

Telescope

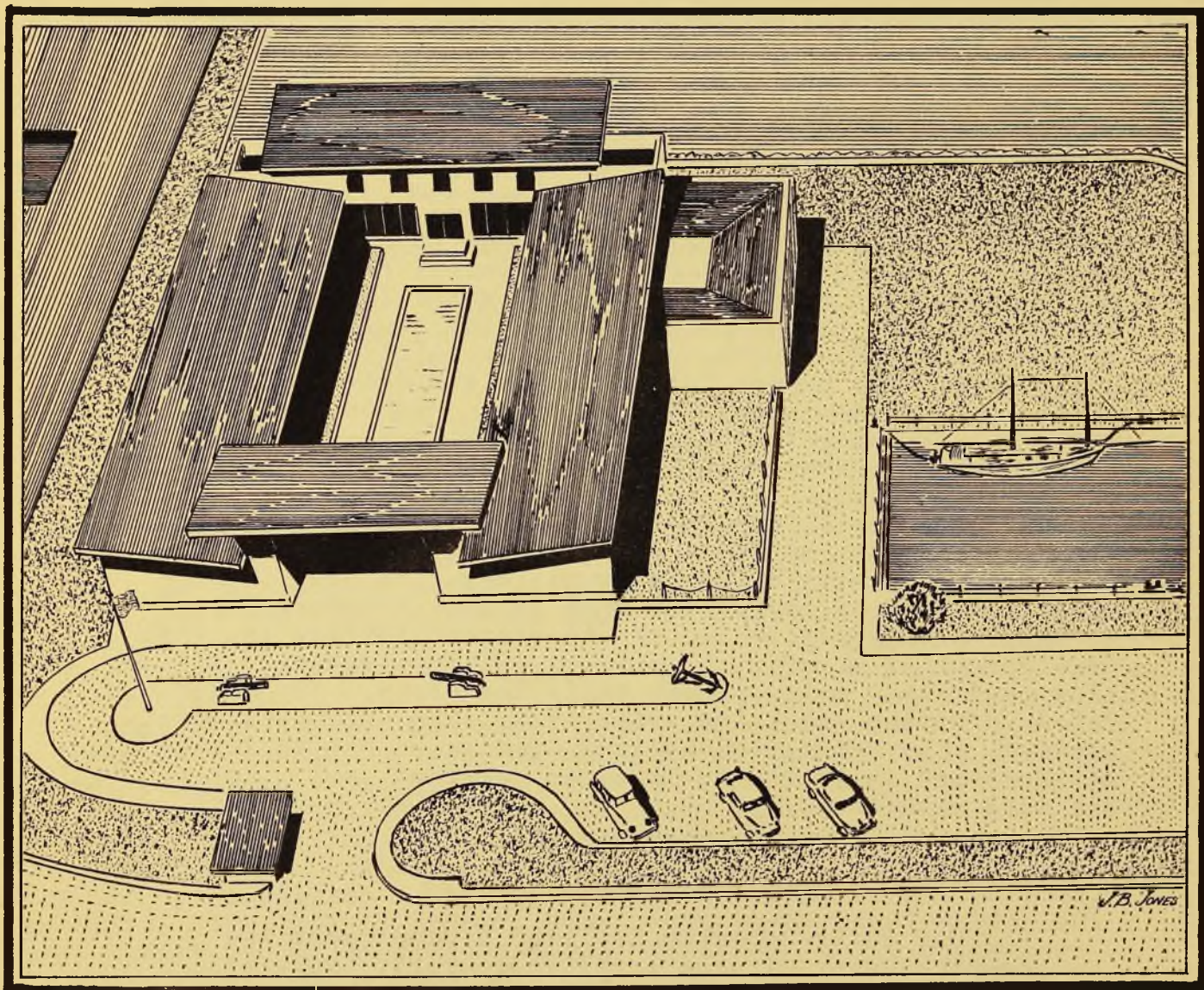
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EXPANSION PROGRAM NUMBER



Air view of proposed building for The Museum of Great Lakes
History

E D I T O R I A L P A G EEXPANSION PROGRAM
of the
MUSEUM OF GREAT LAKES HISTORY

This month we present the expansion program of the Museum of Great Lakes History in as much detail as space will permit. This project has long had top priority with the Guild, and now has the support of several other groups in the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan, including The Marine Historical Society of Detroit, The Algonquin Club, The Historical Society of Michigan, and several others.

