

TELESCOPE

June, 1964

Volume 13, Number 6



**Great Lakes
Maritime
Institute**



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

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Cover: Donald Ringwald's view of *Western States*, bound for Buffalo on 22 August 1950, as seen from *Ste. Claire* (see page 125).

Since this issue is designed to be sandwiched between regular numbers in an effort to regain our usual schedule or perhaps optimum schedule is the word—it contains no news column; that will appear in our July issue, which will also be our Seaway annual issue. GPB

Meeting Notes

Evening Bob-Lo Cruise

Tuesday 28 July 1964

From Foot of Woodward, 6 p.m.

We neglected to mention in our last notice of this meeting that our annual evening cruise to Bob-Lo will be aboard the steamer *Columbia*, so if any of our readers bear partiality toward her, we trust they will come along; while fans of *Ste. Claire* will have a chance to see her pass by on the way! Join us in any case.

INSTITUTE PAGE

Business Meeting

Friday 28 August 1964

Dossin Museum, 8 p.m.

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

* * *

In the annual election meeting in June, the results of the recent election were disclosed. All incumbents of the Board who ran were returned to office, and the vacant position on the Board was filled by the Rev. Peter VanderLinden. This vacancy had been left by Father Dowling, our retiring president, for whom the position of honorary president was created by the Board in its April meeting. Our new president, elected by the Board in June meeting, is Bob Radunz, who will be familiar to *Telescope* readers as editor of its news columns. Ken Fairbanks becomes our vice-president, in deserving recognition of his work with the model builders of our organization. Bill Worden, returning from studies in Denmark, was elected secretary. James McDonald and Bob Lee remained Treasurer and Coordinating Director, respectively.

* * *

We continue in this issue with Father Dowling's list of the "lakers" built on the Great Lakes during World War I. Many of our readers will recall that he published a more abbreviated list of the "lakers" in the *Detroit Marine Historian* in 1956 to 1957, volume 10, numbers 1 to 7, at a time when he was its editor. The present list is broader in scope and brings up to date both the subsequent history and corrections and additions in the light of later research. Such lists as this are rarely "finished," and we are sure that Father Dowling will continue to welcome further information that our readers can supply.

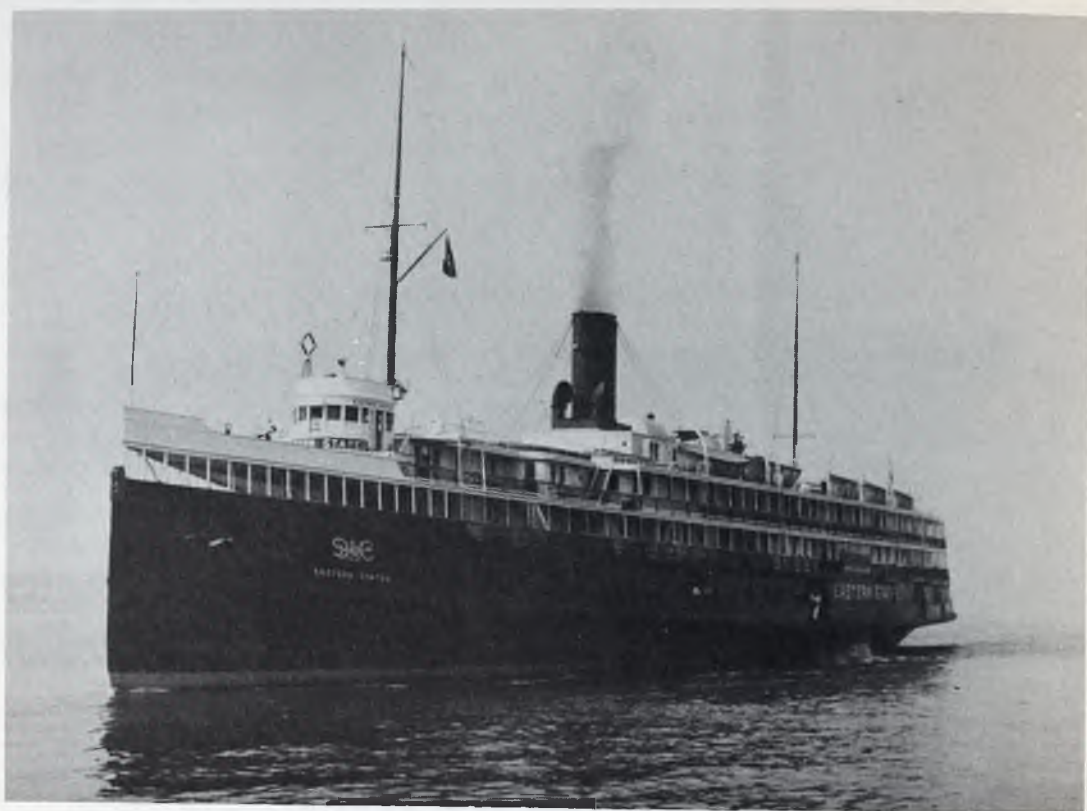
GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS



We begin this issue with bow views of two new ships built by Great Lakes shipyards. Above is the Port Weller-built stemwinder self-unloader Cape Breton Miner, from a photo by Leonard Barr II. Her twin funnels recall both nineteenth century "steam barges" and the new Mohawk stemwinder Silver Isle, while her boom positioning recalls the old BoCo self-unloader Col. E. M. Young. The Upper Lakes fleet owns her.

Below is the trim diesel ferry Tus-tumena, built for service in Alaskan waters out of Kodiak, her home-port-to-be. She stopped off in Detroit recently on her delivery trip from her builders, Christy Corp. of Sturgeon Bay, Wis. Bill Hoey photographed her from his newly-acquired tug, Tipperary. On our last page (143) we close this issue, appropriately enough, with stern views of these new vessels.





