

Telescope

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IN THIS NUMBER WE SEND GREETING TO OUR MANY FRIENDS IN OSWEGO, NEW YORK, AND PAY TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN JAMES VAN CLEVE WHOSE MANUSCRIPT HISTORY OF EARLY GREAT LAKES STEAM BOATS REMAINS AMONG THE INVALUABLE BOOKS ON THIS REGION.

EDITORIAL PAGE

NEARLY NINE SCORE YEARS AGO, A CERTAIN GROUP OF GENTLEMEN SET THEIR SIGNATURES TO A DOCUMENT WHICH BECAME THE BASIS OF A LOT OF CHANGES, FOR THE BETTER. YES, IT WAS THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, AND IT WAS PREFACED WITH A FEW WORDS AS TO WHY.

THIS IS A DECLARATION OF INTER-DEPENDENCE, ALSO WITH A FEW WORDS AS TO WHY.

IT HAS BEEN QUITE CLEAR, FOR SOME TIME, THAT TELESCOPE'S PRESENT SIZE IS INADEQUATE TO OUR NEEDS. WE HAVE BUILT UP A BANK OF GOOD MATERIAL FOR PUBLICATION AND HAVE MORE IN SIGHT. TO ENLARGE THE MAGAZINE AT A COST WITHIN REASON IT IS NECESSARY TO ADD EIGHT PAGES AT A TIME, AND THIS WE HAVE DECIDED TO DO, BEGINNING WITH THE JANUARY 1955 NUMBER WHICH WILL BE VOLUME 4, NUMBER 1. THIS IS GOING TO MAKE TELESCOPE COST MORE THAN TWICE AS MUCH FOR PRINTING AND POSTAGE WILL JUST DOUBLE IN COST.

WE HAVE MADE A SURVEY OF PUBLICATIONS IN FIELDS SIMILAR TO OURS, AND OUR FINDINGS SHOW THAT THE PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT WILL PUT OUR MAGAZINE ON A PAR WITH THE BEST, AS REGARDS EDITORIAL SPACE IN RELATION TO COST TO THE READER IF WE RAISE THE SUBSCRIPTION PRICE TO \$2.50 PER YEAR. THE READER WILL BE GETTING TWICE AS MUCH FOR ONLY .666% MORE IN COST, AND A MUCH BETTER TYPE OF READING MATTER. IT IS ALSO TO BE REMEMBERED THAT THE THINGS WE PUBLISH ARE VERY COSTLY, IN MANY CASES, MAY BE CONSIDERED AS EXTREMELY RARE. SOME OF THE SHIP PLANS PUBLISHED IN THE PAST HAVE COST AS MUCH AS \$400.00 FOR DRAFTING, NOT TO MENTION THE RESEARCH INVOLVED.

DURING THE PAST FIVE MONTHS WE HAVE MET ALL PUBLISHING COSTS OUT OF CURRENT INCOME, BUT NO SURPLUS HAS BEEN ACCUMULATED. TO TURN OUT A LARGER AND BETTER MAGAZINE MORE MONEY WILL BE NEEDED. THAT MONEY MUST COME FROM THE READERS OR THROUGH THEIR EFFORTS, AND HERE IS WHERE WE COME TO THE MATTER OF INTER-DEPENDENCE.

OBVIOUSLY, WE DO NOT, AND CAN NOT, AFFORD TO PUT ON A COSTLY SUBSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN. EVERY DOLLAR WE TAKE IN IS SPENT IN GETTING OUT THE MAGAZINE. NATURALLY, THE READERS WANT THE BEST MAGAZINE POSSIBLE. THE MORE SUBSCRIBERS WE HAVE, THE MORE WE HAVE TO SPEND ON IMPROVING TELESCOPE, AND THE LOWER WE CAN KEEP THE PRICE, SO WE ASK EACH AND EVERY SUBSCRIBER TO CONSIDER THEMSELVES MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON CIRCULATION, AND DO WHAT THEY CAN TO GET US MORE SUBSCRIBERS. AS SOON AS OUR CIRCULATION HAS REACHED THE POINT WHERE WE MAY ATTRACT ADVERTISERS WE CAN INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE MAGAZINE AT FREQUENT INTERVALS UNTIL IT BECOMES IN SIZE AND QUALITY THE KIND OF PUBLICATION THIS GREAT LAKES REGION HAS NEEDED FOR A LONG TIME.

