

# TELESCOPE

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**Great Lakes  
Maritime  
Institute**



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



# THE GLORY DAYS

During the early part of the 1800s the lumbering industry in Michigan was small. In 1837 there were only two small saw mills in operation at Saginaw. During the next two decades the operations expanded and there were at least a dozen mills in operation. At this time lumber 'lookers' were selecting and purchasing tracts of good timber for about \$1.50 an acre. From the 1850s to the 1880s were the glory days of lumbering in the lower peninsula of Michigan. It was in this time that the greatest waste of a nation's natural resource occurred. Timber was cut without regard to conservation or future generations. As one timber 'looker' said, "There's enough to last forever." Thirty years later it was almost gone. In 1872 it was estimated that two and a half billion feet of pine was cut in Michigan. In 1883 it is estimated that four billion feet were cut.

Bay City, Tawas, Alpena and Cheboygan were the main lumber ports on Lake Huron, although any location that could shelter a schooner became

a lumber port. At Cheboygan there is still a mountain of sawdust to remind us of 'the good old days.' Many ports on both coasts of Lake Michigan also loaded lumber in large quantity such as Manistee, Manistique, Ludington, and Muskegon in Michigan and Green Bay, Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and Sheboygan in Wisconsin.

The sawed lumber began to move out of the ports as soon as the ice had cleared in the spring. During the early years most of the lumber was carried by schooner, but in later years small wooden steamers carried the bulk of the trade and the old schooners became barges to be towed by them. It was not an unusual sight to see a lumber 'hooker' with two, three, or even four 'consorts' in tow. Large rafts of uncut logs were often towed down the lakes to lower lake ports. These rafts, held together by huge chains, often contained thousands of board feet of lumber. The largest recorded on Lake Huron contained two million feet of



oak and a million feet of pine. The raft was towed by the tugs *Owen* and *Merrick* in 1875 from Bay City to Buffalo. It took 18 hours to run the St. Clair River, and a total of 16 days to travel from Bay City to Buffalo. These rafts were a menace to navigation and many a ship was damaged or sunk in collision with them. In 1897 the passenger steamer *Cambria* collided with a raft on Lake Huron. The rafts also broke apart in storms and the floating logs menaced navigation for years.

In loading a cargo of lumber a particular pattern was followed. The lumber was first loaded into the hold until it reached the deck beams or as close as possible to them. Wedges were then driven between the cargo and the deck beams, both to secure the cargo in the hold and to support the deckload which might be loaded to a height of 12 feet. When handling square timbers of great lengths another technique was used.

Some schooners had large ports built into the transom. These would be opened and the timbers would be pulled into the hold by a cable drawn by a horse. When the hold was full it was wedged in place, holding the smaller pieces of lumber in place. Shorter timbers and pieces of lumber would be carried on deck and held in place with chains and wedges.

Thus loaded, the little craft took their consorts in tow and crossed Lake Superior, Huron, and Michigan to ports on the lower lakes. The lakes are always treacherous at any time of the year and many of the little 'hookers' left port with the holds full and deck loads high never to be seen again. Weeks later or in the spring the beaches would be covered with wreckage and cargo, the only clue to what happened to the little steamers and their tows. Most of the wrecks were soon forgotten; others, over the years, have gained notoriety.



In September of 1895 the schooner-barge *Elma* broke loose from her tow and 'took ground' near Miner's Castle along Lake Superior's shore. The ordeal that followed is described in Ratigan's *Great Lakes Shipwrecks and Survivals*. In November of 1914 the *C.F. Curtis*, with two schooner-barges *Annie M. Peterson* and the *Sheldon E. Marvin* loaded with lumber disappeared somewhere in Lake Superior near Grand Marais. Lake Huron has its story about the captain who looked out one morning and found two of his barges had disappeared from his tow sometime during the night. In October of 1916 the *Marshall F. Butters* loaded with lumber foundered during the Black Friday Storm on Lake Erie. The crew was rescued by the steamers *Frank R. Billings* and *Fred G. Hartwell*. Although not carrying lumber, the schooner *Rouse Simmons* disappeared in Lake Michigan while carrying a deck load of Christmas Trees to Chicago.