A Trip to the Lakes

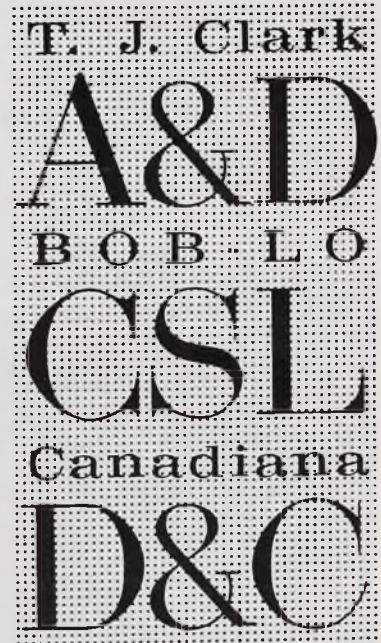
By Donald C. Ringwald

Photographs by the Author

The last two years or so have seen a drastic withdrawal of much of our lake passenger services and fleet. This followed an era of good feeling when it seemed that the passenger trade would take new vitality--with such ships as Cayuga, Aquarama and Erie Queen as evidence. The article below pictures lake passenger trade just as the last great shake-out was taking place, in 1949-52, and reminds us how rich our lakes have been so recently. Donald Ringwald is Editor-in-Chief of Steamboat Bill, the quarterly journal of Steamship Historical Society of America. Aspects of Hudson River steamboat history have been his writing specialty for American Neptune and other publications.

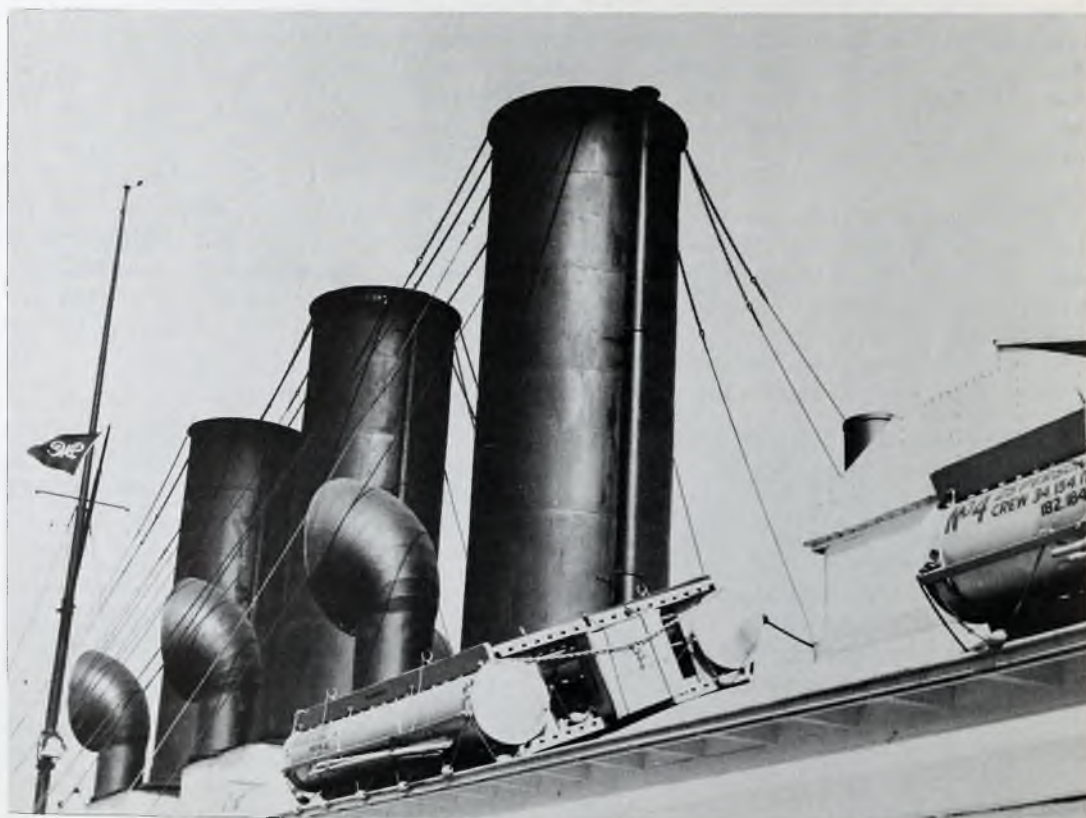
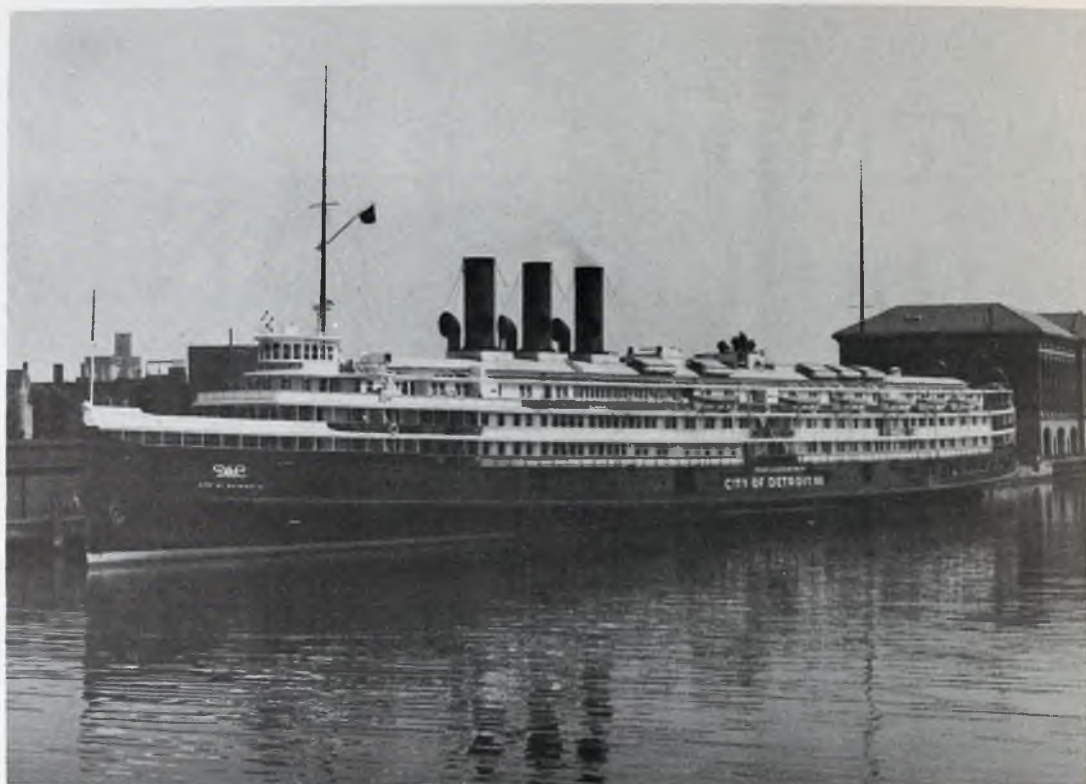
Back in 1950, I set forth on a steamboating expedition to the lakes. Primarily, I went to travel on steamers of the Detroit and Cleveland Navigation Company. For many years, the D&C had been high on my list of "musts," but for many years the D&C and I had failed to meet. In 1950, conditions were finally favorable, and in the nick of time, too. After that year, as you all know, the D&C ran no more.

I have delved into my journal covering that expedition, not to write a lengthy dissertation on the joys of travelling on the majestic sidewheelers of the D&C, but rather to evoke perhaps some nostalgic reflections on what one could do in the way of steamboating in a few short days at that time.



PHOTOGRAPHS ON OPPOSITE PAGE--ABOVE: Eastern States is shown shifting from D&C's main Third Street terminal to its First Street dock on 22 August 1950 to load passengers for its daytime excursion to Put-in-Bay.

BELOW: Put-in-Bay is shown at the old Water Works Dock in Port Huron, the northern terminal of her St. Clair River excursions, on 20 August 1950.



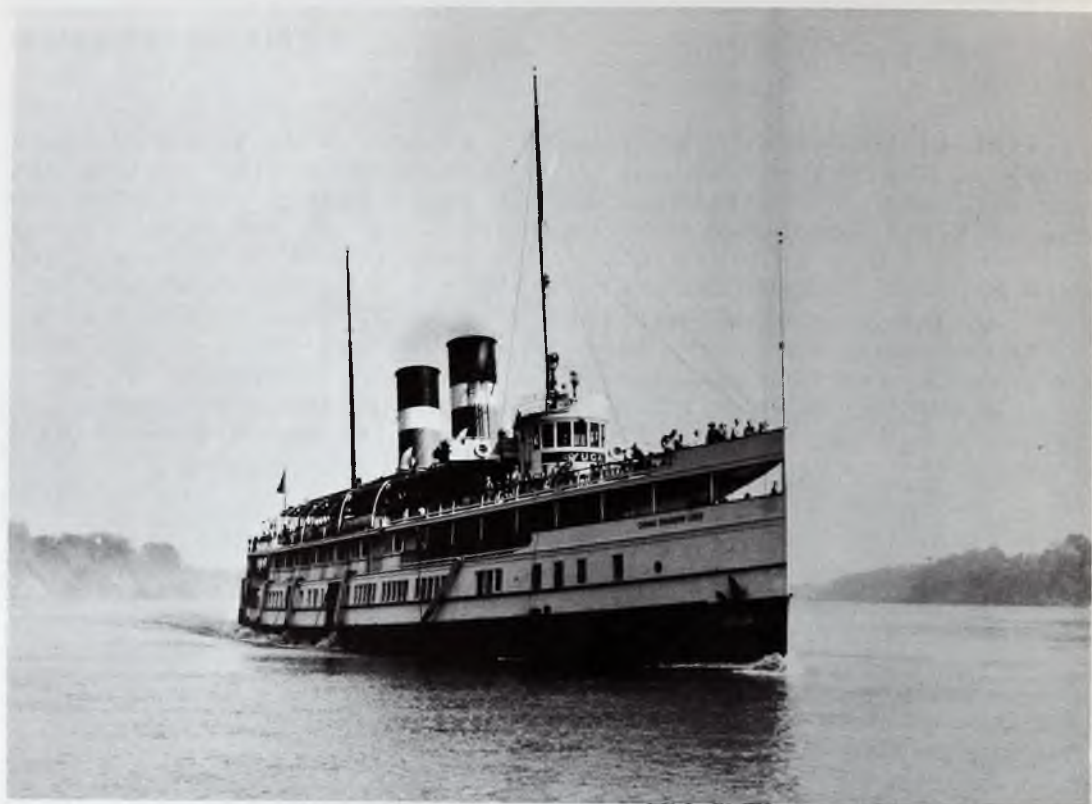
A TRIP TO THE LAKES

I arrived in Buffalo early on the afternoon of Saturday, August 19. The train trip out had been a bore, the weather was overcast and threatening, and I found myself irritated and annoyed as I completed what business I had in the city. I was glad when I was able finally to go down to the waterfront and board *Western States* shortly after 4 p.m., EDST. Soon a strong wind commenced to blow off Lake Erie, the clouds rolled away, the air became fresh and clean and I felt better--a condition that was to persist for several days, since normally I always feel better on a steamboat than anywhere else. We sailed for Detroit precisely on time at 6 p.m., with the orchestra playing out on deck to cheer those left behind and to inspire those departing. The next morning, to quote from my journal,



PHOTOGRAPHS ON OPPOSITE PAGE--UPPER: City of Detroit III is seen at Buffalo from the deck of *Canadiana* on 24 August 1950. **LOWER:** The three tall stacks of City of Detroit III are seen from her upper deck on the previous day.

PHOTOGRAPH ON THIS PAGE: The Great Lakes Towing Company's steam tug *Delaware* took the stern of City of Detroit III at Buffalo to help tug *Colorado* at the bow bring her about in the narrow channel. City of Detroit III had a bow rudder to help her to maneuver, but the river there was too narrow for an unaided turn.



A TRIP TO THE LAKES

"I awakened while we were still out on Lake Erie. When we were off the mouth of the Detroit River, I was told that we were seven minutes late. Soon afterwards, we were bottled up behind freighters and steadily lost time. Breakfast, like dinner the night before, was extremely good. After finishing it, I went forward to watch our passage up the river.