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BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES

I

Captain James Van Cleve
1808 - 1888

Captain James Van Cleve was born in Laurenceville, N.J. in 1808. When he was one year old the family moved to Batavia, where he acquired a common school education which was later rounded off with two years at the pioneer academy at Middlesburg.

At the age of sixteen he began his career as a clerk in a Laurenceville store. In the year 1854 it is hard to realize that there was a time when boys went to work on such jobs working from six in the morning until nine at night, just for the opportunity to learn the calling. Fortunately, for us, young James realized that, as he put it, he was "drifting onto a lee shore". He quit his store job and became a clerk on the steamer "Ontario", first steamboat on the Great Lakes.

Here was a calling indeed, and one that he followed, in one way or another, for 62 years. He worked his way up to Master and left behind him an enviable record of achievement, not only as an able mariner but in many other ways.

In December 1840, while visiting in New York he made the acquaintance of John Ericsson, inventor of the screw propeller, who was in America trying to find a sponsor for a vessel to be equipped with his device. Ericsson made him an offer of a half interest in the patent (Great Lakes rights), if Van Cleve would see to it that just one vessel, propeller-driven, were put into operation on those waters.

An agreement was made and put into writing. Van Cleve took these and went to Oswego, New York, where, in a short time he concluded an arrangement with Samuel Doolittle, who owned a ship yard there, for the building of a vessel. C. C. Dennis, of the town of Auburn, built the engine after drawings supplied by Ericsson himself. She was 91 feet long, and $20\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide, with a depth of hold of $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet. She registered 138 tons, and was given the name "Vandalia".

OUR OCTOBER COVER

This month our cover picture is another one of Rowley Murphy's Great Lakes gems. It shows the three-mast schooner "Stuart H. Dunn", of Kingston, Ontario, fitting out for the 1906 season. She is lying at the Church Street Slip, at Toronto. Note the timber ports for stowing lumber under the poop deck.

