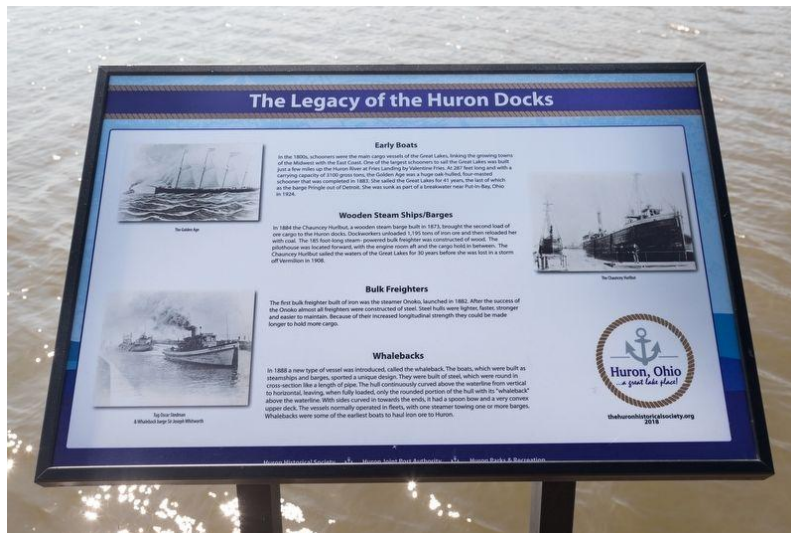


Legacy of the Huron Docks

Early Boats/Wooden Steam Ships and Barges/Bulk Freighters/Whalebacks

Location - Marker can be reached from Main Street north of Huron Pier. It is at the end of Main Street, past the Huron Pier and Lighthouse parking lot, at the doc step-up.



*Photographed By
J. J. Prats, August 8, 2019*

Information taken from the [Historical Marker Database](#).

Inscription - Early Boats.

In the 1800s, schooners were the main cargo vessels of the Great Lakes, linking the growing towns of the Midwest with the East Coast. One of the largest schooners to sail the Great Lakes was built just a few miles up the Huron River at Fries Landing by Valentine Fries. At 287 feet long and with a carrying capacity of 3100 gross tons, the *Golden Age* was a huge oak-hulled, four-masted schooner that was completed in 1883. She sailed the Great Lakes for 41 years, the last of which as the barge *Pringle* out of Detroit. She was sunk as part of a breakwater near Put-In-Bay, Ohio in 1924.

Wooden Steam Ships/Barges. In 1884 the *Chauncey Hurlbut*, a wooden steam barge built in 1873, brought the second load of ore cargo to the Huron docks. Dockworkers unloaded 1,195 tons of iron ore and then reloaded her with coal. The 185 foot-long steam-powered bulk freighter was constructed of wood. The pilothouse was located forward, with the engine room aft and the cargo hold in between. The *Chauncey Hurlbut* sailed the waters of the Great Lakes for 30 years before she was lost in a storm off Vermilion.



*Photographed By J. J.
Prats, August 8, 2019*

Bulk Freighters. The first bulk freighter built of iron was the steamer *Onoko*, launched in 1882. After the success of the *Onoko* almost all freighters were constructed of steel. Steel hulls were lighter, faster, stronger and easier to maintain. Because of their increased longitudinal strength they could be made longer to hold more cargo.

Whalebacks. In 1888 a new type of vessel was introduced, called the whaleback. The boats, which were built as steamships and barges, sported a unique design. They were

built of steel, which were round in cross-section like a length of pipe. The hull continuously curved above the waterline from vertical to horizontal, leaving, when fully loaded, only the rounded portion of the hull with its “whale back” above the waterline. With sides curved in towards the ends, it had a spoon bow and a very convex upper deck. The vessels normally operated in fleets, with one steamer towing one or more barges. Whalebacks were some of the earliest boats to haul iron ore to Huron.

Erected in 2018 by the Huron Historical Society



Photographed By J. J. Prats, August 8, 2019

This interpretive panel can be seen in profile to the right of the steps.