"My intention was to catch *Put-in-Bay* at 9:30 a.m. EST for Port Huron. As we neared the D&C wharf at the foot of Third Street, Detroit, I saw the steam coming up from *Put-in-Bay's* whistle as she sounded the ten-minute warning and realized that while I might get to Port Huron, it would not be by steamer that day. *Western States*, due 9:00 a.m., landed at Detroit thirty minutes late and, as I went ashore, I heard *Put-in-Bay* blow to leave.

"After checking my luggage, I took a cab over to the Ashley & Dustin office at the foot of Bates Street and there deposited my problem. The reigning gentleman was very cooperative, telephoned the Greyhound Terminal and found there was a bus leaving soon for Port Huron. Because I had ample time, he insisted that I walk to the bus terminal and enjoy the city.

"I reached Port Huron safely, had a leisurely dinner, strolled through the town and then went to the park by which was located the Water Works dock, where *Put-in-Bay* was due at 2:30 p.m. I had no more than arrived when an impressive band of musicians commenced a concert. To sit at a band concert is the proper way to wait for a steamboat. I sat.

"*Put-in-Bay* was somewhat late, but eventually came quietly into the landing. I purchased my passage and went aboard. The steamer pulled in her plank promptly at 3:30 p.m., but held in eight minutes to wait for the channel to clear. That enabled

one passenger--who would otherwise have missed the boat--to get on.

"We landed at Tashmoo Park at 5:40 p.m. and left six minutes later. Displaying the great eagerness for a speedy departure apparently practiced by all steamboatmen hereabouts *Put-in-Bay's* people proceeded to pull in the plank part-way with a portly passenger still on it. He was left tottering on the up-end until the purser and a ticket collector grabbed him on either side and helped him to the deck."

After arriving at Detroit, I had a light lunch and about 9:30 p.m. went down to the D&C landing, from where I was to sail on *Eastern States* for Cleveland. The steamer had had a big day on the *Put-in-Bay* run and, as I recall, wasn't opened for passengers until about 10 p.m. We put off the plank right at 10:30 p.m., steamed up the river, rounded and made for Cleveland.

On Monday, August 21, I spent considerable time at the Cleveland Public Library--naturally, looking at steamboat material. Miss Donna Root kindly took almost two hours to show me some of the collection of the Great Lakes Historical Society, of which I was an early member.

That night I went back aboard *Eastern States*, which had been loading fuel oil. The pump on the tank wagon had broken down, and we had to wait for the oil company to send down another pump to complete the loading. Therefore, instead of departing at 10:30 p.m. EST, it was

PHOTOGRAPHS ON OPPOSITE PAGE--ABOVE:
Cayuga approaches her landing at
Queenston Docks on 25 August 1950.

BELOW: Small steamer T. J. Clark
comes to Ward's Island from the Tor-
onto mainland on the same day.

A TRIP TO THE LAKES

not until 11:44 p.m. that we cast off. There were said to be 249 passengers aboard, and at least nine were considerably upset over the delay because the bar couldn't open until we had cleared the breakwater.

After we got to Detroit Tuesday morning, I stayed at the landing to watch *Eastern States* shift up to the foot of First Street, from where she loaded for her Put-in-Bay run, and to see *Western States* arrive from Buffalo. Then I went to my hotel to get some sleep.

This is no reflection on the sleeping qualities of the D&C steamers. I slept on them, too, but I had not come to the lakes to sleep any longer than necessary while afloat.

Actually, I didn't slumber long at my hotel, for in the afternoon I sailed for Bob-Lo Island on *Ste. Claire*. I had gotten the impression that *Columbia*, which was lying in at Detroit when we departed, was suffering from mechanical trouble. This impression proved correct. Shortly after I went ashore at Bob-Lo, an announcement was made that the schedule had been changed and that the next boat--*Ste. Claire*, which had remained in--would leave at 5:30 p.m. Accordingly, I went back to Detroit with *Ste. Claire*, and, to this day, haven't been aboard *Columbia*.

Now came a short steamboating intermission until Wednesday afternoon, August 23, when I boarded *City of Detroit III* on which I was to sail back to Buffalo. That evening was particularly enjoyable, with Lake Erie calm and beautiful and the moon shining clear. It was a fitting setting for what I suppose was the last trip I shall ever make on an American sidewheel night boat.

When we arrived at Buffalo Thursday morning, the Great Lakes Towing Company's high-pressure tugboats

Colorado on the bow and *Delaware* on the stern turned us around and berthed us.

In the afternoon I made a round trip to Crystal Beach with *Canadiana*, and the next morning I left Buffalo via Canada Coach for Queenston Docks, from where I hoped to make *Cayuga's* 11:05 a.m. EDST sailing for Toronto. Because of the Canadian railroad strike and the heavy bus traffic, we were delayed so long at the Peace Bridge that I commenced to feel that I would gain for my efforts only a fine stern view of the departing *Cayuga*. Once clear of customs, however, we made rapid time and I arrived at the wharf several minutes before *Cayuga*. As it happened, she didn't complete her landing until 11:06.

I had never been to Toronto before and, to me, the most fascinating thing there was the little steamer *T. J. Clark*. I went out to Ward's Island with her and waited over a trip to explore a bit before returning. Later I made a round trip to Centre Island on the diesel ferry *Sam McBride*.

Then I went back to Pier 9 to board *Cayuga*, which sailed promptly at 7 p.m.--so promptly that we left four prospective passengers behind. With something like an eight-piece orchestra aboard and a glowing moon, the return to Niagara-on-the-Lake and Queenston Docks passed all too quickly to bring to a close my steamboating holiday on the lakes.

Having travelled on *Western States*, *Put-in-Bay*, *Eastern States*, *Ste. Claire*, *City of Detroit III*, *Canadiana*, *Cayuga* and, of course, *T. J. Clark*, in seven days, with favorable weather throughout, I felt the expedition had been highly successful. I had no cause to complain. That would come later, after it became apparent that never again would I be able to repeat such a combination of trips.



Photographs from
color slides by
Donald Baut and
Gordon Bugbee

ONE. Cruise ship South American enters the old channel, upbound, approaching the St. Clair River's delta, the "Flats." Most traffic now uses the new Southeast Bend Cut-off Channel, beyond off her starboard bow.



Sixteen Snaps

TWO. In the old channel, a string of closely-grouped summer cottages leads to the first landmark, the Old Club. Seen from an upper deck of Aquarama, the clubhouse and grounds have the look of a model.



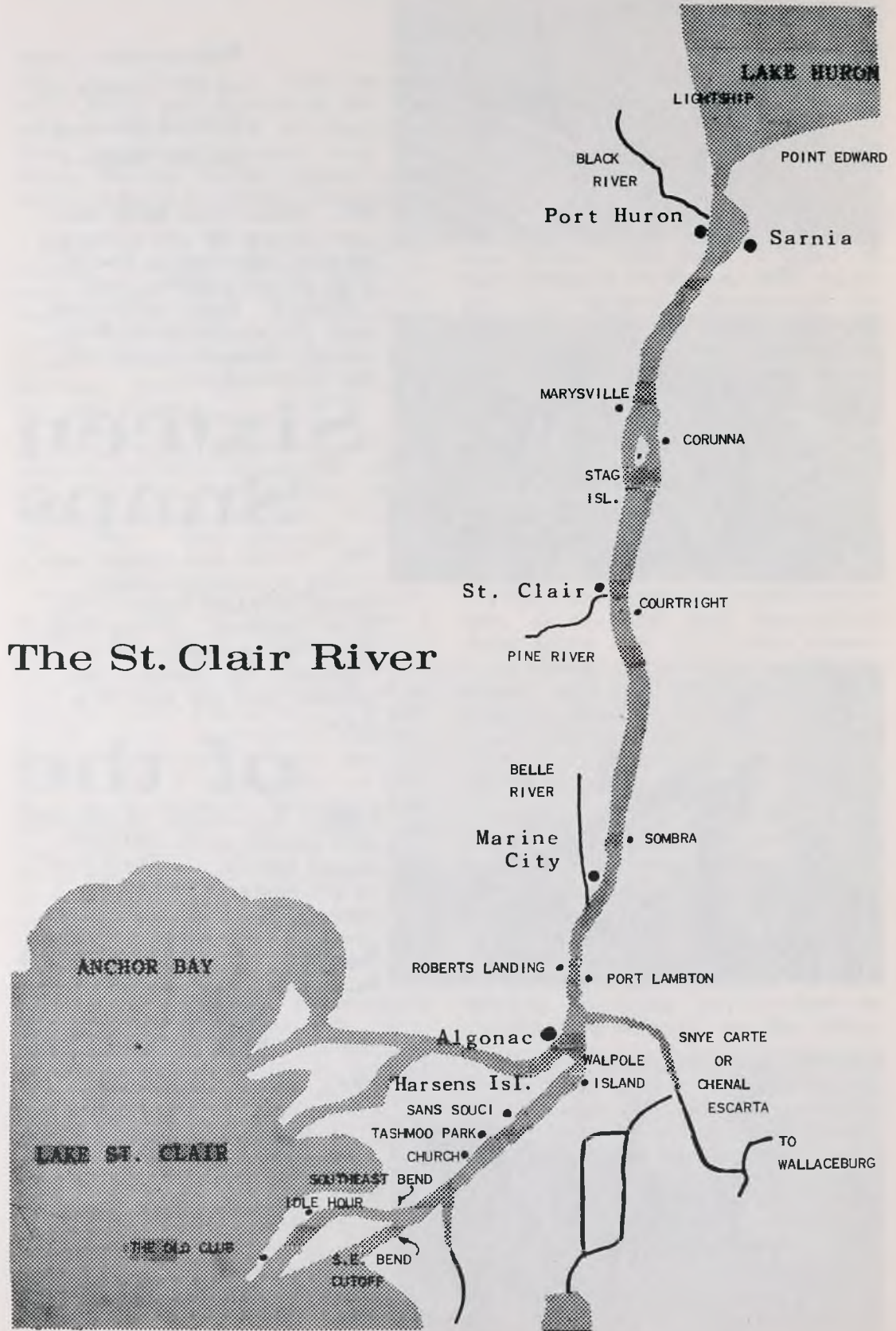
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THREE. A remainder of the days when the St. Clair had many summer hotels, the "Idle Hour" in the Flats is now much remodelled.

St. Clair River



FOUR. Another well-known dining spot of the old days was "Joe Bedore's". Opposite this point, until the 1962 season, northbound freighters would find themselves swinging into a southeasterly direction. The new channel straightens this Southeast Bend, but passes far from the landmarks seen on this page.



FIVE. *Passengers frolic on an upper deck of Aquarama as she moves out of Southeast Bend. Today, South American, during her weekly cruises, is the only passenger ship that visits the St. Clair River.*



SIX. *Wyandotte freighter Huron passes a pleasure cruiser and a scattering of summer cottages lining the river. Beyond this fringe, the land is largely swamp or undeveloped.*



SEVEN. *The only church along the river on Harsens Island in the Flats is St. Mark's, a white wooden structure that is a prominent landmark, just downriver from Harsens Island Range Lights. Through the trees can be seen a passing Roen Company tug.*



EIGHT. *Now closed in as a storage shed for a marina, this pavilion with twin cupolas is a remnant of old Tashmoo Park. Once an amusement park carrying the name of the grand sidewheel day steamer Tashmoo, the park was last regularly visited by a steamer, Put-in-Bay, in the 1951 season. Upriver from Tashmoo Park Marina is the town of Sans Souci, with the island's post office. Not far beyond, the main or "South" Channel is joined by the "North" Channel. This ends the "Flats" on the American side, opposite the mainland town of Algonac.*



SEE FACING PAGE FOR PHOTO-
GRAPHS NINE TO TWELVE

NINE. This far, most of the way northward, the Canadian shore has been uninhabited marshland, a place that draws most of its visitors in the hunting season. At last, almost opposite Algonac, appears the small settlement of the reservation of Chippewa and Potawatomi Indians on Walpole Island. Back from the cottages lining the river stands this old mission church. Separating Walpole Island from the Canadian mainland is the Chenal Escarta, or "Snye Carte," which winds its way to Wallaceburg.