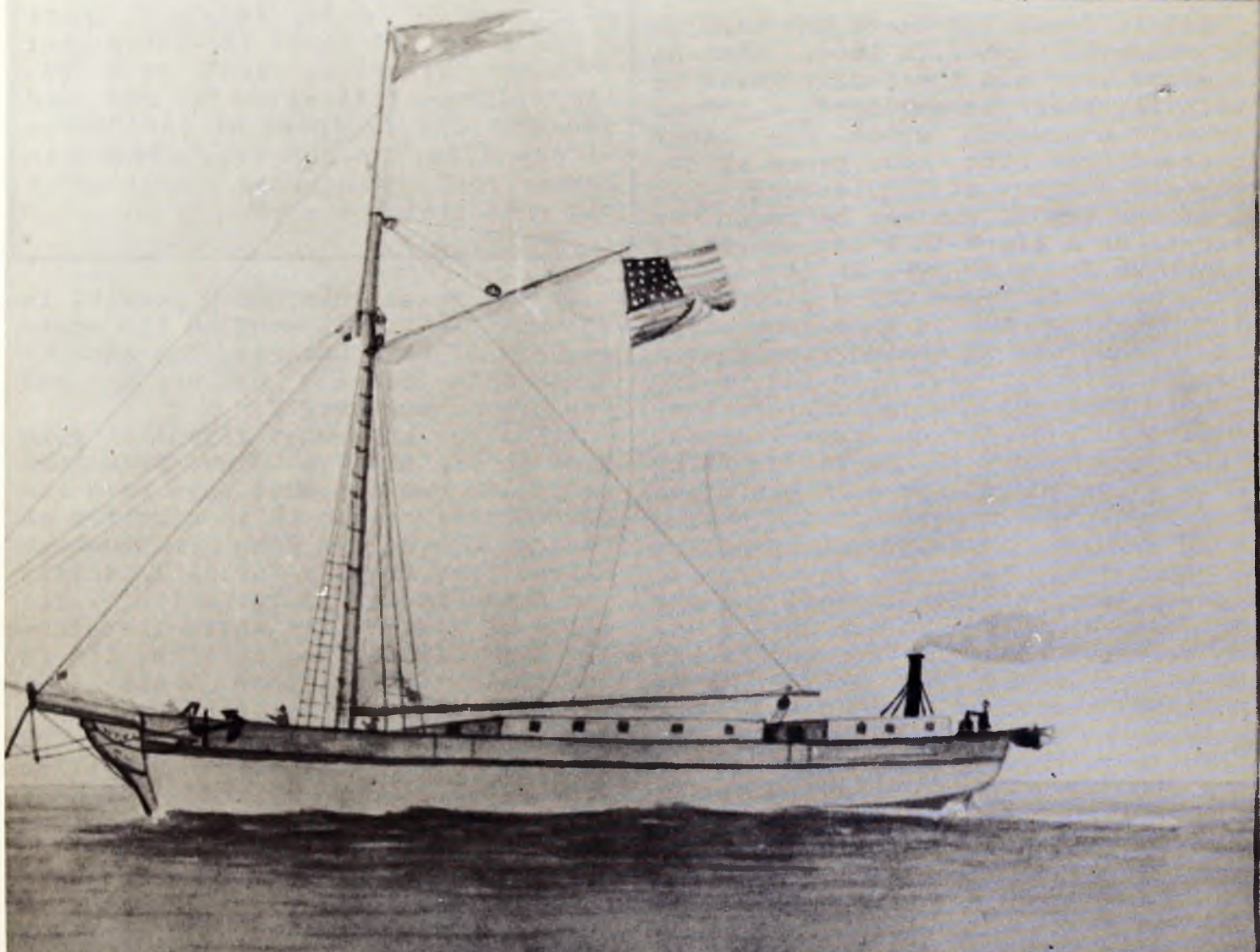
On her trial trip, under permit, in November, 1841, she went to the western end of Lake Ontario. She encountered both good and bad weather and was proved successful.

We do not know what financial gain came to Captain Van Cleve from the propeller but it must have been satisfactory, since it is a matter of record that he and John Ericsson remained fast friends for life. Captain Van Cleve had an appreciation of the value of history far above the average for his day and calling. It is doubtful if any other Great Lakes mariner has left to posterity such a wealth of historical materials. The drawings of the "Vandalia" propeller and engines he retained for many years, then presented them to the Oswego, N.Y. Historical Society.

Perhaps his most valuable contribution to the history of Great Lakes shipping is several volumes, still in manuscript form, containing a great number of his own sketches of early Lakes vessels. One volume of this work is in the hands of the Chicago Historical Society and the others are a part of the Buffalo Historical Society's collection, known as the Van Cleve Papers. The historical societies of Cleveland, Ohio, and Toronto, Canada, were also favored with items which this remarkable man had collected during his long and interesting life.

Captain Van Cleve died April 20, 1888 at his home in Sandwich, Ontario in his eightieth year. It is regrettable that more of our early Great Lakes shipping men did not possess his appreciation of history.

James Van Cleave



Propeller VAN DALIA ON THE LAKES. SKETCH BY CAPT VAN CLEVE 1841.

