

# TELESCOPE

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**Great Lakes  
Maritime  
Institute**



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

# The PIONEER STEAMSHIP COMPANY

by

KEVIN C. GRIFFIN

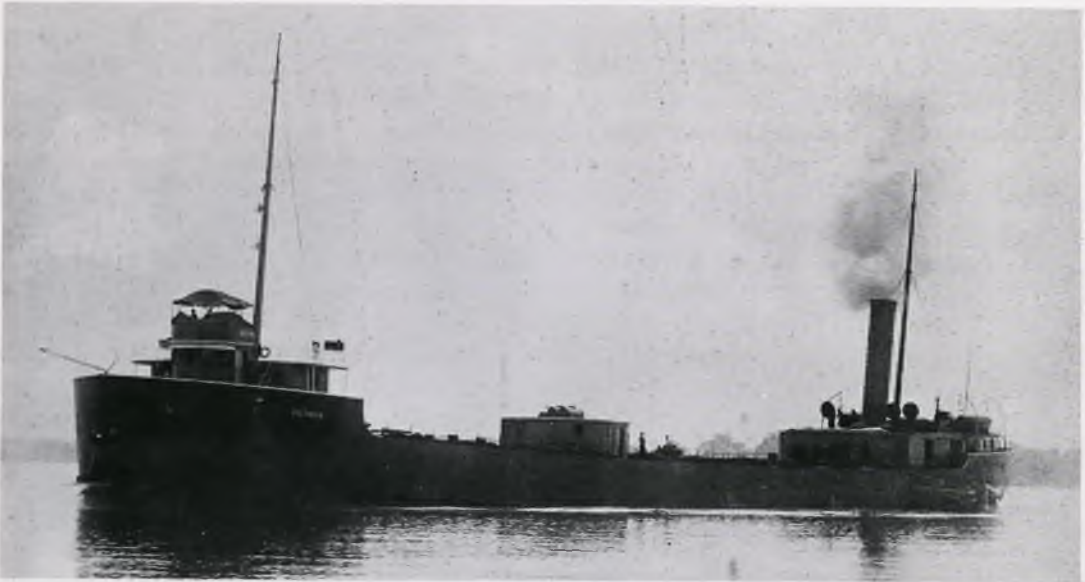


JAMES P. WALSH

Dossin Museum Collection.

It has been brought to our attention by a member, Arthur Harris of Windsor, Ontario that an error exists in the data of the ships listed in last months issue. The error concerns net tonnage. This should be listed as deadweight tonnage. It has been corrected in this issue and is listed as dw instead of net tons. This error is not the fault of the author, Mr. