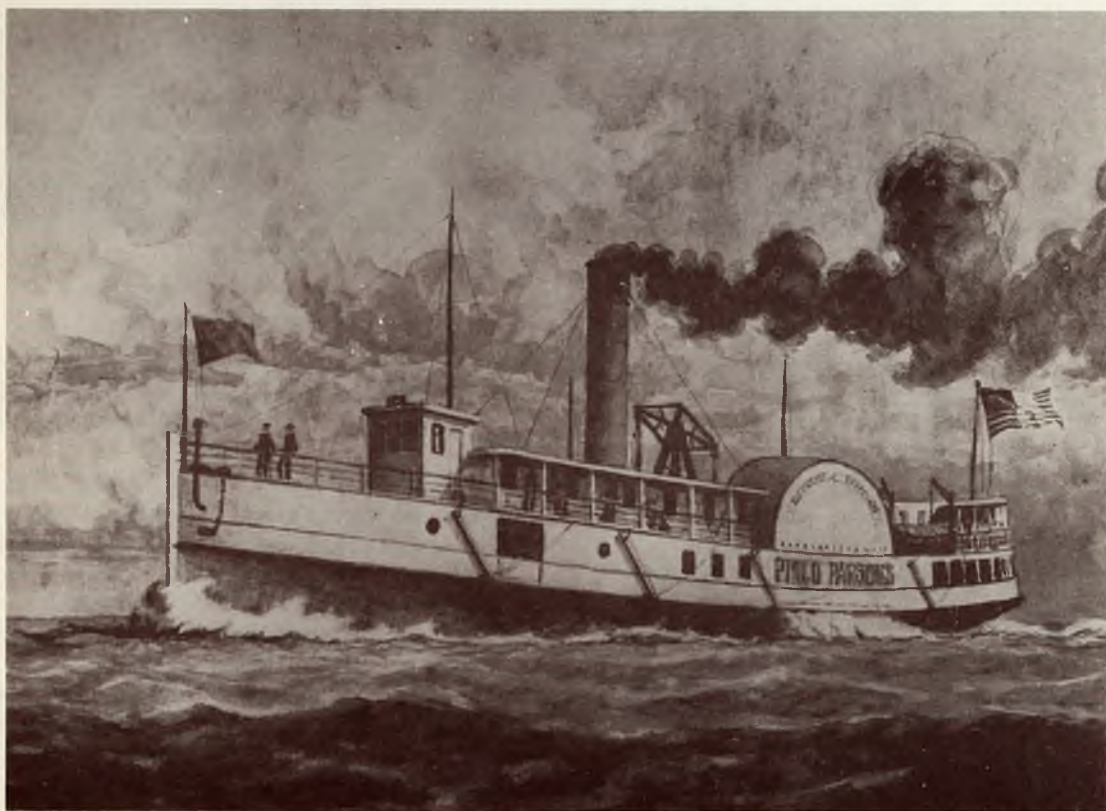


TELESCOPE

February, 1964

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**Great Lakes
Maritime
Institute**



**Dossin Great Lakes Museum,
Belle Isle, Detroit 7, Michigan**

The Great Lakes Maritime Institute

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Meeting Notices

GENERAL MEETING

Friday, March 20, 1964
Dossin Museum, 8 p.m.

Gordon Bugbee will describe Lake Erie's first Golden Age of sidewheel steamers in a paper on the Buffalo to Detroit "North Shore Line" ships of Michigan Central Railroad and its predecessors in the 1840s and 1850s.

BUSINESS MEETING

Friday, April 24, 1964
Dossin Museum, 8 p.m.

Visitors are welcome to these meetings of the Board of Directors.

* * *

The model shipbuilders have already had two gatherings in recent months. In the first, on January 4, Michael O'Brien exhibited his own small-scale models of Lake and East Coast steamers, together with other items in his collection...especially, an outboard profile of his beloved *Tashmoo*. In the second, on February 29, Pat Labadie exhibited some of the more interesting vessel plans in the museum's collection. Pat, who arranges our "blueprint" pages in *TELESCOPE*, is also at work doing drawings of his own. We expect perhaps one more gathering before summer, probably as guests of Ken Fairbanks on April 25. We suggest you phone a R.S.V.P. to Ken and Mrs. Fairbanks (telephone, appropriately, is **KEN**wood 3-3396) so they can know how many to expect and you can learn how to find your way there. For those who missed the visit to Ken's house last year, this will be a good chance to see his extensive model-building workshop.

COVER: Steamer *Philo Parsons*, water color by Father Dowling (see pp. 34, 36 and 45).



FRANK E. KIRBY of 1890
OIL PAINTING BY SETH ARCA WHIPPLE, 1891.
IN THE DOSSIN MUSEUM COLLECTION

Four Narratives

From the
Pre-history and
First Years of the
Ashley &
Dustin Line



1847

For about thirty years after Lake Erie saw its first steamboat, there was hardly any regular "express" service at the western end of the lake. Passengers going from Detroit or Toledo to Buffalo had to abide with many stops at Lake Erie's numerous South Shore settlements. The nearest approach to an express line was the Detroit-Toledo service, calling at Monroe.

Coming of railroads changed this. Railroad managers promoted express steamer lines from their terminals to other ports where railroad connections might also be available. Thus, early in 1847, the steamer *General Scott* began running between Detroit and Sandusky. At the one port was the Michigan Central, extending westward with further stage and steamer connections to reach Chicago. At the other was the Mad River and Lake Erie railroad extending toward Cincinnati, and another railroad reaching to link with the Baltimore and Ohio. Over the years, the occasional calls of the steamers at the Lake Erie Islands became formalized in regular schedules. Service from Detroit to Sandusky via Put-in-Bay grew into the Ashley & Dustin Line, whose beloved steamer *Put-in-Bay* last made the trip in 1951.

The letter below, from the Detroit Free Press of September 27, 1847, gives a view of the newly-opened steamer service and its attractions in its first year of operation.

Sandusky, September 19, 1847

Mr. Harmon:

Did you ever pass a rainy Sunday in a strange place? If you did, you know with what avidity the mind seizes hold of anything which affords employment for the moment, and you will know, too, why it is that I, who detest letter writing, am now engaged in scribbling you a letter for the *Free Press*.

Being disappointed in our trip on board the *Fashion* in consequence of that boat starting on Friday some three hours before her time, I left on Saturday morning on board the [General] *Scott* for central Ohio, via this city. Our passage down was generally pleasant. I say generally for it was occasionally interspersed with sea-sickness--the lake being in considerable commotion in consequence of a stiff breeze. The *Scott* proved herself a good sea boat, and rode the waves admirably well.

On our way down we stopped for half an hour at Put-in-Bay Island, famed in history as the spot where the gallant Perry, during the last war, discovered the British fleet, and near which, one of the best-fought naval actions of the last war was fought and won by our gallant tars.

Roaming along the beach, accompanied by a friend, hunting for pebbles, we discovered several which, if polished, would be superior to any Lake Superior agates I have yet seen. Thousands upon thousands of pebbles of every shape and form, worn perfectly smooth by the action of the waves. Long will I remember Put-in-Bay Island for the pleasant stroll I had upon it.

While at the island, we discovered a steamer passing, and by the time we left, she was some considerable distance ahead, right on our track. Of course, the *Scott* gave chase, and soon the increase of black smoke

from the steamer ahead gave us the assurance that she was going her best licks. As we gained on her, the excitement increased, and soon all of our passengers--men, women and children--were out on the guards, excited with the race and in the enthusiasm of the moment, wishing all sorts of good luck to our gallant craft and, I fear, much of ill luck to the one ahead. The spray dashed upon the lower decks of both vessels as they "walked the waters like things of life." ...In half an hour we had neared her so as to read her name--the *Gen. Harrison*, bound from Toledo to Buffalo. Each dash of our wheels brought us nearer, ...and just as we were about passing, the bell of the *Harrison* sounded, and both engines stopped.

The *Harrison* gave us her passengers for Sandusky, then dropped astern and headed down the lake, while we, then at the mouth of the bay, pursued our course for this city. The *Harrison* was badly beaten, and her passengers showed it plainly by the chagrin of their looks. A boat race is of thrilling interest, especially when one is on the fastest boat, and our gallant *Scott* bore herself admirably in the contest. Success to her and her clever captain.

The window in my room, in the Exchange (by-the-bye, an excellent hotel), looks out upon the bay, and as the rain has ceased since I commenced, and the sun is now shining, the prospect is a delightful one. The islands in the distance look like green spots in the "desert waste" of waters around them, and add much, if indeed not all, to the beauty of the scene.

Sandusky, dignified with the title of "city," is a thriving place and bids fair to be one of the greatest commercial points, if not, indeed, the very greatest, between Buffalo and Detroit. The bay is a noble sheet of water, with a depth of eight feet of water at the lowest stage, and if necessary, I under-

stand, from those I have confidence in, that by pursuing a circuitous route in entering, which is marked out, that a much greater depth can be had. I had been led to believe that only the smallest class of boats could get in, but I find that injustice has been done, for many of the largest class of boats visit this city without difficulty. The citizens of other points in the vicinity, finding it to their interest to disparage, have done so, and I am sorry to say, with effect. A vessel has never been wrecked in Sandusky Bay.

The Mad River Railroad, leading to Cincinnati from this place, is now finished, with the exception of thirty miles, and is doing a heavy business in both freight and passengers. It is said to be a good road. Another railroad, intended to connect with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at Zanesville, is completed as far as Mansfield and is under contract for the greater part of the remainder. Having twice passed over the finished part, I can speak as one who knows. It is, for a flat rail, one of the best roads in the Union, being solid, substantial and perfectly straight--scarcely a curve in the sixty-odd miles to Mansfield. The passenger cars are substantial and beautiful. The depot is a massive and beautiful stone building, built at an immense cost, and is an ornament to the city.

The route through this city to the south, and to the southeastern cities, will be travelled much by the Michigan people, as well from the speed as the cheapness and ease of travel, and hence it is that I have spoken particularly of the rail roads leading from this place. The capital of Ohio is but twenty-four hours travel from Detroit, and Cincinnati but little more. The completion of the roads will make it much shorter. Steamboats and rail roads, nowadays, seem, as the telegraph really does, to annihilate both time and space. ..."

The writer's glowing appraisal of Sandusky is typical of the local patriotism of the period when the Lake Erie cities were scrambling for their place in the wonderful promise of Young America. If it hardly relates to the sleepy town of today, it was not altogether the writer's fault, for Sandusky's railroad connections seemed to insure its future. Not until the fall of 1849 did the steamers London and Southerner begin running from Detroit to Cleveland in a similar service, connecting to a railroad reaching toward Pittsburgh; that, of course, grew into the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company which would greatly overshadow the Detroit-Sandusky line. But by 1853 Sandusky was host to Lake Erie's largest steamers, Mississippi and St. Lawrence, which for two seasons gave it elegant express service to Buffalo. Completion of a shoreline railroad link with Cleveland idled these steamers, however, and thereafter Sandusky's promise as a lake port was never so bright again.

1859

In early years, the anniversary of Perry's 1813 victory at Put-in-Bay became a day of regional celebration second only to the Fourth of July festivities. On September 10, each year, steamers would carry large crowds to Put-in-Bay from Detroit and Lake Erie ports for picnicking and ceremonies. As a fiftieth anniversary approached, festivities became increasingly lavish; in 1860 a mock naval battle was staged off Cleveland. This Detroit Free Press article of September 11, 1859, describes one of these Put-in-Bay excursions.

The grand excursion to the scene of Perry's victory in the Battle of Lake Erie took place yesterday, and was attended by an immense concourse of people from the various lake ports. The Ocean left this city at an early hour, having on board about seven hundred excursionists, all of whom were provided with the necessities of life, stowed away in baskets and other receptacles.

The weather was quite threatening, and a rainy day was somewhat anticipated, which prevented many from venturing out. The signs proved fallacious, however, and in an hour's time the sun came out and dissipated all fears on account of the weather. The boat was a good deal crowded, but everybody managed to find accommodations, and those who were so disposed had the benefit of the cabin floor and a band of music for dancing.

A fine run down the river and lake

brought the group of islands that bear the fame of having been the scene of our greatest inland naval engagement in sight, four hours from Detroit. At almost the same time, several steamers from other ports hove in sight, and all entered the spacious harbor of Put-in-Bay together, amid the roar of cannon and sound of martial music, with which the boats were amply provided. The scene was an enlivening one, and seldom witnessed in the quiet little bay which indents Kelly's Island (sic)--perhaps never since Perry's war dogs spoke in thunder tones and awakened the same echoes many years ago.

There were thirteen steamers, the majority of which were literally covered with human beings, crowds of people swarming all over the decks, fore and aft, to the highest altitude of the hurricane deck and the pilot house, and even into the rigging where Young America ensconced



This photo shows steamers at Put-in-Bay for the G. A. R. Encampment of 1869. Although photographed just ten years after the grand excursion of 1859, the steamers already belong to a later "generation" than those thirteen which were similarly ranged opposite the pier at Put-in-Bay then. From left to right are *R. N. Rice*, *Lake Breeze*, *Evening Star*, *Reindeer* and *Jay Cooke*. On the island beyond can be seen the castle which was the summer residence of Jay Cooke.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM DOSSIN MUSEUM COLLECTION

itself for a better view and more conspicuous position.