By the late 20's most of the schooner-barges were gone, and by the late 30's most of the wooden 'hookers' were disappearing. Their old hulls could be seen in the backwaters of ports throughout the lakes. Even today, their old bones still can be seen in an occasional port, a sad reminder of their glory days.

In this month's issue of *TELESCOPE* the Editors have selected pictures that they feel are representative of those glory days. These photographs are from the collection of the late Emerson Knack. We hope you may enjoy them as much as we enjoyed selecting them.



Dock-wallopers go about the laborious business of loading lumber aboard the 180 foot JAMES P. DONALDSON at Bay City, about 1910. With heavy trousers and leather aprons, the laborers pass lumber below decks and are laying the first tiers where the cargo will be stacked 15 feet high, almost to the cabin windows on the foc'sle deck.

Seen from the dock, the DONALDSON takes aboard 500,000 feet of lumber, and the bare handed crew worked from 12 to 16 hours a day for \$35 per month. These were what we call the good old days.

The DONALDSON's consort, the old schooner-barge A.W. WRIGHT, is laden with 700,000 feet of Saginaw Valley pine lumber. The freight rate in those days was 85 cents per thousand feet.



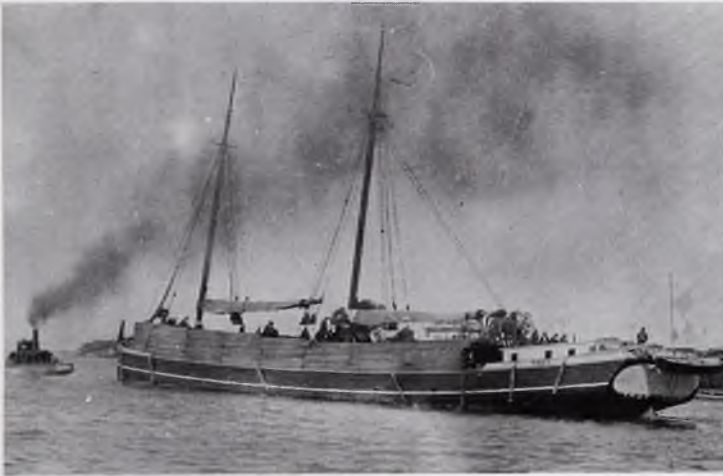


Above is an interesting old view of the Bay City waterfront, about 1908. In the foreground are the steamers JAMES P. DONALDSON and her consort the A.W. WRIGHT. Astern are BOSCOBEL, OGEMAW, and an unidentified barge, all "in ordinary".

Below, the LANGELL BOYS in winter quarters with the barges J.L. KETCHUM and J.B. COMSTOCK, about 1910.







To the left, the barge TROY is seen under tow by a tug about 1910.

At the right the barge SUPERIOR is seen loading lumber at Saginaw. She was wrecked at Caseville in 1887.