TEN. Small dock pavilions like this one at Port Lambton are common on both sides of the river.

ELEVEN. On a river bend, just above Marine City, stands the substantial brick house that Captain Samuel Ward built for himself around 1828. Captain Ward was an early promoter of Marine City (known as "Newport" before 1865). With his nephew, Captain Eber Brock Ward, he came to own the lakes' largest steamboat fleet in the early 1850s. Today, many families of lake seamen live in Marine City and other St. Clair River towns.

TWELVE. The Pine River at the town of St. Clair once marked the southern boundary of Michigan's white pine forest. St. Clair has many fine old homes of 1900 or before, some built with timber wealth. Higher land adjoins the river banks here than is found to the south.

THIRTEEN. Above Corunna, the pastoral landscape of the Canadian shore is abruptly transformed into Canada's largest oil refinery complex, which stretches on to the city of Sarnia. These refinery towers have the fantasy appeal of a rocket launching pad.

FOURTEEN. Laid away for the winter in the bay below Point Edward is this fishing vessel, Elsie Mae II. The bay also frequently gives shelter to grain and other freighters and barges laid away out of season or in retirement.

FIFTEEN. Point Edward forces the St. Clair River into a constriction providing an easier crossing for the graceful steel arch of the Blue Water Bridge spanning to the Port Huron shore. Above the bridge on the American side stands Fort Gratiot Light, built in 1829 and one of the lakes' oldest. Both bridge and light appear in this view. Together they announce to the upbound ship passenger that he has arrived at the broadening into Lake Huron. Even a nighttime passage through this part of the river is fascinating for the bright and colorful lights of aids to navigation, the bridge arch, and the oil refineries. (For a view of the excursion steamer Put-in-Bay at Port Huron's Water Works dock in 1950, see page 124. The Water Works building is now cut down to basement walls forming a platform overlooking the river.)

SIXTEEN. Northernmost outpost of the St. Clair River is "Huron", last lightship on the lakes, which lies anchored in Lake Huron above the river entrance. Here she is seen from downbound North American.

THE ST. CLAIR RIVER

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Text on page 134

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THE ST. CLAIR RIVER



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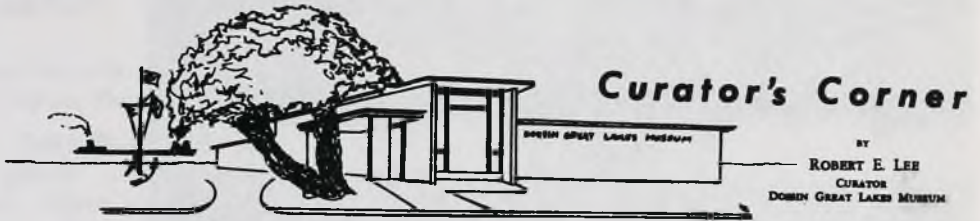
Text on page 134



15



16



It seems the usual thing for you all to be telling us where "goodies" can be found. Just this once, we are going to tell you about something we thought was very good, and well worth passing along...if you enjoy a pleasant boat trip.

We took this trip, with Mrs. Curator, the week of June 8, leaving on that date from Owen Sound, Ontario, and returning the evening of June 12. Five more delightful days we have never known!

The total trip, Monday evening to Friday evening, including berth and meals, is \$60 Canadian money (which figures about \$56 in U. S. funds). Interest you? We thought it would.

The vessel is m.s. *Normac*, operated by Owen Sound Transportation Co. She is formerly *James R. Elliott*, fire tug for the City of Detroit, built at Jenks at Port Huron in 1902 with (originally) a 110-foot hull. In 1931 Georgian Bay Ship Building Co. Ltd. lengthened her and added a deck, replacing her steam engine with a diesel one at the same time.

During summer months, *Normac* runs ferry service, so the trip we took is only available in the spring and fall. June sailings left on Mondays the 1st, 8th and 15th. Of course, it's too late to get in on any of those trips, but...and we now give you ample notice in advance...there are nine sailings in the fall.

Trips will leave Owen Sound every Monday evening, beginning September 14 and continuing through November

9. The route takes you across Owen Sound and up the channel above Manitoulin Island, stopping at such places as Little Current, Thessalon, Bruce Mines, Cockburn Island, and finally at the Soo. You arrive here at about 10 Wednesday morning, have the entire day and night to watch ships at the locks, and leave Thursday morning for the return.

The schedule is so arranged that you can see everything in daylight. The ports you make at night on the way up are reached in daytime on the return.

So, there you are. All of you who say, "Isn't it a shame you can't still take a nice, inexpensive boat trip," here is one you *can* take, and in the way of "the good old days."

Now to more normal matters for this column. A while ago we sent out an appeal for items to use in our reconstructed pilot house. Just as this is being written, we get word that a brass whistle-pull has arrived from Fraser-Nelson Ship Yard...a handsome addition, indeed. We are still looking for a brass cuspidor, brass wheelsman's railing, door knobs and old light switches.

Thanks to the Institute, we now have a complete public address system installed. The next time you come here to hear a speaker, you will, in fact, hear him! And there is thus another constant reminder of the many things for which we, the staff, thank the Institute and you!



1963 Gold Cup Race off Belle Isle, Detroit, fifth heat

**Once again,
this summer, Detroit will be host
to the Gold Cup Race. This is
the amusing story of Detroit's
first joust for the cup, in 1915.**

To those interested in Great Lakes matters, the late Mr. J. Lee Barrett was best known as president of Michigan-Ohio Navigation Company. With its large, modern passenger liner Aquarama, this line revived Detroit and Cleveland service for six seasons through 1962, seeking a mode that might be attractive to the travelling public. Mr. Barrett took to that venture a long experience in Detroit tourism circles, as executive vice-president of Detroit Convention and Tourist Bureau and long work in American Automobile Association affairs.