Letters to the Chairman of the Detroit Historical Commission, endorsing the program, have been received from all of these organizations, or are being prepared at this time, by them, for presentation in the near future. Our thanks to all of them.

Within recent years much has been done in the field of Great Lakes History by individuals, but there has been no co-ordination of effort, and no central repository for collections of documents and objects where they could be made available to the public under the supervision of a competent custodian with adequate facilities for their protection. The Burton Collection of the Detroit Public Library has accumulated a considerable number of documents but no objects other than a few pictures, and there is no member of their staff who is a specialist in Great Lakes History.

With the facilities outlined in this number of the Telescope we may, at last, hope to see justice done this very important part of Amercian History. We have included here a plan of the museum deck of the schooner "Wing" to show how impossible it is to proceed further in the development of a maritime museum, without these facilities, and this only partly tells the story. The museum files, drafting room, and preparatory shop are even more crowded. The Detroit Historical Commission has indicated its interest in seeing the program carried out. Let us all work with them.

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AS A REMINDER

Our entire program for 1955 depends upon the prompt payment of dues early in January. Dues are payable on January 1, and your prompt attention to this detail will make our work very much easier.

J. E. Johnston
Secretary-Treasurer.

SIX YEARS ON THE WING
1949 - 1954

When the Museum of Great Lakes History was established as the Maritime Division of the Detroit Historical Museum a dozen or so objects of some historical significance, plus about thirty-five ship pictures, were the full extent of the accessions.

During the winter of 1948-49 a few more were acquired. When the museum was opened, July 2, 1949, its home the schooner "J.T. Wing" was ninety per cent of the show. Three canoes had been borrowed. Along the port side, below decks, there were six case exhibits with photo-mural backs and a few tiny models, not built to scale. The Detroit Power Squadron installed an exhibit, and the Lake Survey another. They helped fill the space, and were quite good, but they were still just loans.

It is difficult now to remember how the remaining space was filled. One item was a large model of a very small type of sail boat, and a lot of items from the schooner's own rigging, spread thin. Down the center of the hold there was nothing at all but a row of stanchions and the lower parts of the masts. Large explanatory labels were attached to the various structural members, all of which was very well, but they did nothing to tell the story of Great Lakes shipping, and that was supposed to be our job.

The winter of 1949-50 was spent in an intensive search for real museum pieces, with some success. Four case exhibits were installed against the centerline stanchions. In place of the Power Squadron exhibit a replica of a ship's navigator's bridge was installed, with full equipment. Some scale models began showing up among the other items. Plans, suitable for model building had never been available, for Lakes vessels.

During the following winter, after long search, plans began turning up often in the most unexpected places. More models were built or purchased. During the second year of operation, silhouettes, made of card board had been used to indicate the models it was hoped would some day be built.

As the actual models came in the silhouettes were retired. One of the remarkable coincidences in connection with the Museum of Great Lakes History is the finding of plans for every one of the ships which were first indicated only by those silhouettes.

When the museum opened for the summer of 1952 the exhibit space was nearly filled. Before opening day in 1953 there was more good material on hand than could be displayed without over-crowding. The season just ended found us with the overflow either in storage, or displayed at the main building of the Detroit Historical Museum because of lack of space in the schooner "J. T. Wing".

Then, other things have been added to the list of accessions. The anchor collection now contains all of these types in general use from 1492 to the present time.

Paintings of old Great Lakes ships by famous artists of the past, coming from many sources, make the museum's collection the largest of the kind in the United States. Unfortunately they can not be long on exhibition because of dampness within the Wing and the overcrowding.