Aside from these, there were fifteen or twenty yachts and sailing vessels, all of which brought their living freight and discharged it into the throng that poured ashore from the steamers as they ranged themselves side by side opposite the little dock. It took some time, as might well be supposed, to get such a crowd of people safely ashore, but the feat was at length accomplished, and each party, with baskets in hand, found its way to the pleasant grove on the beach, and sat down to join in one of the most extensive grand consolidated pic-nics that ever took place in the west. There were not less than ten thousand people, at a moderate estimate, on the ground, judging from the reports of the different boats that brought them there. The *North Star* carried

between twelve and fifteen hundred alone. Besides, there were the *Ocean*, *Western Metropolis*, *Sea Bird*, *May Queen*, *Bay City*, *Forester*, *Arctic*, *Granite State*, *Island Queen*, *Bonnie Boat* and the propellers *Cushman* and *New York*. All of these were heavily loaded, and, as all but two or three are boats of the largest class, the number of people present on the occasion could not have been less than as above estimated. These came from all the lake ports between Detroit and Buffalo, Cleveland contributing a much larger number than any other. ...

It was emphatically a scene of confusion, not only in the general features of individual enjoyment, but in the carrying out of the day's programme. We were unable to ascertain that any very definite line of action had been resolved upon, and if it had, it was discarded in the

most unceremonious manner by the independent sovereigns who constituted the rank and file. There was an address by Mr. H. P. Spaulding of Cleveland, which a portion of the assemblage listened to very attentively. The remainder of the ceremonies were of the most indefinite and incomprehensible nature.

It was understood that the cornerstone of the monument was to be laid on Gibraltar Point, which could be reached in no other way than by water. We believe that a small party, including the committee of arrangements, went over there and laid the cornerstone, having all the fun and what of august dignity pertained to the occasion, to themselves. We are certain that they all got left on the rock, and they may be sitting on their cornerstone, yet, for aught we know. The boats came away without them, much to the amusement of the ten thousand who had come down to see them cater to the genius of antiquity under such formidable auspices as had been proclaimed to the world for some weeks beforehand.

The company, nevertheless, enjoyed itself on the island after its own fashion, and probably gave little thought to the proposed monument or its accompanying ceremonies. At about three o'clock the signal was given to go on board, and then commenced a stampede which we have seldom seen equalled. The only avenue to the boats was by a narrow pier running out into the bay about two hundred feet, and over this the whole crowd had to pass.

Of course there was a crush and jam in which there was some demolition of hcoops, much disarrangement of finery and any amount of annoyance. The throng commenced getting on board at the ringing of the bell, and for an hour and a half poured steadily over the narrow pier and distributed itself on the various boats. The people were packed in as closely together as it was possible to squeeze them, and many a hooped



The Monument, the Pride of the Committee for Arrangements

PHOTO FROM SKETCHES AND STORIES OF THE
LAKE ERIE ISLANDS, BY THERESA THORNDALE,
SANDUSKY, 1898, PAGE 33.

and flounced lady found herself in a smaller space than ever she dreamed of or hoped for since rotundity became the fashion.

The comfort of this position was rendered more dubious by the occasional charges of persistent artillery and fire companies who were determined to get through, but might more easily have walked over the heads and shoulders of the crowd. There was scolding and fretting and no end of "oh, dears!," etc., from the fair ones who saw no possible redemption for their silks and laces. They all got on board at last, however, and deposited themselves in their respective boats in a very dilapidated and exhausted condition.

This state of affairs did not last long, however, for as the boats began to back off and leave the harbor, cheer upon cheer rose from all sides, and everybody speedily

regained their spirits and good humor. The astonished appearance of the committee of arrangements, as they stood on the distant hill and saw the boats file out one by one, leaving them in the wilderness, added materially to the cultivation of good humor. They ran and jumped and shouted and hallooed, but nobody paid any attention to them, and they were left alongside their monument, a memorial of the efficiency of com-

mittees in general.

The run home was made in four hours and a half, the boat arriving at the dock at nine o'clock, and discharging its freight in good order. Everything passed off pleasantly, and the occasion will be long remembered as the most successful of our time. Many returns of such social gatherings will be ardently hoped for.

1864

When the fiftieth anniversary of Perry's victory did come around, the nation was exhaustively engaged in civil war, and had little time or energy to honor wars of other years. About a year later, however, Put-in-Bay once again came close to the real shooting war in a skirmish that took place 100 years ago this September. Below are the Detroit Free Press accounts of this episode, telling not so much the coherent story of piracy on Lake Erie, but rather its effect on wartime hysteria. This was directed not only toward the Confederate states, but also toward Canada which represented soil of England which had earned U. S. enmity in its veiled support for the Confederate cause. On their part, the Canadians distrusted the United States for its past public enthusiasm for northward expansion, sentiments which probably were not yet dead. Thus we see in retrospect how a minor incident became potentially magnified in inflamed wartime feelings.

THE DETROIT FREE PRESS,
Wednesday, September 21, 1864

THE PIRACY ON LAKE ERIE. One of the most reckless deeds of this war was perpetrated on the evening of the nineteenth instant. A party of men, on the morning of that day, took passage on the *Philo Parsons*, a passenger steamer plying between this city and Sandusky, Ohio, touching at Kelly's Island (sic), Lake Erie. The boat was in charge of the first mate, Mr. D. C. McNichols, the captain, S. F. Atwood, being temporarily absent on account of illness of his family.

Soon after the boat left Kelly's Island she was seized by the marauders, who proclaimed themselves rebels under command of Capt. Bell

(sic), who compelled the officers, crew and passengers to descend to the hold. At Middle Bass Island these officers seized the small steamer *Island Queen*, which plies as a passenger boat between Sandusky and Kelly's Island, and after landing her passengers and despoiling the boat of everything valuable, scuttled and sank her in Lake Erie.

The *Parsons* then proceeded until within sight of Sandusky, when suddenly it changed its course and made for Detroit River, where it arrived about daylight, on the morning of the 20th instant, leaving the mate and crew of the *Parsons* (except the engineer, fireman and wheelsman) on Fighting Island, a small island in Detroit River, about half way from

this city to the lake.

This is by far the most impudent raid during the war. From prominent citizens of Amherstburg we learn that the party which committed this daring deed of piracy arrived there on Saturday (September 17). They inquired if any Kentuckians resided there, and were directed to the residence of several. This was the last that was seen of these men until they were noticed on their way to the *Parsons* on Monday morning.

Various rumors are afloat as to the object of this raid on Lake Erie, but as yet there is nothing authentic, beyond what we have stated in our news columns. No one with reasonable sagacity could have been engaged in such a raid, and the whole affair bears the marks of being projected and executed by crazy fanatics, who were intent upon temporary success, without regard to the ultimate failure and destruction of all engaged in it.

We hope that our government will be prompt in demanding the arrest and extradition of these pirates, and in placing them on trial for one of the highest crimes known to our laws.

* * *

Washington. Considerable excitement exists in government and military circles in regard to the two rebel steamers which have appeared on Lake Erie.