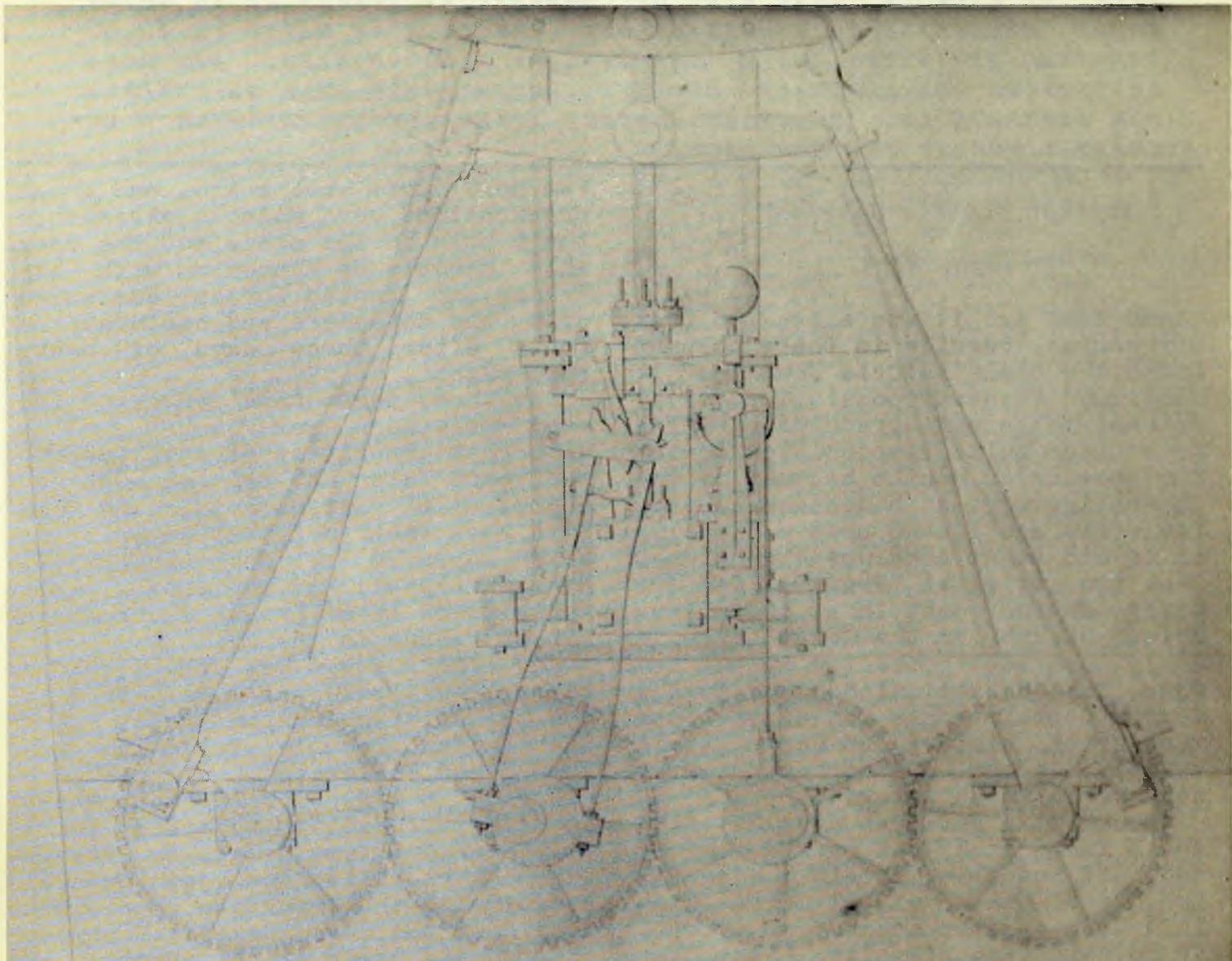
AS SHE APPEARED WHEN SHE FIRST CAME OUT.

THE PROPELLER VAN DALIA

138 1/2 TONS.

CAPT Rufus Hawkins.

*Was built in Oswego in 1841 - Sylvester De Witt Ship Building
Her owners were Sashwin Doolittle - Bronson & Crocker - Capt Rufus Hawkins
and Capt J. Van Cleave - The above is a faithful portrait of her*



Cap. Ericsson drawing of double Engine for the
 Pioneer Van Dala
 2 Cylinders

Side View —

The Side View in Attachment of
 the Van Dala of the
 Double Engine

THE ABOVE
 is the Original Drawing of the
 ENGINE
 put into the PIONEER PROPELLER
 VAN DALIA.