The plans of Lakes vessels, indispensable in the making of fine ship models, and almost unobtainable just a few years ago, now number more than forty complete sets. Referred to as bits and pieces, are parts of the plans of one hundred other sets.

In the museum's files there are three hundred fifty fine photographs of Lakes ships. More than six thousand Lakes vessels are recorded in information file on ships.

There are eighteen scale models of Lakes ships of all periods, with two more under construction. All of these have been built by members of the Great Lakes Model Shipbuilders' Guild an organization with two hundred members and associate members serving as a very active auxiliary to the museum. There is no other such collection, either as to number or quality. Most of the significant types are represented, and all are built to one scale.

(Turn to page 8)

DETROIT RIVER

GENERAL EXHIBITS

OFFICE

SHOP

STORAGE

HISTORY OF SHIPPING

LAWN

MOTIVE POWER & MARINE EQUIPMENT

TEST POOL

MEETINGS

SPECIAL EXHIBITS

LAWN

LAWN

OUTER HARBOR

Lt. Ho.

WHARF

MARINE R.R.

MUSEUM SHIP

INNER BASIN

INNER HARBOR

LAWN

PARKING AREA

LAWN

FENCE

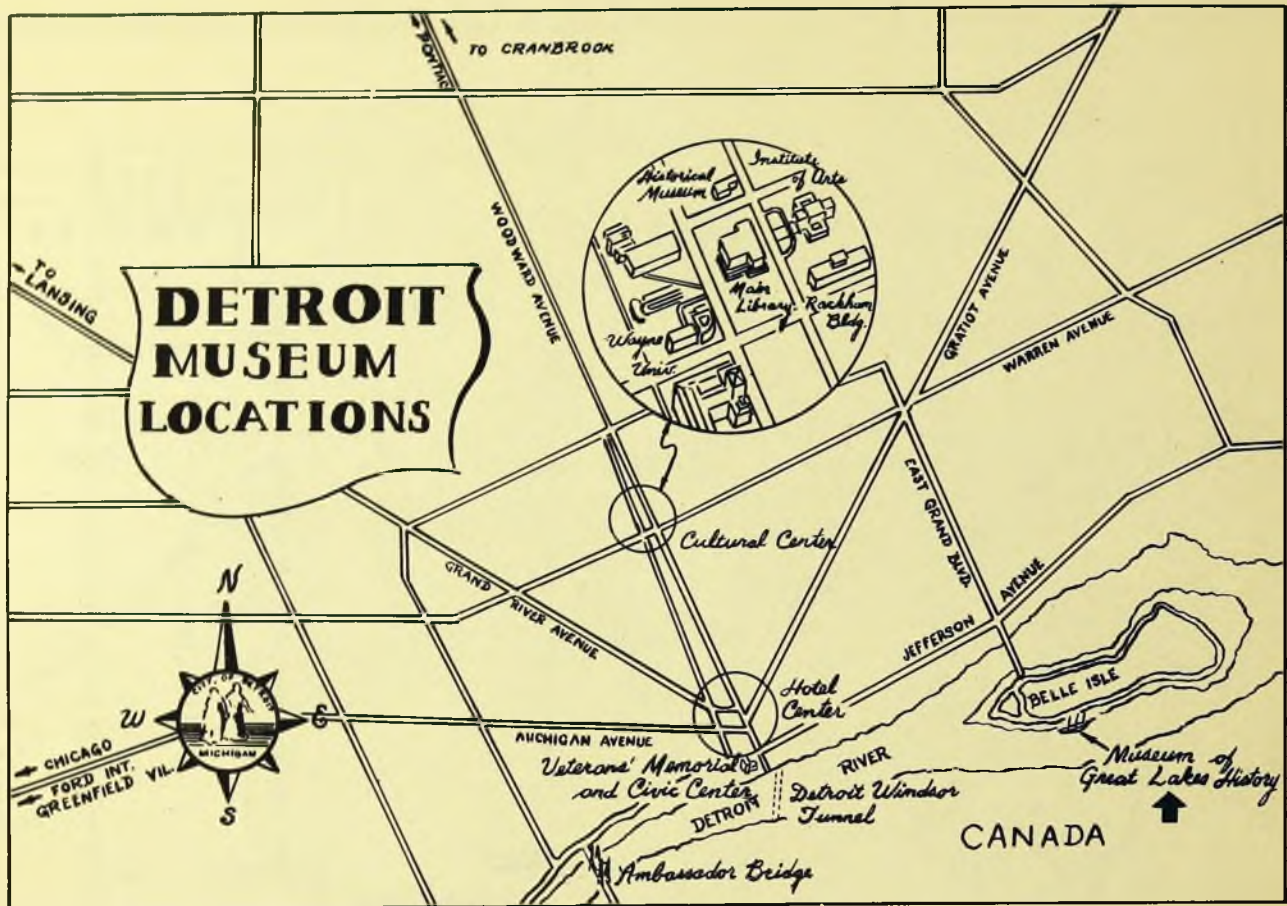
ENTRANCE

SOUTH SHORE DRIVE
BELLE ISLE

BRIDGE

CANAL

MUSEUM OF GREAT LAKES HISTORY
PLANT EXPANSION PLAN
SCALE ~ 1/32" = 1'-0"



REGARDING A LOGICAL SITE

Ever since the need for additional facilities for the Museum of Great Lakes History became evident we have been receiving suggestions regarding possible locations. The above map will explain our choice in this matter. The sites suggested are here listed.