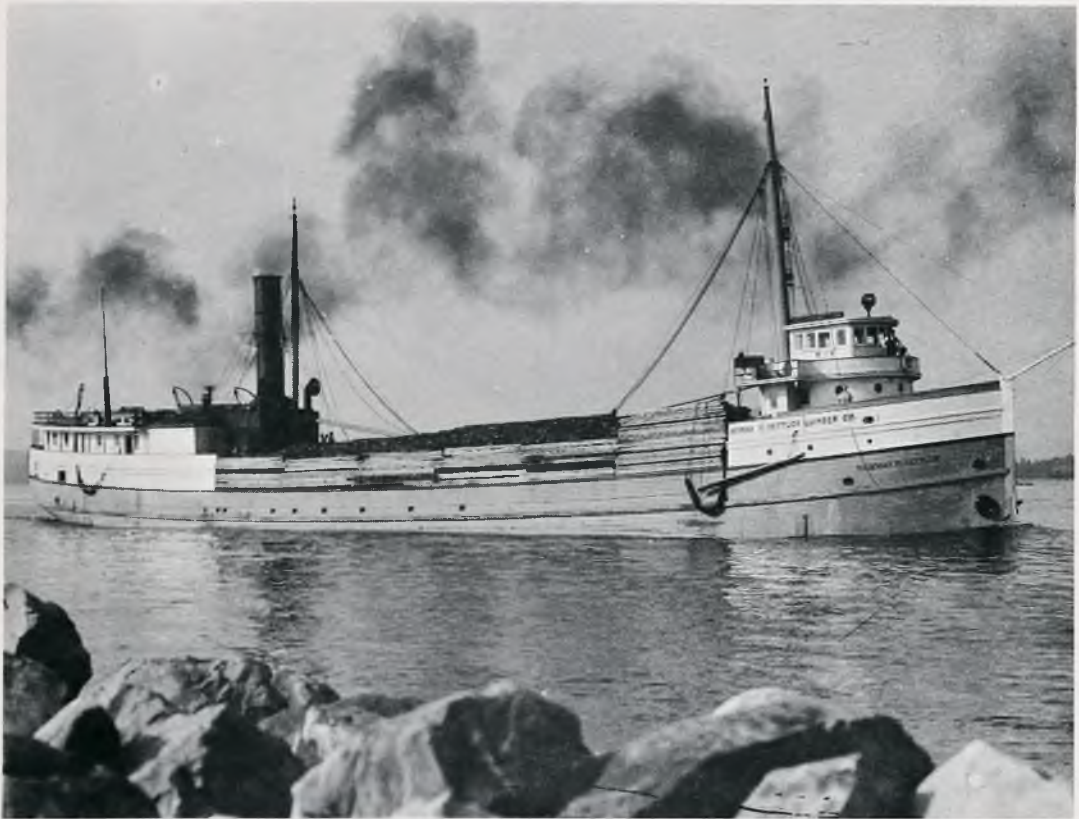


At the left is the barge GRAMPIAN. She was often towed by the Davidson's tug HOWARD along with the barge PAISLEY.



With the advent of steam barges in the 1860s, many a handsome old schooner was relegated to the end of a tow line. The P.J. RALPH tows the barges MIZTEC, GOSHAWK, MARY WOOLSON and BRIGHTIE, about 1916. All five vessels are laden with cedar posts

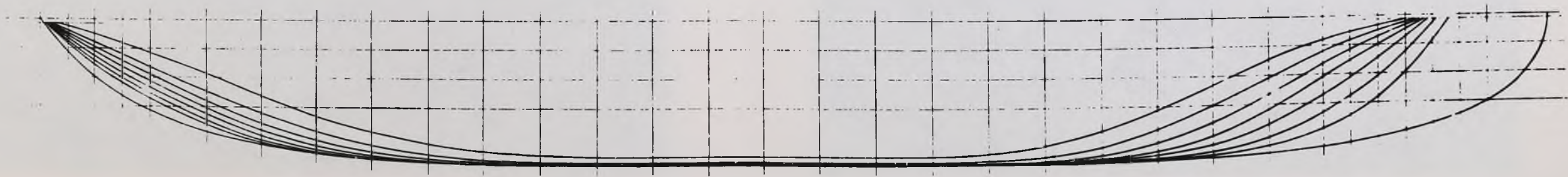
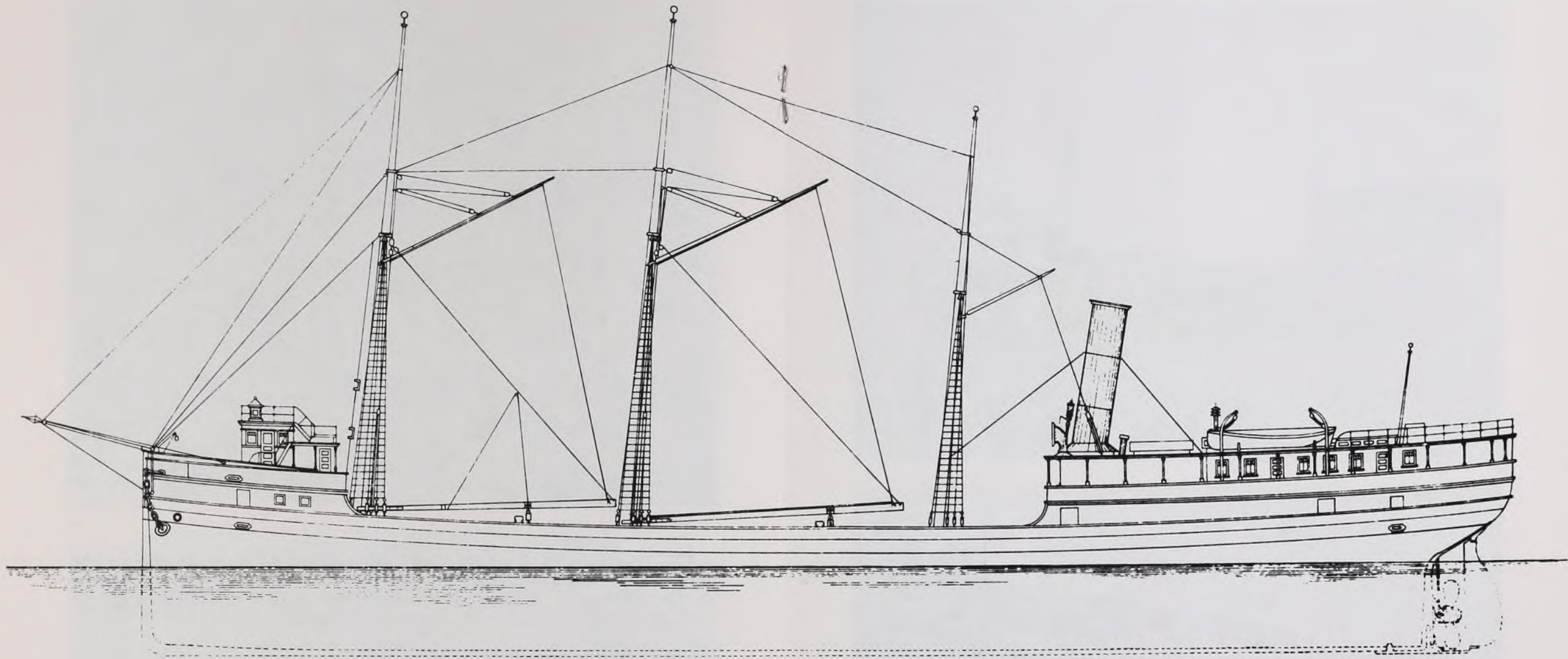


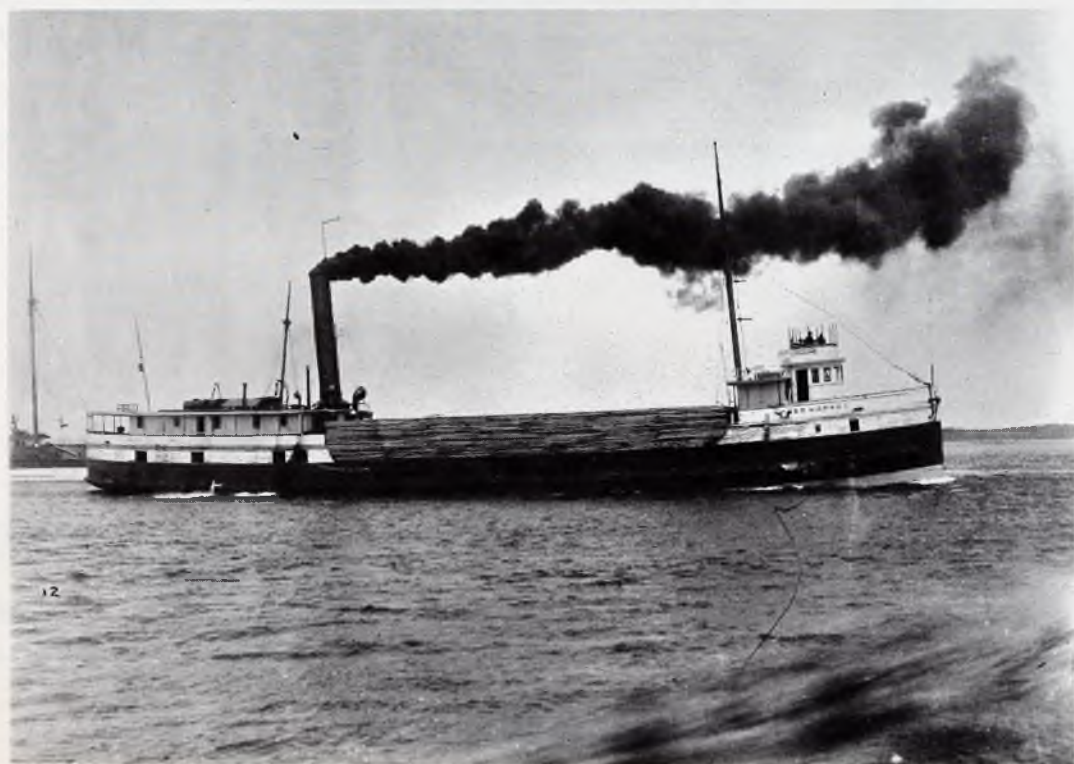


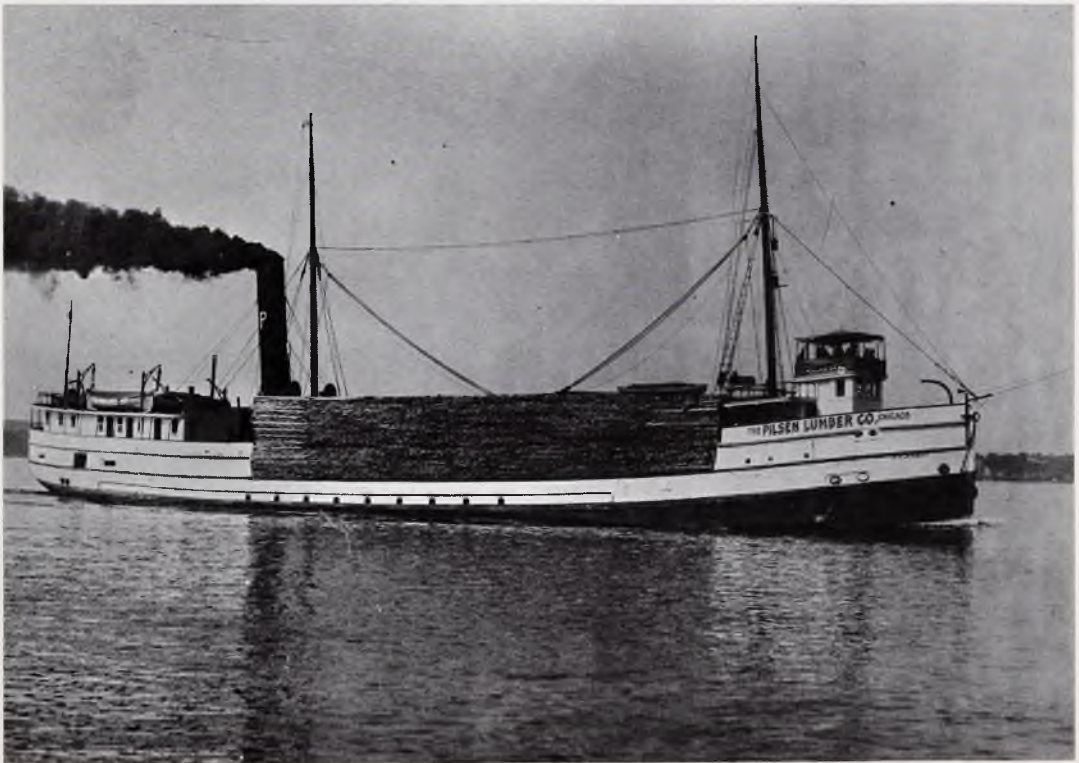
This month's center-spread features the plan of the wooden steamer WALTER VAIL, one of the fine drawings from the WPA series (Historic American Merchant Marine Survey) published by the Smithsonian Institute in Washington.

The WALTER VAIL (US. 81263) was designed for the coarse freight trade and was built by James Davidson at West Bay City in 1890. Powered by a Frontier Engine Works fore and aft compound engine, she measured 200 x 35 x 13.3 feet; 726 gross tons. In 1904 the VAIL was rebuilt for the lumber trade, with a capacity of 1,000,000 board feet, and her gross tonnage was increased to 789 tons. She was rebuilt again in 1913 and re-named HERMAN H. HETTLER. She became the flagship of the Hettler Lumber Company fleet of Chicago and was one of the largest lumber hookers on the lakes.

The HERMAN H. HETTLER was stranded in a snowstorm at the entrance to Munising Harbor on November 23, 1926. A year later the wreck had broken and settled in deep water where it now attracts local diving folk.









The wooden ARGO was a Detroit product that was built by the Detroit Drydock Company in 1885. A 192-footer, she was rated for a capacity of 820,000 feet of lumber. ARGO was renamed GLEN in 1930, and sailed under that name until she was abandoned because of age at Manistee around 1935.

A lumber-hooker with an interesting past was the HOMER WARREN, pictured here in 1912. She was built as the passenger propellor ATLANTIC in 1863 for the old Union Steamboat Company and later ran in the Grummond fleet out of Detroit. She burned in 1899 and was rebuilt at Bay City in 1901 for the lumber trade. At this time she was renamed HOMER WARREN. Under Canadian ownership, she foundered with all hands in a gale on Lake Ontario in October of 1919.

Another historic craft was the ROBERT HOLLAND, built at Marine City in 1872 as a steam barge of 339 gross tons. In 1875 she was converted to a passenger steamer for Georgian Bay service and was renamed NORTHERN QUEEN. Badly damaged after being wrecked at Manistique in 1881, she was reduced to a lumber hooker again in 1882 and sold back to U.S. parties, who gave her her original name. She burned at Sturgeon Bay, May 11 1915 and because of her age, she was not rebuilt.

KALKASKA was built in 1884 at St. Clair by Simon Langell, a steam barge of 678 gross tons, 178 x 33.8 x 15.5 feet. She was reconditioned in 1918 for the sand trade and burned on the St. Clair River near Marine City on September 15, 1932.

Regarded as one of the more handsome lumber craft was the JAMES H. PRENTICE, built by John Craig at Trenton, Michigan in 1885. A 167 footer, she is pictured here around 1912 towing the barge HALSTED. The barge was lost in the Great Storm of 1913; the steamer was abandoned because of age in 1935 at Toledo.

Running from Lake Michigan to Lake Erie ports, the WOTAN carried 800,000 board feet of lumber from the Louis Sands mills at Manistee. The WOTAN measured 181.5 feet in length, 886 gross tons. Renamed SWIFT in 1930, she laid up at Sturgeon Bay and burned in December of 1935.





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Nov. 1...The tug SAMUEL E. BOLL is towing a barge with a 250 ton nuclear reactor on it, which will be used in a new power plant at Ontario Center, N.Y., at last report the tug and tow were off Milwaukee. The reactor was built in Mt. Vernon, Ind., and the trip started Oct. 16, moving down the Ohio River, up the Mississippi to the Illinois River, and thus to Chicago, where the BOLL took over.

Nov. 4...The first commissioning of a Coast Guard vessel in Great Lakes in more than 20 years took place in Cleveland, Ohio, when Rear Adm. Charles Tighe commissioned the U.S.C.G. cutter VALIANT in a brief ceremony.

...The new 730 foot SENNEVILLE suffered engine trouble on her maiden voyage near Escoumains, P.Q.

Nov. 6...The Canadian laker MOHAWK DEER (a. L.C. WALDO, b. RIVERTON) which had been sold for scrapping overseas, sank in the Mediterranean, near Portifino, after drifting onto rocks during a storm. The MOHAWK DEER was being towed with another ship to the Italian port of La Spezia, and had to be cut adrift when she began to flounder.

Nov. 7...A blizzard that hit Conneaut, Ohio, Nov. 5 and again today (37 inches of snow) delayed inauguration of the second shiploader (coal loader) that was scheduled to start operation today. When both shiploaders are in service they will have a loading capacity of 11,000 tons per hour.

...The U.S. Marshal will auction off C.S.L.'s 390 foot package freighter RENVOYLE, Nov. 15.

Nov. 9...The barge WILTRANCO I (a. HORACE S. WILKINSON) has been declared a total loss, and has been given to the Corps of Engineers.

...The Maritime Administration has offered the bulk carrier PEAVEY PIONEER (a. STEPHEN M. CLEMENT, b. UNITED STATES GYPSUM, c. JOHN J. BOLAND JR., d. NIAGARA MOHAWK) for sale for scrap or non-transportation use.

## GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS



MOHAWK DEER at Iroquois, Ont., Sept. 26, 1965. (Photo by Geo. Ayoub).

Nov. 11...SENNEVILLE makes her first trip through the Welland Canal.

Nov. 12...Great Lakes levels will stay high, predict U.S. Lake Survey engineers, provided rain, and snow fall in the same proportions as last year. The outlook is that all the lakes except Superior will remain substantially above the average of the last 10 years through April.



NORTHERN EAGLE at Iroquois, Ont., Nov. 12, 1967. (Photo by Geo. Ayoub).

## GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS

Nov. 13...Thirty ships were delayed by a traffic tie-up in the Welland Canal when the Liberian Freighter NORTHERN EAGLE, struck a bank near Port Robinson and damaged her hull by opening a seam in the bow. She was later tied-up between bridges 11 and 12, with a hole below the waterline, and her bow down by about three feet, while pumping operations got underway to keep her from sinking. After being pumped out, the NORTHERN EAGLE proceeded to Port Colborne, Ont. for inspection and repairs. The NORTHERN EAGLE (a. HOVENWEEP, b. OILFIELD) is a former T2 tanker, which was converted and re-built with a new mid-section, in 1962, was bound for Detroit with steel.

Nov. 15...Upper Lakes Shipping Ltd., of Toronto, has assigned its 710 foot bulk carrier ONTARIO POWER to the iron ore pellet and coal trade on the east coast, at least until the end of January. The self-unloader, built in 1965, has a cargo capacity of 28,850 tons at salt water draft, more than 6,000 tons greater than capacity at Seaway draft.

...The Canadian freighter RENVOYLE (a. GLENLEDI) has been sold to Sam Simon, of Acme Scrap Iron & Metal Co., of Ashtabula, Ohio, for \$21,000.

...Soo locks to remain open until Dec. 30, if ice permits and traffic warrants.

Nov. 16...Coast Guard helicopters rescued four men from a tug and her barge in trouble on Lake Michigan. The tug was the MUSKEGON which got her tow line fouled in her screw and lost the barge, with three men aboard, just south of Frankfort, Mich. The helicopters lifted the barge men to safety just before it grounded on the beach, and they also lifted an injured sailor off the tug. The tug JOHN ROEN towed the MUSKEGON into Frankfort for repairs.

Nov. 17...William F. Dean, 72, died today at his home in Detroit. He was president of Nicholson Terminal and Dock Co., and Nicholson Transit Co., both of Detroit and of Nicholson Cleveland Terminal Co.

Nov. 22...The master of the Liberian vessel ARTHUR P. was fined \$1,000 in Quebec City for permitting the spillage of oil into Quebec harbor.

...In Cleveland, Ohio, the U.S. Steel Corp. appealed a Federal District Court's punitive damages award against them in the CEDARVILLE case.

...The barge GLENBOGIE (a. ALEXANDER MAITLAND) has been towed to Strathearne Terminals in Hamilton, Ont. for scrapping. (At the same place, the after-cabins of the JOHN ERICSSON have been removed).

## GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS

Nov. 23...About 1,000 longshoremen were laid off in the Port of Montreal, after the Shipping Federation of Canada had charged them with "continued low productivity". About 130 men were fired the day before for refusing to handle load slings holding some 400 or 500 pounds more than the old limit, despite an agreement made in 1966. Port conditions in Montreal, Trois-Rivieres and Quebec, were described by the President of the Canadian Export Associations as a national emergency, due to work slowdowns, loss of perishables, and increased rates of ocean freight.



...The HENRY R. PLATT JR. (a. G.A. TOMLINSON) struck the J.R. SENSIBAR (a. FRANK C. BALL) in a minor stern to stern collision at Toledo, Ohio. The SENSIBAR was at the dock at which the PLATT was docking when the accident occurred.

Nov. 26...The 450 foot, 10,983 ton, British freighter LONDON CITIZEN ran aground about 25 yards from the Canadian shore in the St. Marys River just below the Soo locks. The vessel was allowed to drift in strong river currents so it paralleled the shore and did not disrupt shipping. Steering trouble apparently was the cause. After inspection at Sault Ste. Marie, Mich. the ship is due to continue to Duluth.