But until the fifties, his principal contribution to marine matters had been in promoting Detroit's role in powerboat racing, especially in the years that Gar Wood dominated the Harmsworth Trophy in international competition with his Miss Americas. From its beginning, Mr. Barrett was secretary to the Yachtsmen's Association of Amer-

ica, the official authority in this country for all world speed records and international races.

Having taken a part from the time Detroit people captured the Gold Cup Trophy in 1915, Mr. Barrett was well suited to tell the colorful history of such racing in his 1939 book, *Speed Boat Kings*. The story below was taken from a chapter of that book, with his permission.

Today we understand Detroit's youthfully exuberant, if tolerably provincial, glee over taking racing trophies from Easterners, if we contemplate the shoe-on-the-other-foot-today: Detroit's chagrin of seeing Seattle take what belongs here. Mr. Barrett has observed that the racing experience became of great value in World War II in developing the motor torpedo boat. We were regretful to learn that his long and active career came to an end this past January. GPB

The Dream Boat

Disaster struck swiftly and suddenly at Chris Smith.

by J. Lee Barrett

First, John Ryan left him. Ryan was the goose that laid the golden egg. But Ryan's gold melted. He had to quit the boat business.

That was all right. Smith could get along. He'd done it before; he could do it now. He and his sons could still build the fastest speedboats in America--and sportsmen were still demanding fast boats.

But then the First World War broke loose. J. Stuart Blackton had been Smith's best customer. The war ruined Blackton. Germany had been his biggest market for Vitagraph pictures. Swiftly, suddenly, that market was cut off. Blackton had to quit buying boats. The cost was tremendous.

Someone asked Blackton how much boat racing cost him every year.

Blackton said, "I don't know. If I knew, I'd probably quit it. That is why I never figured it up. A man in this sport has no business counting his costs."

But he had to count his costs now. His best picture market was blown to pieces.

During the winter of 1914-15, Chris Smith went to New York to see Blackton in a final effort to sell him a boat. After four or five days there, things looked pretty bad for Smith. One night a poker game had stripped him down to his last seven cents. Then he received a telegram from Detroit. He tipped the messenger boy the seven cents and went to bed.

* * *

That night he had a dream. He saw a beautiful speedboat being dis-

played on Cadillac Square, Detroit, beside the Pontchartrain Hotel. Hundreds of beautiful flower girls were throwing basketsful of dollar bills into the boat. The money had been given by the people of Detroit. In his dream Smith even began laying out plans for the boat.

"That's the idea," Smith told himself the next morning. "Build a speedboat for Detroit and raise the money by popular subscription." He borrowed one hundred dollars from friends in New York and rushed back to Detroit. At the Pontchartrain Hotel he met Sherman Wooley and William J. Chittenden. He told them of his dream.

The men were interested. "That dream can be carried out, Chris," Wooley said. "It's the easiest thing in the world."

They called a meeting of civic leaders for March 30, 1915. Among those present were Hugh Chalmers, head of the Chalmers Motor Company; William E. Metzger, one of the original organizers of the E. M. F. Automobile Corporation; William E. Scripps, publisher; Horace E. Dodge, Sr., head of Dodge Brothers; Otto Barthel, Detroit attorney; Paul H. Deming; Dr. Crevier; C. Harold Wills of the Wills St. Clair Company; Frank Boydell; John J. Barlum; Arthur Waterfall; Charles T. Bush; Havelock Northmore; Dr. James W. Inches. These men organized the Miss Detroit Powerboat Association. Later the author was appointed secretary.

We talked about speedboats and racing that day, about rules and

qualifications, about displacement and restrictions. No one in Detroit knew much about these things. Detroit had never seen a speedboat race of any importance. All the races for the Gold Cup Trophy had been held in the East--on the St. Lawrence River, Lake George, the Hudson River, Chippewa Bay. But never, never in the Middle West.

And the Harmsworth? The Harmsworth race had never been held west of Long Island. The idea of shipping boats to the interior of the American continent was unthinkable in 1915. Even as late as 1930, Sir Henry Segrave didn't want to ship his *Miss England II* to Detroit. He said it was too far inland. He wanted the Harmsworth race held at Miami, Florida.

That's why some of us thought that Smith's dream sounded like the dream of a very young, imaginative boy. Detroit did not know speedboats. How could we raise enough money to build a speedboat in this town?

Well--we didn't.

Chris Smith built the boat, but we couldn't raise enough money in Detroit to pay him for it. And yet, that little meeting in the Pontchartrain Hotel in 1915 set the stage for the highest drama in Harmsworth history. It poured 600,000 race-crazy spectators to the banks of the Detroit River in 1931. It also set the stage for the Gold Cup Races for many years.

It is true that Chris Smith didn't have the scientific equipment for building speedboats that other builders had. There was a great deal of technical work going on at the time among boat builders that was completely foreign to him. When he went to the National Motorboat Show in New York in 1914, the experts started to discuss friction, wetted surfaces, air resistance and model testing in the government tank at Washington.

Smith openly admitted that he knew nothing of these things; that he was just an ordinary speedboat builder who got his ideas for speed under actual tests out on the St. Clair River.

"Well, what about displacement? How do you figure displacement?" they asked him.

"Displacement?" he said, surprised. "I don't care about displacement. All I need is enough water to cool the engines, that's all."

And yet the boats he had built for Blackton won every important trophy in America in 1912 except the Gold Cup. His *Baby Speed Demon II*, built in 1914, was the first boat in America to travel over fifty miles an hour, officially.

* * *

Now, Chris Smith went to work building the dream boat, *Miss Detroit I*. It was a single-step hydroplane powered with a new Sterling engine of 250 horsepower which Charles Criqui had developed at Buffalo, N. Y. William E. Metzger took it out on the St. Clair River for a trial spin. Before he stepped into the boat, Chris Smith said to him, "Be careful, Billy. This is the fastest boat I have ever built."

And Smith was right. When Metzger came back to the boatwell after the run, he said, "For the first time, Chris, the West will win the Gold Cup."