1. CULTURAL CENTER. Rejected because, at its present size, the maritime museum would be dwarfed by surrounding institutions and because of high realty values. (See large circle) Harbor facilities for our boats are essential to our future plans.
2. CIVIC CENTER. Rejected for the same reasons.
3. A POINT ON THE DETROIT RIVER, NEAR CONNER CREEK. Rejected on account of its isolation.

The most logical site is the one offered, at no cost, adjoining the present site on Belle Isle. This would have these advantages in its favor: (a) No outlay for land. (b) Unlimited room for future expansion. (c) A suitable harbor for our Youth Program schooner, and other training craft. (d) A view of the main channel of the river and its panorama of modern shipping. (e) Ample parking space for visitors. It may be added that visitors to Belle Isle usually have ample time to spend and so will get more out of their visit to the museum.

THE MUSEUM DECK Schooner "J.T.Wing"

To illustrate what we mean when we say that the schooner "J.T.Wing" is full of exhibits we present here a plan of the museum deck. The small numbers signify:

1. Case exhibits. (Models, etc.)
2. Panels for flat exhibits.
3. Visitor-operated exhibits.
4. Exhibit on tonnage.
5. Dugout and birch-bark canoes built by Indians.
6. Builders' half-models of famous Lakes vessels.
7. Table exhibit.

In order to meet the requirements of the Detroit Building and Safety regulations passageways must be at least four feet wide. A glance at the plan will show that there is no place within the area where another case may be installed without obstructing one of the passageways.