EDITORIAL PAGE CONT'D

WITH, OR WITHOUT, THAT KIND OF COOPERATIVE EFFORT IT IS GOING TO BE NECESSARY TO INCREASE OUR SUBSCRIPTION RATES TO \$2.50 PER YEAR BEGINNING WITH THE JANUARY 1955 NUMBER. NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS AND RENEWALS RECEIVED DURING 1954 WILL BE CHARGED FOR ACCORDINGLY. THOSE BEGINNING AFTER DECEMBER WILL BE CHARGED FOR AT THE NEW RATE.

Another "Little Journey"

Oswego, N. Y.

Some time ago it was suggested that our series, carried in these columns under the title "Little Journeys" be continued whenever possible. This, of course, means making journeys, which have been quite impossible during the past seven months because of the increasing work at home base. Just a few weeks ago I came upon a clipping in an old scrap book which mentioned that the original drawings for the first engine used in a propeller-driven steamer on the Great Lakes, in 1841, had been presented to the Oswego, N.Y. Historical Society by the famous Captain James Van Cleve whose manuscript history of early Lakes vessels is one of the most important works in this region.

Though this gift was made 77 years ago I immediately set out to find it and, if possible, obtain a copy for the use of our model builders. Here is a step by step account of my visit to this historic city. First, let us take a look at a partial list of persons and events which made Oswego so interesting to the lovers of history.

As far back as the 1680's, about 265 years ago, English and Dutch traders had ascended the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers and crossed over to Lake Ontario at what is now Oswego, where they were making a bid for a share of the fur trade, then almost a French monopoly. By 1727 the colony of New York considered the post of sufficient importance to warrant the expense of maintaining a fort there.

Twenty-eight years went by, and by that time the French were determined to destroy the post at all costs. The British were just as determined to hold it. Their first Great Lakes shipyard was built there in 1755.

Two more forts were built, and great preparations were made to strengthen their hold on the place but the very able Marquis de Montcalm with his French and Indian forces descended upon the defenders and captured the forts after three days of heavy bombardment.

The three forts were destroyed and many prisoners were taken, along with vast quantities of supplies, but two years later the British returned and rebuilt Fort Ontario, and from this base sent out the expeditions which captured Fort Frontenac (1758) Niagara (1759), and Montreal (1760). Three years later France surrendered all of Canada to the British.

In 1766 Oswego was the scene of peace treaty between chief Pontiac and Sir William Johnson which ended the Indian trouble following the French and Indian War.

During the War for American Independence the British sent Col. Barry St. Leger out from Oswego to ravage the Mohawk Valley and join General Burgoyne in the effort to remove New York from the war. General Herkimer stopped St. Leger at the Battle of Oriskany, the bloodiest ever fought on the continent of North America, in point of casualties in relation to the number of men involved. Fifty percent of the combatants were killed or wounded. General Herkimer died of wounds received there.

The last campaign of the Revolution was directed against Oswego by orders of George Washington, but the war ended with the fort still in the hands of the British who held it until 1796, in spite of the terms of treaty of peace.

On July 19, 1812 war with England was again declared, and Oswego was again an important post. The British made several attempts by water to capture the place during 1813, but not until May 7, 1814 were they successful, and only then by employing

eleven vessels and three thousand men. The post reverted to the United States at the close of the war, and except for the period of uneasiness caused by the Patriot's War (1838) it has known nothing but peace.

In 1863 the Federal Government began rebuilding Fort Ontario, replacing the timber revetments with stone but ceased work on it in 1866, with parts of the walls unfinished. The Federal Government turned the fort back to the State of New York in the year 1946 and it is now being fully restored in accordance with the 1866 plans.

Those are only a few of the highlights of the past of this fascinating city in which I found myself at the end of my journey. For a visitor interested in historical research a planned reception would hardly have been more gratifying. As it was, I arrived unannounced.