It will be recollected that some time ago Gen. Halleck ordered that the gunboat *Michigan* should be stationed at Johnson's Island to prevent the threatened liberation of the rebel prisoners confined there. By a special treaty with Great Britain, the United States is prohibited from having more than one gunboat on Lake Erie, and hence a protest was made by England against the *Michigan's* armament, which was eighteen guns. As the *Michigan* is confined to the surveillance of Johnson's Island, it is feared that the rebel steamers will ravage our

commerce, and perhaps lay Buffalo under contribution.

* * *

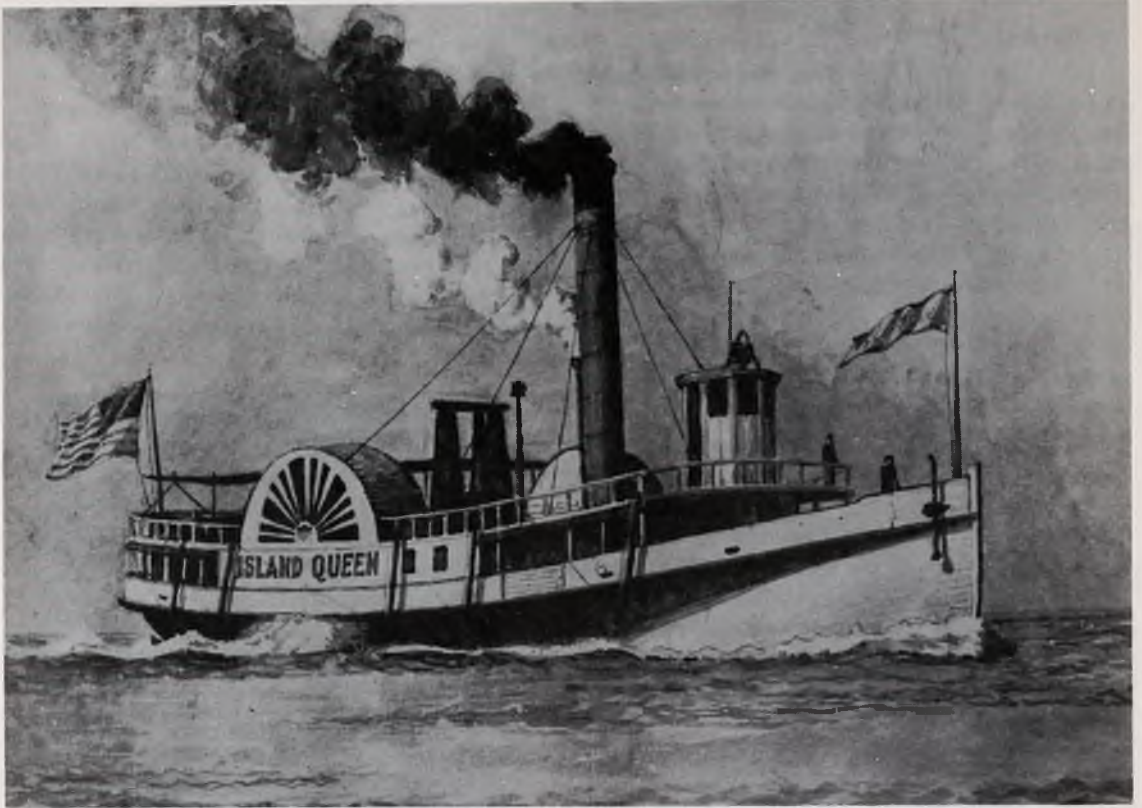
Toledo, Sept. 20. Capt. Orr, from the *Island Queen*, arrived here from Detroit River this morning and furnished the following statement with regard to the piratical operations in Sandusky last night. The *Queen* left Sandusky at 3 p.m. yesterday,



Captain George W. Orr of the steamer *Island Queen*

FROM SKETCHES AND STORIES OF THE LAKE
ERIE ISLANDS, PAGE 80.

stopped at Kelly's Island for thirty or forty soldiers, passed to Middle Bass Island where she found the *Parsons* in possession of the pirates, who at once seized the *Queen*. The soldiers were paroled as Confederate prisoners, and the passengers sworn to secrecy for twenty-four hours. The *Queen* was then lashed to the *Parsons* and both started. The pony engine was broken off, opening a hole in *Island Queen's* side, and she was cast off and left to sink. The *Parsons* passed on to the mouth of Sandusky Bay, and after hovering about for some time, apparently



Island Queen was the smaller of the two steamers seized in the Confederate raid. She is shown here in a water color painting by Father Dowling. The larger steamer, *Philo Parsons*, appears in a second Dowling water color on our front cover.

awaiting a signal from the inside, started for the Detroit River, stopping at Fighting Island on the Canada side, at 8 o'clock this a.m., where Capt. Orr and his clerk were landed. The *Parsons* was then run up the river to a dock, where the captain supposes the plunder was landed and the steamer burned, as preparations were made for that object. He has no doubt that the seizure of the U. S. Steamer *Michigan* and liberation of the Johnson's Island prisoners were the object of the plot. Both steamers were stripped of their valuables.

THE DETROIT FREE PRESS
Thursday, September 22, 1864

Washington, Sept. 21. Commander Carter of the U. S. Steamer *Michigan* has telegraphed to the Secretary of

the Navy, dating off Johnson's Island today, concerning the capture by pirates of the steamers *Philo Parsons* and *Island Queen*. He says they were pursued by him and that he has got the principal agent a prisoner on board and many accomplices. He adds that all is well and safe at present. The object was to capture the steamer *Michigan*. It further appears that Col. Hall has six of the pirate party on Johnsons Island.

THE DETROIT FREE PRESS
Saturday, September 24, 1864

The tug *Mayflower*, Captain Boynton, which left here a day or two since with implements to raise the *Island Queen*, was prompt in the discharge of that duty. She found that steamer on Chickomolee Reef, having drifted a distance of ten miles from

where she was cast adrift by the *Parsons*. The work of raising her was quickly carried out, when she was towed to Sandusky, where in brief time she was again put in running order.

* * *

We have already spoken of the atrocious crimes committed by a few men who congregated in Canada and set foot an expedition against the peace of the United States. We wish to call the attention not only of our government, but the Canadian government, to an extraordinary feature of this transaction. These men went on board of an American steamer on Monday morning at a Canadian port. On the afternoon of the same day they seized and plundered the boat, fired upon and dangerously wounded--if not killed--the officers of another boat, seized and plundered it, and then returned on Tuesday morning to a Canadian port,

after destroying everything valuable on the boat and abandoning it in a sinking condition.

There are few crimes more atrocious than this, yet the Canadian authorities in the immediate vicinity of where this transpired never lifted their hands to bring these men to justice. Two of them were arrested for a violation of the revenue laws, but the justice before whom they were arraigned promptly discharged them, knowing at the time that they had committed crimes for which the penalty is death. We trust the Canadian government will see to it that such officers are promptly discharged, and others who better understand their duties, or understanding them are more willing to discharge them, be put in their place.

The course of the Canadian authorities, however, was not more negligent than that of our own. It was known throughout our city at an



View of the prison camp on Johnson's Island, under protection of the gunboat *U. S. S. Michigan*. The ship and camp were the object of the conspiracy.

early hour on Tuesday morning that this crime had been committed, and that two of the criminals were under arrest in Sandwich and were to be brought up for examination. But the District Attorney, Alfred Russell, who obtained such infamous notoriety in his prosecution of Eber B. Ward for defrauding the government, quietly sat in his office, and not a step was taken to induce the Canadian authorities to retain these men in custody or to arrest the others until a late hour on Wednesday, when it was well known they had fled, and then a warrant was obtained and placed in the hands of a local officer who could not, legally, execute it scarcely five miles from his door. If Mr. Russell had been as anxious for these men to escape as he was for Captain Ward, he could not have aided them more effectually than he did. It is a disgrace to

the administration, a disgrace to the party, and that is saying a good deal, for them to keep in office a man who has been so derelict of duty --if not corrupt--as the District Attorney of this district.

We hope these pirates will be arrested. The Canadian government, we understand, have signified their displeasure at the gross neglect of duty on the part of their officers in Sandwich. But we wish to say to them, as well as to our administration in Washington, that unless they employ better and more efficient men than those now in office, their efforts to bring these villains to punishment will fail. We want men who know more and who are more prompt in the discharge of their duty, or we may have a border war on this frontier which the nation will find it difficult to put down.

Philo Parsons was back at her rounds on September 21, two days after her adventure. But the Free Press was caught up with other wartime concerns, and never clearly told what happened to her when her pirates were through with her. Only the routine entries of the vessel passages column noticed her return to service. Today we can read about the episode more clearly in Dana Bowen's *Memories of the Lakes*. And, a century later, the Free Press set the record straight on February 2, 1964, with Curt Haseltine's vivid retelling of the story.

1889

After railroads linked Detroit to Toledo and the south in 1857. the steamer line to Sandusky was no longer "essential transportation." Travellers were there-after spared the inconvenience of wintertime alternatives--stagecoach travel--and freight could move overland all year.

After the Civil War, however, the islands grew into an attractive summer resort. With this in mind, the Detroiters W. O. Ashley and John P. Clark gave new life to the Detroit-Sandusky line in its calls at Put-in-Bay. This line reached a peak in the season of 1878. These promoters placed their new steamer Alaska in overnight service from Buffalo to Cleveland in company with their steamer Pearl, continuing their westward passage on to Put-in-Bay and back to Cleveland in daylight. At Put-in-Bay were connections with their Jay Cooke for Detroit or Sandusky, while the Toledo steamer Chief Justice Waite offered another connection at Put-in-Bay.

The 1878 season did not favor the enterprise, however. The



The wooden steamer *Alaska* of 1878 spent almost all of her career on the Detroit - Sandusky route.

DOSSIN MUSEUM COLLECTION

big Put-in-Bay House burned that August. And on September 14, *Pearl* was reported ashore at Fairport in danger of breaking up, but she was released with slight damage several days later. The next year *Alaska* took the *Cooke's* place on the Detroit and Sandusky run, and her speed was publicly compared to that of the other new steamers *Grace McMillan* and *City of Detroit* (i). *Grace McMillan* avoided a direct challenge with *Alaska*, but at last in September, 1879, *Alaska* managed to tangle with *City of Detroit* near the mouth of the Detroit River. The challenge ended tragically in the failure of *Alaska's* steam dome, filling her cabin with steam and badly scalding many people; three engineers escaped overboard and were drowned. *Alaska* continued on the run in later years, enduring a number of further mishaps until fire destroyed her at last in May of 1889.

The 1889 season found the Detroit-Sandusky line at the threshold of modern times. Horace Mitchell, Ashley's half-brother and partner, had died in 1887; John P. Clark died a year later. Thus, early in this new season, the firm of Ashley & Mitchell became known as Ashley & Dustin. Until the death of Oliver Dustin in 1948, the Dustin family would carry on the line in the twentieth century.

To replace *Alaska* was a critical task. Captain Harryman's steamer *Remora* was already running "opposition" on the Detroit-Sandusky route. The small *Gazelle* took *Alaska's* place, but she smashed into a steam barge at Toledo in late June. Next, *Pearl* withdrew from Cleveland and Put-in-Bay service to fill in. By

default that route fell to Detroit & Cleveland Line ships that would otherwise spend the day idle in Cleveland. To hold down the Detroit-Sandusky route called for a bold innovation, and Ashley & Dustin ordered their first metal-hulled steamer from Detroit Dry Dock Co. This was the Frank E. Kirby, "the flyer of the lakes." Together with her later consort and eventual successor, Put-in-Bay of 1911, the Kirby is one of Detroit's best-remembered excursion steamers.

The article below, from Detroit Free Press of September 15, 1889, summed up the line's history to that important year.

Put-in-Bay, Sept. 14. Few cities in this country possess facilities for water excursions to the same extent as Detroit. There are routes in many directions, all but one or two in perfectly sheltered waters whereby the passenger from Detroit may take a refreshing day's outing and return to his home again by the same evening.

This fact came very forcibly to mind during the voyage to this point a few days ago. The trip down the

Detroit River is charming. The sights and scenes are always of sufficient interest to engage the attention of the most careless traveler. Lake Erie, though not always smooth, is tolerably well hemmed across its upper end by the Point au Pelee peninsula which juts out from the Canadian shore in the very direction of the islands Pelee, North Bass, Fox, Middle-Bass, Put-in-Bay and half a dozen smaller ones which are something like stepping stones to the Ohio line. ...



This picture was taken in 1888, showing a group of steamers in Put-in-Bay harbor. Prominently at left is *City of Sandusky* (ii), which before that year was the Ashley & Mitchell steamer *Jay Ccoke*. Beyond her bow is Toledo's steamer *Chief Justice Waite*, while above the dock is seen the stack of *American Eagle*. In mid-harbor at right is the Ashley & Mitchell steamer *Pearl*, which went on the Detroit-Sandusky route the next year to replace the burnt *Alaska*.

Of all the lake vessel owners, W. O. Ashley of Detroit has had the strange experience of having himself and his steamer captured by the confederates during the war of the rebellion. The story is well known. The steamer was the *Philo Parsons*, the captor was John Y. Beall, a confederate, who boarded the steamer at Sandwich, and the officer with whom he came more particularly in conflict with was Mr. Ashley.

Speaking of the excursion business and the steamboat route between Detroit, Sandusky and the islands of Lake Erie, Mr. Ashley said that it began upwards of forty years ago when the Mad River and Lake Erie Railroad was built into Sandusky. Passengers from Cincinnati and the region thereabout, as well as people from central Ohio, found their best route east was to Sandusky and

thence by steamer to Detroit where favorable and speedy connections were made to all points.

