

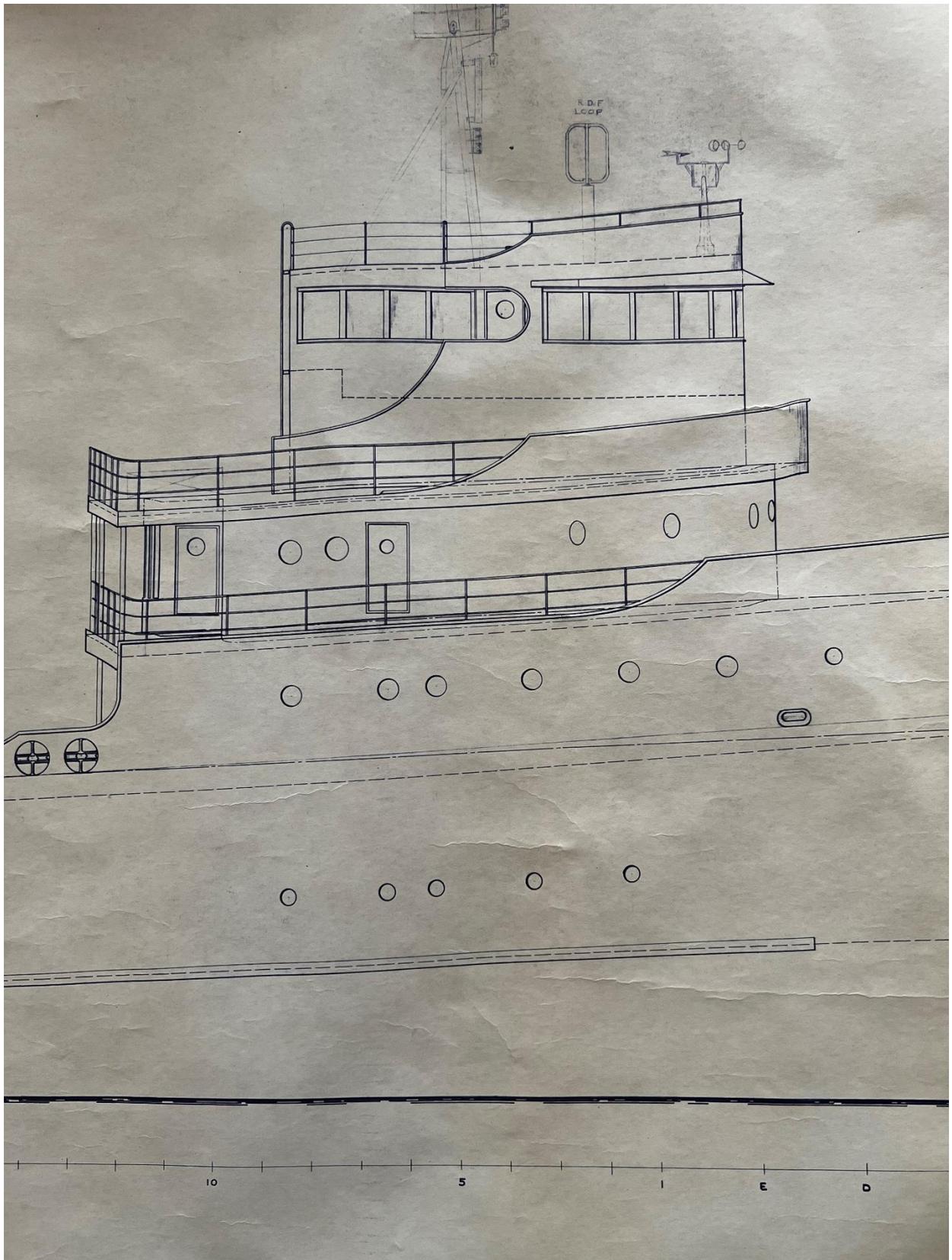
The SS Edmund Fitzgerald

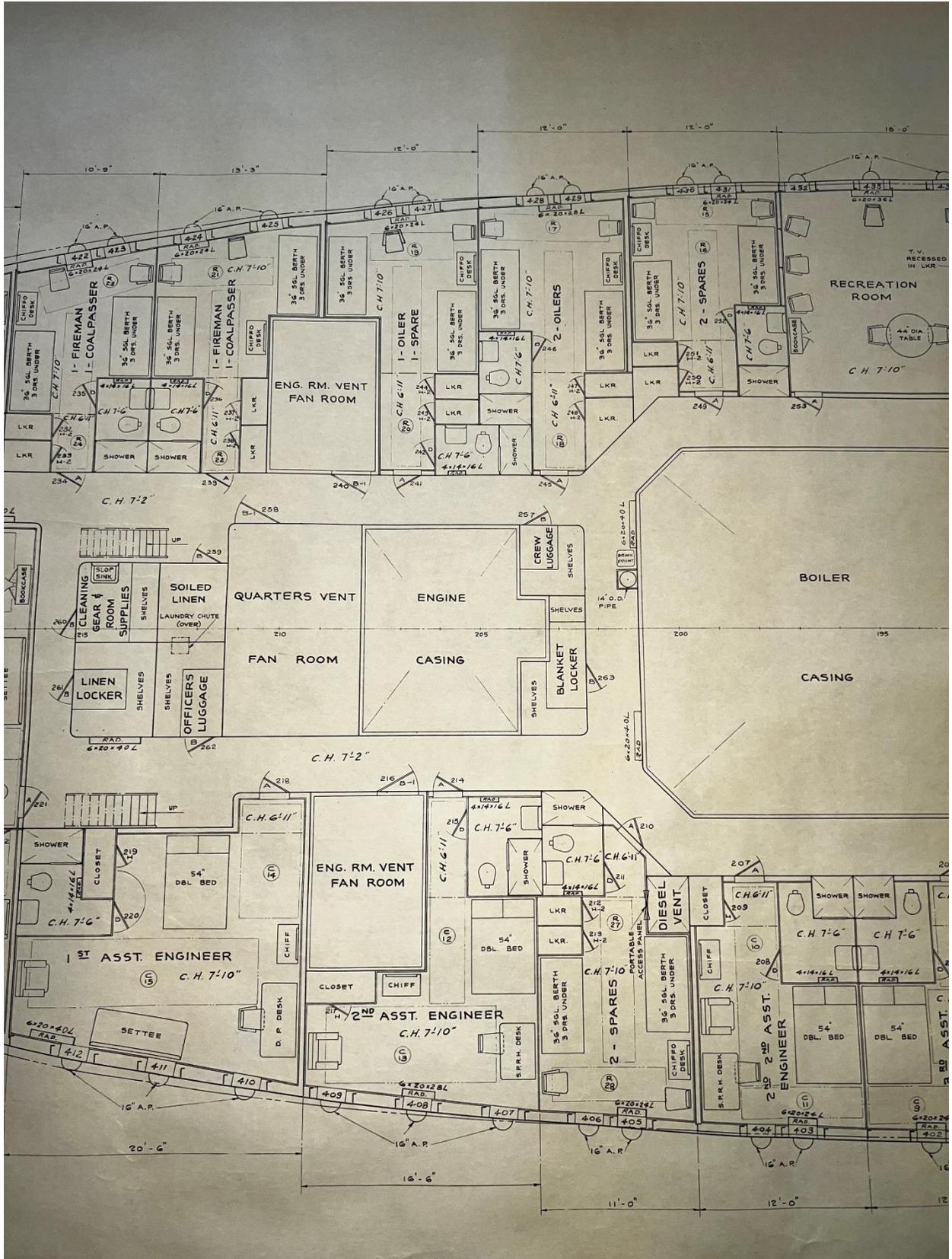
By Audrey Wicklander, Museum Assistant

Recently while looking through some maps for a research request, I found original blueprints of the SS Edmund Fitzgerald from Great Lake Engineering Works in River Rouge. The blueprints were donated by a GLEW engineer and Wyandotte resident, Lawrence Kretchmer, on November 14th, 1970 – almost five years before the Fitzgerald sank in Lake Superior on November 9th, 1975 and exactly five years to the day before she was found on the lakebed. Pages 2 through 8 of this article contain four blueprints and two images of the Edmund Fitzgerald under construction for your viewing, courtesy of the City of Wyandotte Museums.

The Edmund Fitzgerald's keel was laid on August 7th, 1957 at GLEW in River Rouge as Hull No. 301. The Fitzgerald was owned and funded by Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance after they became the first insurance company to invest in iron and mineral ores. Northwestern wanted the largest ship on the Great Lakes and after hiring GLEW, they instructed them to build her within one foot of the maximum dimensions required to fit the Saint Lawrence Seaway. Not only was she designed to be the largest freighter, but also the most luxurious for her crew and their guests... including air conditioning in the crew quarters! She was also to be named after Northwestern President, Edmund Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald vehemently disagreed with the decision but the Board of Directors unanimously voted to give her his name.

When she was completed, she was the largest ship to sail the Great Lakes until 1971. The ship was launched in the Detroit River during an elaborate ceremony on June 8th, 1958. Over 15,000 people were in attendance. She completed nine days of sea trials in September of 1958, then she was cleared to sail. Although she was built and launched in River Rouge, her port of registry was Milwaukee because the headquarters of Northwestern are in that city. She traveled mostly between Superior, WI, Toledo, OH, and Zug Island, MI. During her time sailing the Great Lakes, she made 758 round trips between the lakes which is equivalent to 44 trips around the world.





APPROVAL DATES	
OWNERS	JAN. 9, 1958
U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE	MAR. 31, 1958
U.S. COAST GUARD	4-18-1958

HULL NO 301

ARRANGEMENT OF
SPAR DECK FORWARD

Great Lakes Engineering Works

RIVER ROUGE, MICH.

HULL DEPT.

DRAWN BY P.W.D. CHECKED BY _____

TRACED BY _____ SCALE 1/4" = 1 FOOT DATE AUG. 14, 1957

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