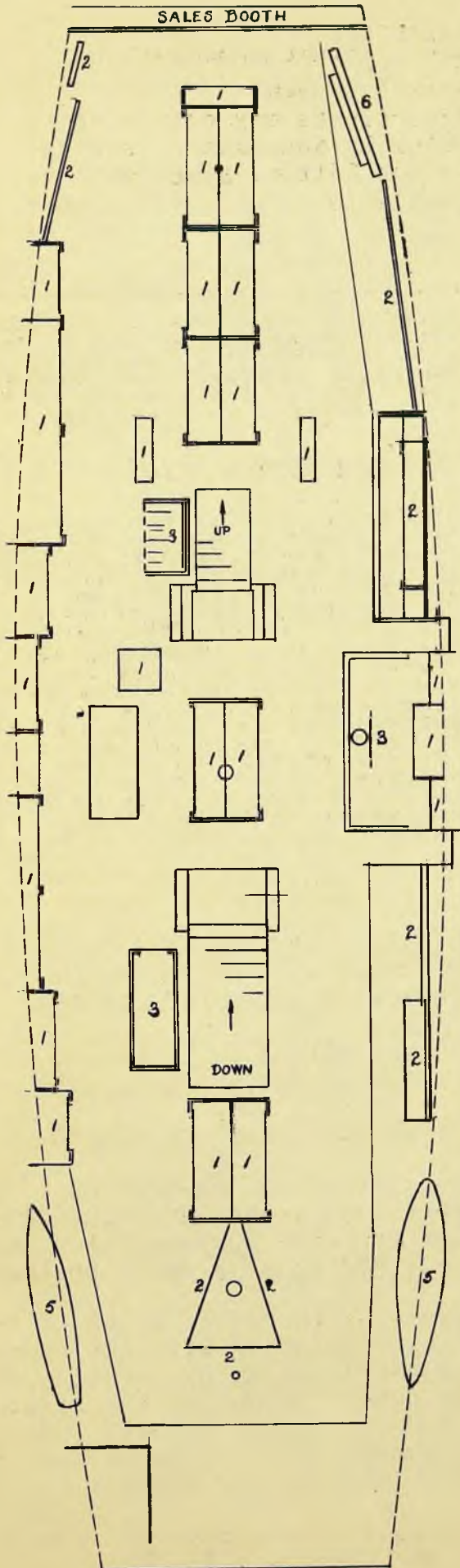
If all the exhibits indicated on the plans were arranged in a single row they would form a line 400 feet long, and even more if not crowded together, end to end.

In addition to the exhibits indicated here there are on hand enough paintings of old Lakes vessels to cover more than one half of one of the ship's sides, and more than enough maps, charts, and graphs to fill an equal space. The models now under construction or planned will require, in one single line, all of 200 lineal feet.

Our projected exhibits on motive power and marine equipment will require space equal to all that now in use in the "Wing". Materials for these are already available.

Working models of the Soo Locks, marine railways, dry docks, and the St. Lawrence Deep Waterway are only a few of the educational exhibits projected. There are many others.

We have now the opportunity, and the duty, to make the Museum of Great Lakes History the kind of institution the Great Lakes have long needed. Let's do just that.



The Museum of Great Lakes History, assisted by the Guild has, with the cooperation of three major donors, Grant M. Piggott, Nathan Silverstine, and Troy M. Browning, and many others who have contributed funds in lesser amounts, established a Youth Education and Training Program, involving the acquisition, reconditioning, and maintenance of two sizeable boats, and a harbor for their protection. One crew of ten young fellows, under skilled guidance, have activated one of the boats and the other will in operation with the coming of spring.

The museum will provide a speaker where ever groups indicate interest in maritime activity on the Lakes. The only charges for this service is reimbursement for expenses incurred by the speaker. The Museum's color-slide collection is both interesting and educational.

The preparatory shop at the museum is the best-equipped in any public institution of its kind in America, and perhaps in the world. Almost all of the machine tools in this shop have been donated by their manufacturers.

The reference library contains the best books on the building of models and many volumes on Great Lakes history. Log books, ship account books, scrapbooks, old charts, licenses of noted Lakes ship masters, with many other significant documents are also among the accessions.

To list all of the exhibits would require more space than is available here. A profile map of the St. Lawrence River, showing existing locks; a visitor-operated showing and explaining the lights carried by ships in accordance with law; another visitor-operated exhibit demonstrates the advantages gained by the use of block and tackle. One shows the essential parts of a light house, and how they worked in the days of oil lamps. These are only a few.

So, as we look back over the few brief years of the Museum's life we see what has been done through community effort to preserve from loss the things used by the men who have made Great Lakes shipping one of the most glamorous parts of our American Heritage.

TELESCOPE

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All available back numbers up to the December 1954 issue, 20¢ plus 2¢ for postage for each number. Later back/numbers, 25¢ plus 3¢ each, postage.

Because of the great value of the contents, beginning with the January number, we recommend back-dating all future subscriptions to the first/23 1955 number. That, and all subsequent numbers will be twice the size of this and previous numbers.

Membership dues, payable January/21, of each year are \$3.00