John Owen of Detroit was quick to take advantage of this opportunity, and built for the route the fast steamer *Arrow*, whose exploits still remain a tradition of old river men. After years of service the *Arrow* gave place to the *Bay City*, also owned by Mr. Owen. After a few seasons, the development of railroads interfered with the business to such an extent that the *Bay City* was withdrawn. The line was for a time kept open in tri-weekly trips by the *T. Whitney*, one of the shrill, puffing, slow-going, high-pressure craft, whose great waste of steam through the exhaust pipes waked the echoes in the woods for miles back.

In 1863 the *Philo Parsons* made her



One of the first notable steamers on the Detroit-Sandusky line was *Arrow* of 1849, seen here in part of an oil painting of 1853 by Robert Hopkin. DOSSIN MUSEUM COLLECTION, GIFT OF MRS. RICHARD P. JOY



This model of *Frank E. Kirby* of 1890 was built by Dr. Frederick W. Hyde. He was aided by plans furnished by American Ship-building Company and advice of the late Oliver S. Dustin. The "walking beam" of her engine actually rocks back and forth while her wheels turn, powered by electricity. The model is now in the Dossin Museum collection.

advent on the route. The owners were the Foxes of North Bass and W. O. Ashley, and it was while acting as clerk of the boat and in charge of the money and express matter on board that he had the adventure with the Confederate captors. Beall, the leader, was tried by court martial and executed for piracy at Governor's Island, N. Y.

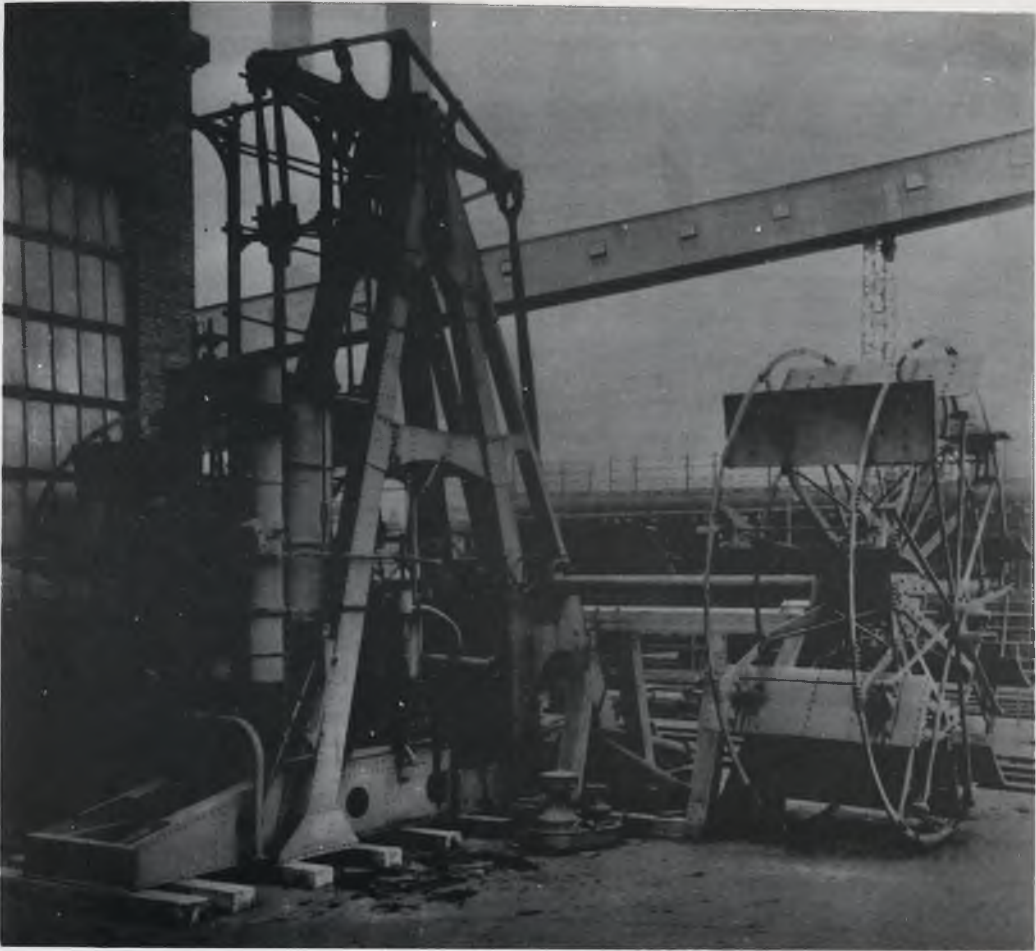
After four seasons on the route, *Philo Parsons* was sold and the *City of Sandusky* (i) took the place for a brief period, but was withdrawn for lack of business. Ashley thereupon chartered the *Island Queen* and kept up the communication.

In 1867 Put-in-Bay first began to receive summer visitors, and the number of people whose attention was attracted toward the islands induced Mr. Ashley and the late John P. Clark to put a new boat on the line. Mr. Clark built the *Jay Cooke*. Her trip began July 4, 1868. Her great speed and handsome accommodations made the *Cooke* a favorite. The Wed-

nesday and Saturday excursions were inaugurated and the enterprise became successful.

This was the beginning of the excursion business from Detroit, and in the course of twenty-one years it has taken on very large proportions. The *Alaska* came on the route in 1879 and gave even better satisfaction to patrons than her predecessor. Being damaged by fire while lying at the wharf last May, the *Alaska* was laid up and the *Pearl* has done the work.

This is Mr. Ashley's story of the line. To still further develop it, he and his partners have contracted with the Detroit Dry Dock Company to build them a new steel steamer at a cost of \$150,000. Her speed is to be 18 miles an hour or over, to be provided with feathering wheels, which will avoid all jar upon the vessel, and to finish off the cabins and state rooms beautifully and comfortably. Her length will be 200 feet, beam 30 feet, moulded depth 11 feet, and her capacity 1000