They shipped the boat to Port Washington, Manhasset Bay. The first heat for the famous Gold Cup Trophy in 1915 was run on Saturday, August 14. The *Miss Detroit I* and the Detroit crowd received scant attention at New York. For days before the race the sportsmen and the newspapers were talking chiefly of Blackton's *Baby Speed Demon II* and *Baby Reliance V*; Charles F. Chese-

THE DREAM BOAT

brough's *Tiddledey Wink* which was reputed to have travelled at 82.5 miles an hour over the government course at Glen Cove on July 23; Count Mankowski's *Ankle Deep Too*; *Tech, Jr.*, owned by T. Coleman du Pont; and the *P. D. Q. VI*, owned by A. Graham Miles and Mrs. Henry Devereaux Whiton, Hewletts, L. I.; and Carl Fisher's *Presto*. The *Miss Detroit I* and her owners were barely mentioned in the advance reports.

And yet Smith's new boat was the only one--out of a field of 12--that was able to negotiate the entire three heats without trouble. It was the greatest disaster in the history of American powerboating, and the hollowest kind of a victory for Detroit. It is fortunate for American honor that this was not a race for the British International Trophy. America could never have lived that frightful race down.

It seemed almost that the gods of speed had frowned upon this race from the very beginning, and had delegated a ghostly army of fiends under cover of night to tamper with the engines of these speedboats. After the race Blackton said, "racing is like that. You never know what's going to happen to these fast boats." That was the famous racer's parting tribute to speedboating. He departed from the stage and passed into oblivion. Other sportsmen were to take his place.

The first warning of disaster came from Count Casimir Mankowski, of Lake George, N. Y., a few weeks before the race. His beautiful new \$25,000 boat, *Ankle Deep Too*, hit a rock at high speed in a trial off Sands Point and sank immediately in Long Island Sound.

Then, suddenly, about the same time, *Peter Pan VII* hit a piece of driftwood in trial and ripped off one of the metal planes on the forward step. The boat was owned by J. P. Bicknell and flew the colors

of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club of Toronto.

The *P. D. Q. VI* blew out a cylinder on the St. Lawrence River. Part of the crankcase was torn away.

The *Hawkeye* was severely damaged by backfiring.

The owners of these boats had all challenged Blackton for the Gold Cup Trophy. None of them were ready to start the first heat.

Detroit was having trouble, too. Five minutes before the starting gun, Billy Metzger, pilot of the *Miss Detroit I*, couldn't be found. A. A. Schantz, chairman of the Detroit Committee, was frantic. "Who knows how to drive a boat?" he asked the little group of Detroiters standing around him.

A freckled face kid from Algonac, Michigan, stepped up.

"What's your name?" Schantz asked.

"John Milot."

"Can you drive a boat?"

Milot said he could.

Milot jumped into the cockpit beside Jack Beebe, the mechanic. He had no goggles, gloves, knee-pads--nothing. Before the heat was over Jack Beebe was driving the boat, taking care of the engines, and trying to hold Milot in the boat. The constant pounding in the rough sea had almost jarred Milot into insensibility.

But they won the race.

At first, Milot didn't know the course. *Baby Reliance V*, Blackton driving, was first over the line at the gun; *Little Joker* was second; Blackton's *Baby Speed Demon II*, with Robert Edgren driving, was third; *Miss Detroit I* was fourth.

Milot followed Blackton around the course for two laps--to get acquainted with the position of the

buoys. At the start of the second lap *Baby Reliance V* was leading, but the *Miss Detroit I* had pulled up in second place. Milot stayed in second place for another lap. Then Beebe began pulling out the throttles. They passed Blackton and were leading at the beginning of the third lap. They stayed in the lead and won the heat, averaging 48.5 miles an hour.

As the *Miss Detroit I* swept across the finish line the gun on the judges' stand blasted the finish signal. But Milot and Beebe, strangely enough, kept going for two more laps, while boat whistles blew and the crowds yelled to them to stop their boat. When they came near the judges' stand, finally, engines throttled, someone yelled, "Why didn't you stop? You won the race long ago."

Beebe yelled back, "We forgot to count the laps."

Miss Detroit I won the second and third heats as easily as the first.

* * *

But during the following winter, we were having our troubles with the *Miss Detroit I*. The boat was our white elephant and we were wondering what had happened to those basketsful of dollar bills Chris Smith had seen in his dream. We still owed \$1,800 for the boat. With that indebtedness glaring at us we couldn't order a new boat built for the 1916 race. Smith built the *Miss Minneapolis* for a group of Minneapolis sportsmen. The *Miss Minneapolis* won three heats at Detroit and took the Trophy to Minneapolis. Our *Miss Detroit I* was a broken, battered hulk after the race, fit only for

junk. Some of us were actually going to junk the boat. Metzger, Dodge, Barlum and Schantz ordered me to sell the boat to the highest bidder. "Maybe we'll get *something* out of it," they said. "Liquidate our obligations and wind up the affairs of the Miss Detroit Powerboat Association."

So one day I made a plea at the noon-day meeting of the Detroit Exchange Club for some loyal Detroiters to buy the boat. It so happened that the one man in all the world who was interested in a "used" speedboat was in that room when I spoke. He stood up--a slim, dark-haired, modest fellow about thirty-five years old. I had never seen the man before.

"How much do you want for that boat?" he called out from the back of the dining room.

Silence swept the room. The man didn't look to me like he could buy an \$1,800 boat. I leaned over to Judge Sherman Callender sitting at my side, and said, "Shall I tell him the price?"

"Sure," said the judge. "Take a chance."

I straightened up and told the stranger the price.

"I've got \$1,000", he said. "I'll give you a six-months note for the balance."

I whispered to the judge, "Is his note good for \$800?" The judge replied, "His word is good for a million." The boat was sold--to Gar Wood.

The man went almost immediately to Algonac to see the boat. While he was there, he bought Chris Smith's boat plant. For six years after that Chris Smith and his sons built speedboats under Gar Wood's direction. It was the beginning of Wood's famous line of *Miss Detroit*s and *Miss America*s.

Here are the stern views we promised on page 123. Above is Cape Breton Miner photographed by Leonard Barr II. and below is Tustumena in Bill Hoey's view (with car ferry Huron).

GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS



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