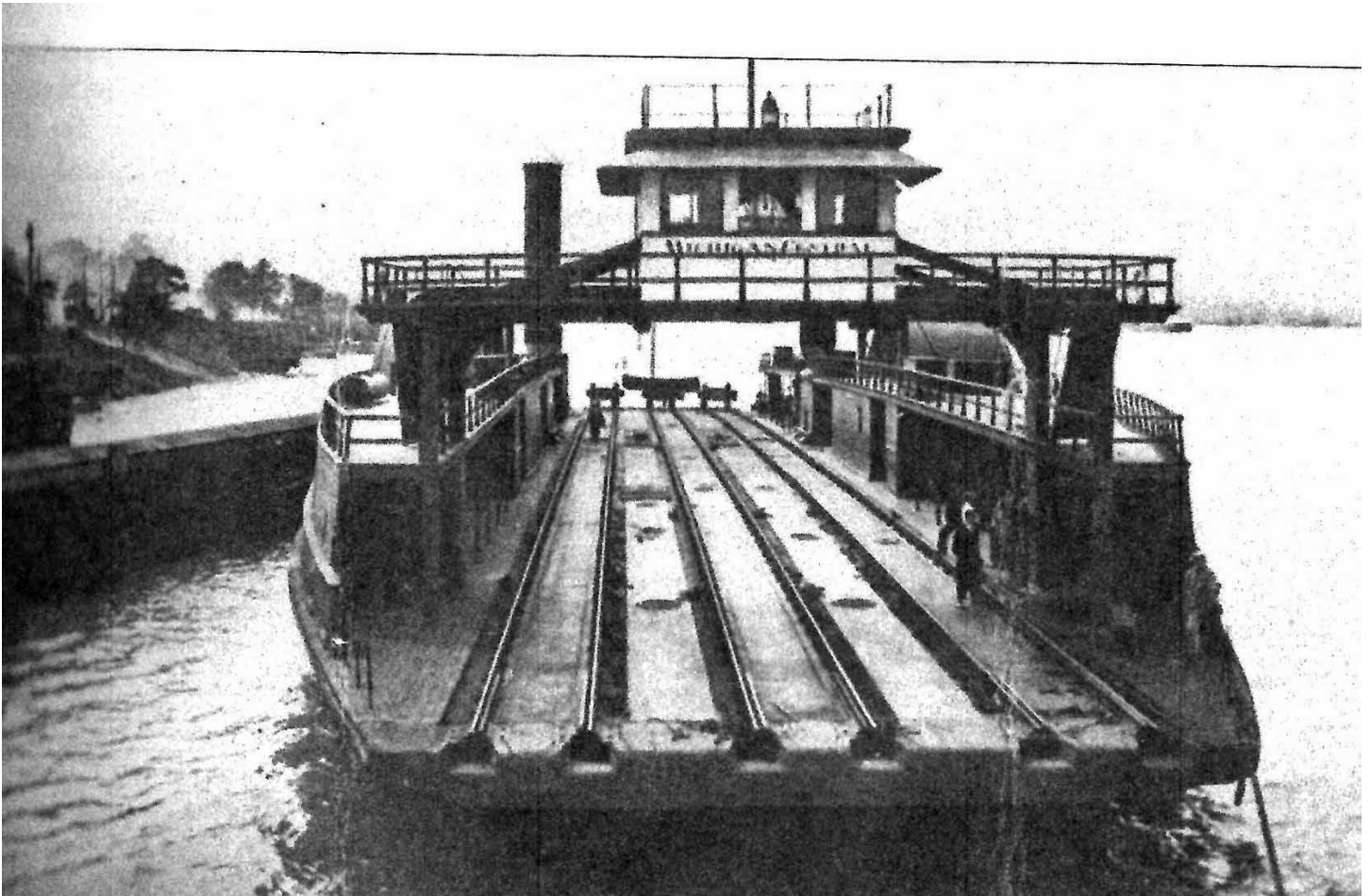
Disposition: Sold to Wabash Ry., October 1912 then sold again, Pine Ridge Navigation, Ltd; scrapped at Hamilton 1940.

“**TRANSFER (II)** had 27’6” wheels (@ 66 tons each). The wheels were driven by two cylinders in the hull through a 16 ft. cog wheel. Additionally, the 9’6” propeller at the stern was driven by cylinder on a shaft 10” in diameter and was 53 ft. long. “The shaft was slightly inclined so that the screw projected. The reason for this odd arrangement was the nature of the icebreaking required at Detroit. The ice on the Detroit River is typically pack ice against which the usual method of ice breaking, bringing the bow forward on the sheet of ice until the weight of the ship breaks the ice, is inappropriate. Since the



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No. 3: 1903 @ 3-rails. "The Detroit River car ferries are not equipped with the jacks and chains of the Lake Michigan boats; cars are secured only with rail clamps. Here is the uncluttered car deck of the **Michigan Central**." (Hilton, p. 35)

Detroit River car ferries spend about half their passages backing, the propeller on **TRANSFER (II)** was the wheels while birthing however, and normally the ship used only her wheels approaching the ship."

"**TRANSFER (II)** had many opportunities to demonstrate her ice-breaking talents on her maiden voyage. She steamed from Cleveland to Detroit under her own power, January 13, 1889, making the trip in 11 hours and 12 minutes, even though she had run through about 50 miles in sheet ice., four to six inches thick. She had a speed of 12 miles per hour in open water and 10 miles per hour in sheet ice. She was equipped with 10 intakes in various points about her hull because of the difficulty of taking boiler water in heavy ice."

"Paddlers had three distinct advantages in car ferry service: they could be built for shallower drafts than propellers, they were more maneuverable in thin ice, and their wheels were particularly effective in keeping their slips free of ice."

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Plans:

The plans of **Transfer II**, as built, were obtained from the Great Lakes Maritime Museum. James B. Jones of the Great Lakes Model Shipbuilders (5401 Woodward Avenue, Detroit 2 Michigan) drew the plans. The scale of the 3 sheet drawings is 1/8" (HO model R.R. scale is 1/87).

As this ferry was the third of the three builds, it would be safe to assume that Transfer II, in 1903, would appear similar to above.

Bill Strachan, October 15, 2022

Next up: The Build of the first steel hull: Phase 1