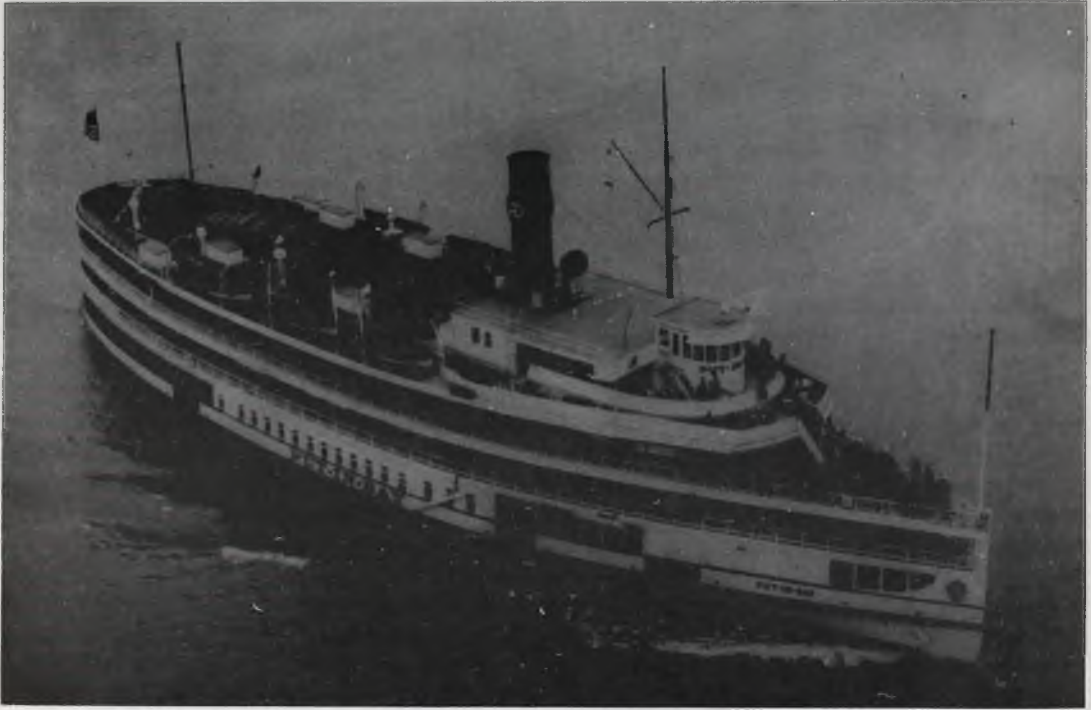
The Fletcher beam engine of *Frank E. Kirby* had been built in 1866 for the revenue cutter *Sherman*. Captain Stephen R. Kirby, father of the naval architect, Frank E. Kirby, was one of the *Sherman's* builders. The engine was placed in *Alaska* in 1878, and went to the new *Frank E. Kirby* in 1890. After World War I, the *Kirby* ran from Detroit to Kingsville as *Silver Spray*, and later ran between Erie and Dover as *Dover*. Fire destroyed her in 1932, but her engine was salvaged by Henry Ford and set up for a time at the Rouge plant as seen here; it was later dismantled. Mr. Ford apprenticed as a mechanic in the old Detroit Dry Dock Company in the early eighties, and the *Kirby* was built in that yard in 1890.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HENRY FORD MUSEUM, DEARBORN, MICHIGAN

passengers, with sufficient space for fruit, which is the principal item of freight during the season.

The islands of Lake Erie have a soil and climate especially adapted to fruit growing. The crop of

peaches never fails, but the growers have not taken as much pains as the men of Michigan to plant good varieties. The island peaches, while inferior to the Michigan product, are very good peaches after all, and



Put-in-Bay of 1911 joined *Frank E. Kirby* in the Ashley & Dustin route to Sandusky and the Lake Erie Islands from Detroit. She continued alone after the first world war until her retirement in 1951. (In the seasons of 1949-50, she ran upriver from Detroit while D&C steamers provided service to Put-in-Bay.) She was burnt for scrapping in Lake St. Clair in October, 1953.

DOSSIN MUSEUM COLLECTION

Detroit is the principal market for them.

This whole region is the natural home of the vine. It flourishes here in the most thrifty way, and produces most magnificent crops. All the best varieties of grapes, but especially the Delaware, Concord and Catawba, are planted. It is not uncommon for the yield to exceed \$300 an acre, and more than that sum has been realised when the prices have been good. The islanders feel quite independent and real estate is not often offered for sale.

The making of wine naturally comes in where vineyards abound. There are two or three establishments upon the islands, the largest being that of Mr. Wehrle. He makes half a

dozen varieties of still wines, and also some sparkling wines, and has a most extensive trade.

There is a deal of money in this business. An illustration of it was afforded by the presence here of a beautiful yacht owned and commanded by a tall, stout and very amiable gentleman whose pleasure it is to cruise the waters hereabout, the Detroit and the St. Clair, every summer with the family and friends. A member of various clubs who has homes on the Islands and at the Flats, he alternates between ship and shore and enjoys the health and comfort which a rational method of living affords everywhere, but more especially on the Great Lakes. This gentleman is Judge Longworth of Cin-

cinnati, whose grandfather, the late Nicholas Longworth, inaugurated the business of making wine from native grapes, and whose success in the sparkling Catawba has been sung by no less a poet than Longfellow. Thus began the making of a great

fortune, which has since taken on still greater dimensions by the enhancement of early investments in real estate in the Queen City of the West, as Ohio people delight to call Cincinnati.

—Yusef



Those who missed the column last month (and we hope there were some who did) should know that we didn't skip it just to replace it with a dues reminder, although we are behind on the reminding. Nope, we were drydocked for an emergency operation. We are afloat again and on limited service. The hull patch seems to have "taken," and the welders are in for compliments.

But it wasn't all bad. One of the nicer things that come from an experience of this type is the sudden realization of how many really fine friends you have. And to all of them, for the cards, flowers, the calls with good wishes, we thank you.

While we were gone, the business of the museum went on pretty much as usual, except that a couple of "extras" happened that pleased us. First, we had planned to remove the Ford Eagle Boat exhibit at the end of the year, as advertised. Interest in the exhibit led us to extend it a couple of weeks. Then, Dearborn Historical Museum arranged to take the entire exhibit to be installed intact in their museum. So, by a totally unexpected route, we have effected our first travelling exhibit.

Next, as you are possibly aware, the Civil War touched the Great Lakes in 1864 in the conspiracy to steal the *U.S.S. Michigan*. As this

is the centennial of that event, Pat Labadie prepared an exhibit to tell the story in connection with a larger "Michigan in the Civil War" exhibit at Detroit Historical Museum. We had, in our own collection, a fine painting of *Michigan* by Patterson. But a painting, alone, as lovely as it is, wouldn't hold up an exhibit. At this point, Institute members entered the picture. From William A. McDonald we had received a pair of sister-hooks from the ship. Our president, Father Dowling, agreed to paint two paintings of the other ships involved in the conspiracy, *Philo Parsons* and *Island Queen* (see cover and center spread of this issue, with story on p. 34). In his usual fine water color execution he has produced fine likenesses of these ships, of great value both to the exhibit and to the permanent collection. Other exhibit items were borrowed from Burton Historical Collection, and our own model of *Michigan* (in her later appearance as *Wolverine*) rounded it out. After serving at the Historical Museum, the exhibit will be re-installed at Dossin, thus doing double duty.

The last item we are overdue in reporting. This is a newly-acquired model of *City of Detroit III*, built by and donated to the museum by Institute Board member Bill Moss. We couldn't do justice to this fine

(Continued on page 47)

**Great
Lakes
Marine
NEWS**

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*December 31...*The final arrival of the season in Toronto harbor, the sandsucker *C. D. Cadwell*, brought the total vessels in the winter fleet there to forty, one more than last season. They include 24 bulk carriers, 4 self-unloaders, 10 tankers and a survey vessel.