The desk clerk at the Pontiac Hotel, on duty when I registered, is a member of the Oswego County Historical Society. He directed me to the Curator of their museum, Mr. Anthony Slosic, who immediately gave me the freedom of the fine old mansion in which the Society has its headquarters, and is organizing and displaying its historic documents and other materials. Through Mr. Slosic I met Mr. Ralph M. Faust, Principal of their High School, and a past president of the historical society. Both gentlemen were most helpful, and through their good offices I obtained permission to inspect Captain James Van Cleve's book which has reposed in the vaults in the Oswego City Hall since it was presented to the city in 1877.

As if by magic the book opened at the page upon which the plans of the Vandalia's engines were pasted. There was no way of obtaining a copy except by photographing the page. I was referred to a Mr. Carpenter, of the Oswego Palladium-Times, and with him I made the necessary arrangements for this undertaking.

As I turned the pages of this book it occurred to me that here was one of the most valuable reference works in the Great Lakes region, locked

away in a safe place for more than three-quarters of a century, seldom heard of, and little used. Why not have it microfilmed?

Fortunately, Oswego has one photographer qualified to do this work, and having the confidence of the custodian of the book to the extent that it would be entrusted to him. First I had to get permission from the Mayor, who by the way knew little about the book, but who very graciously granted the privilege. The next step was to locate some one to do the job, and through Mr. Faust I made contact with Mr. George Barbeau and quickly concluded the necessary arrangements for 114 slides to be done black and white for the text and in color for the beautiful watercolor sketches with which the work is profusely illustrated.

Thus, through Mr. Carpenter's photos, contracted for by TELESCOPE, and the slides being obtained through the Museum of Great Lakes History, another treasure will be made available to the public.

Because of this, and similar work being done by the Museum and the Guild in the field of nautical research and the development of plans of old, and new, Great Lakes vessels we feel that we are entitled to the support necessary for the carrying out of our plans to restore to its proper place in American history the story of the men and ships which are so largely responsible for our high state of development today.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Among the models of Great Lakes vessels now in the Museum of Great Lakes History is the "Mayflower", a sidewheeler of one hundred years ago and one of the luxury liners of the period.

According to a large silver medal, exhibited with this model, one James R. Cunningham was awarded First Prize for this model, in a contest sponsored by the Michigan Agricultural Society. Somewhere, one of these days we will locate the records of that society, and perhaps they will

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One Hundred Years Cont:

throw some light on the status of the art of model building at that time.

At least eleven vessels on these waters have been named "Mayflower". The one mentioned here was built in 1849, one of three similar steamers operated by the Michigan Central between Detroit and Buffalo with the intention of capturing the luxury passenger trade. All went well until 1854 when a business recession slowed down passenger traffic to a mere trickle. Two of the steamers were scrapped. The "Mayflower" avoided the ship breakers by running ashore on Point Pelee, in Lake Erie, where she became a total loss.

The year was one of marine disasters. There were 387 in all, with a property loss of well over two million dollars, large sum when a boat like the "Mayflower" cost no more than \$40,000. 119 lives were lost. Property losses were fairly well divided between sail and steam. Fire and collision claimed about equal parts of the losses, approximately \$500,000.00, with strandings, sinking and jettison taking the rest.

It is interesting to note that in our time the loss of one modern ore carrier would cause more property loss than did the 387 disasters of 1854.

FOR THE RECORD

The "George M. Humphrey"

On October 5, 1954 a new heiress to the title, "Queen of the Lakes" was launched when the "George M. Humphrey" was gently placed upon the surface of the water.

Built in a huge drydock at Lorain Ohio, yard of the American Ship Building Company, the tense moments of conventional launchings were absent. The submerging valves in the drydock were opened and the great vessel took the water as lightly as an autumn leaf. She was christened on October 5, and already has made several trips.

Because of several new features incorporated into the "Humphrey" we

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consider her worthy of a place in historical continuity of models and will request plans for our files and in due time will be publishing all details concerning her.

THE NOVEMBER MEETING

In order to avoid conflicting with Holiday celebrations the November meeting of the Guild will be held at 7:30 P.M., Friday, November 26th, 1954 in the briefing room of the Detroit Historical Museum.

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