...Gales on the St. Lawrence Seaway halted traffic both up-bound and downbound. Winds up to 45 mph started in the early hours. Ship movement did not resume until late afternoon.

Nov. 27...Hanna Mining Co. has decided not to accept two C-4 troopships assigned to the Hanna Fleet by the Maritime Administration. The ships, the GEN. M.L. HERSEY and the GEN. W.F. HASE, were to have been converted into 45,000 ton ore boats

## GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS

for Great Lakes service. Hanna would have had to offer two vessels to the Maritime Administration for scrapping in return for the troopships.

...Shipping in the Welland Canal was tied up for about 16 hours over the weekend after the Liberian freighter ATLANTIC HOPE, one of the largest salties in Seaway service, struck a lock boom. There was no damage to the ship.

...With the Port of Montreal tied up in a labor dispute, the Norwegian freighter ALSATIA (a. BYSANZ) on charter to the Cunard Line, proceeded to Brockville, Ont. to unload part of her cargo thus achieving the honor of becoming the first salty to stop at that St. Lawrence River port. Lacking facilities and employing high school students, it took three days to unload the cargo.



Nov. 28...The Cleveland-Cliffs vessel WALTER A. STERLING (a. SAMOSET, b. CHIWAWA) will have its boiler and burner controls converted to automatic operation during the winter in the American Ship Building Co.'s Lorain yard.

## MISCELLANEOUS

The Canadian coaster RIVIERE PORTNEUF, owned by L. Tremblay, of Riviere Portneuf, Que., sank in the Saguenay River after it went aground last Oct. 7, enroute from Port Alfred to Rimouske, Que. (See Goelettes List, Tel. Feb. 1967, page 34).



## CURATOR'S CORNER

by  
ROBERT E. LEE, Curator,

*Dossin Great Lakes Museum*

Earlier this year the marine industry lost a true friend; a quiet, pleasant, reserved man who was in every sense of the term, a gentleman. At the time of his death he was the Fleet Superintendent of Oglebay-Norton's Pringle Barge Line. It was more than just "a job" to him; it was almost a religion.

Emerson Knack was an institute member, and along with this writer, and several other members, he shared fraternal brotherhood in the International Ship Master's Association. He was a native of Michigan, born in Bay City, and worked in his early years on steamers in the lumber trade. In his early Detroit career he worked on the tug *Jean Fraser*, with the garbage barges *Great Western* and *Rose Burgess*. In 1942 he was hired by the old Pringle Barge Line as Fleet Superintendent, in which job he continued until his death.

In all of these years he shared the love of ships so many of us enjoy, and he collected pictures. He was not, in the sense of so many of our members a "collector", for he never amassed the thousands of photographs so many collectors do. But he did take, and save, many fine photographs.

Recently, his widow has presented this collection to the museum, and this issue of *TELESCOPE* is pleased to present many of Mr. Knack's photos in the annual "Christmas Album". We who are friends of Emerson will be pleased to remember him in this way, and we know that contributing to the enjoyment of others who shared in the things he enjoyed would have been his wish.

On another subject...the year comes to an end, but as surely as it does, we are faced with a new year! Sometimes the new one brings new problems. Such is the case with 1968.

Our Editor, and President, Don Richards has done a fine job in the time he has held the reins. Because it has been a fine job there has been the ever present temptation to leave him on his own.

While no announcement of the fact was made in these pages, he recently made it known to the Board that, as of the first of the year, he would be relinquishing those reins. It was, in his words, *Just too much for one man!*

We agree. But there seemed to be no one else who felt that he had the necessary ability, or the time, to pick up the job and carry on.

Don has agreed to continue IF he is given help, and we have placed the services of our own "first mate", Pat Labadie at his disposal as Associate Editor. We don't want to do this for a number of reasons, not the least of which is our desire not to have the museum too involved in *TELESCOPE*. Besides, we can ill afford to spare his valuable assistance for the time it will take. But there seemed to be no other way, so this is a solution...for a while, at least.

**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, Mich. 48207. The editors cannot be responsible for authors' statements.

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1965

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