...Cargo shipments through the St. Lawrence Seaway section during 1963 were estimated at a record total of 31,000,000 tons, up 20 per cent from 1962. The Welland Canal section reached an estimated record total of 41,000,000 tons, up 15 per cent.

...Captain M. J. (Mike) Bishop of the car ferry *Chief Wawatam* retired after sailing the *Chief* for 21 years. He has spent almost a half century on the lakes, and became a licensed master at age 20. He was succeeded on the *Chief* by Captain Charles Closs.

...The former lake tanker *Michigan*, now renamed *Trina*, left Chicago on Dec. 9 with a cargo of corn for Montreal. She was then to go to Jacksonville, Florida, to enter coastal service. But she was unable to make the Seaway canals by closing date, and so wintered at Kingston.

*January 2...*The United States and Canadian governments in 1964 will face the difficult decision of whether to increase, decrease or maintain at present levels the tolls on the St. Lawrence Seaway. Pressures are being brought both for toll increases and for toll decreases.

*January 3...*Gross earnings of the Port of Milwaukee declined slightly to \$935,000 in 1963 (from \$942,000 in 1962). Net earnings, however, were expected to be up to \$475,000

(v. \$471,000 in 1962). St. Lawrence Seaway trade there dropped from 496,184 tons in 1962 to 453,883 tons last year--an 8.52 per cent decline.

*January 4...*Danish freighter *Helga Dan* arrived at Montreal to set a new record for early season arrivals in the port, but required assistance by icebreakers *d'Iberville* and *Ernest Lapointe* after stalling in heavy ice downstream. It was also the shortest closing period in the port's history, just seven days after the final departure of 1963 by *Fort Ramazay*, on December 28. For the captain of *Helga Dan*, it was the third gold-headed cane award in a row.

*January 6...*a \$400,000 petroleum pier on Jones Island in Milwaukee—built by the city in 1950 to accommodate tankers—may be converted to handle other liquid cargoes such as vegetable oils and tallow. Water borne petroleum receipts in Milwaukee have skidded dramatically since a pipe line from Chicago through Milwaukee to Green Bay began operating in 1962. A New York City firm is seeking financing to build facilities to handle edible and inedible oils.

*January 8...*Another gold cane award went to the captain of the Canadian Pacific freighter *Beaverpine*, for the first ocean vessel arrival into Quebec City in the 1964 season.

...New manager of what will be known as the Pittsburgh Fleet will be Loran F. Hammett; his headquarters will be in Cleveland.

*January 9...*Milwaukee's open dock terminal, a major trade attraction with its heavy lift cranes, is los-

ing its appeal according to the Milwaukee port director. A new trade pattern is emerging toward larger ships with their own heavy lift facilities. Also, other Great Lakes ports have acquired their own heavy lift equipment.

...The second guided missile destroyer built by Defoe Shipbuilding Company for the Australian Navy slid down the ways today. The ship, the *Hobart*, was sponsored by Mrs. David O. Hay, wife of the Australian ambassador to the United Nations.

...Burt J. Beauchamp of Marine City, one of the large Beauchamp family of sailing men, died after a long illness. Mr. Beauchamp sailed the lakes for about 50 years until his retirement about two years ago as a chief engineer.

...Purchase of the C&O Railway coal docks in Toledo by the Toledo Lucas County Port Authority has cleared the way for an ambitious expansion program by the port agency. Envisioned is a ten-year program of \$15 million estimated cost, increasing the ship berths at the Presque Isle dock site to twelve from the present six.

...It has been reported that the steamer *Ishpeming*, tied up in Toledo for the past two years, is to be put back into service for the 1964 shipping season.

*January 12...*Private terminal operators of the Port of Detroit have had the best year in their history and are looking to a better one in 1964.

...Preliminary tonnage figures for the Port of Detroit indicate an increase of nearly 22 per cent for the shipping season that closed on December 5. A total of 787 vessels loaded or discharged cargo at Detroit docks last season.

*January 15...*An official of the Ann Arbor Railroad says they can take up the slack if ferry service across the Straits of Mackinac is abandoned. The four Ann Arbor ferries make four round trips weekly between Frankfort and Menominee on

(News continued on back cover)

CURATOR'S CORNER

(Continued from page 45)

model in written word...you have to see it, and having seen it, you will say it is beautiful! You may remember Bill's drawings in *TELESCCPE* (Vol. 12, No. 3), and the same quality they display is repeated in the model. Between Bill and his mother the Institute owes a considerable debt. It was Mrs. Moss (an honorary life member) who made the Institute-Museum House Flag...sort of our own Betsy Ross. (See photo below.)



Bill Moss' model of *City of Detroit III*

The Great Lakes Maritime Institute, Inc., promotes interest in the Great Lakes of North America; preserves memorabilia, relics, records and pictures related to these lakes; encourages building of scale models of lake ships; and furthers programs of Dossin Great Lakes Museum, repository of Institute holdings. The Institute was organized in 1952 as the Great Lakes Model Shipbuilders' Guild, with efforts of the late Capt. Joseph E. Johnston. It is incorporated as an organization for no profit under the laws of the State of Michigan. Donations to the Institute have been ruled deductible by the Internal Revenue Service. No Institute member receives any remuneration for services rendered.

Telescope, the Institute's monthly journal, covers Great Lakes topics. Its editors welcome opportunity to review manuscripts for publication, sent care of "Telescope, Great Lakes Maritime Institute, Dossin Great Lakes Museum, Belle Isle, Detroit 7, Mich. The editors cannot be responsible for statements of authors.

Other communication with the Institute should go to the Coordinating Director, by mail to the address above, or telephone at LO 7-7441.

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the west side of Lake Michigan at the Wisconsin border, and three round trips weekly between Frankfort and Manistique, Michigan, on the north shore of the lake.

...Sixteen ships are having bow thrusters installed this winter. Thirteen already have them.

January 16...Residents of Lauzon, Quebec, registered strong complaints about the bad taste in their drinking water, believed to have been contaminated by the dumping of oil and gasoline from the tanker *Irving Glen*, in dry dock there for repairs.

...A Canadian vessel operator, Reoch Steamship and associated companies, has bought the freighter *George W. Perkins* from Pittsburgh Fleet, and will operate her next season. The same firm also recently bought *Dow Chemical* from American Steamship Co. Up for sale by Pittsburgh is the *Perkins'* sister, 549-foot *Henry C. Frick*. Sale of her would reduce the Pittsburgh Fleet to 49 vessels, all over 580 feet in length.

January 21...It has been reported that Seaway tolls will not be raised before 1965, if then. However, the tolls will be charged for the Welland Canal.

...Milwaukee received a blow to its hopes of developing in four years a harbor that could take full advantage of St. Lawrence Seaway traffic. The cost-conscious administration of President Johnson only came up with \$400,000 to deepen the harbor; they hoped for a million.

January 22...Growing trade between Port of Detroit and Japanese ports is anticipated next season with the recent important merger of the OSK and Mitsui Lines, to take effect on April 1.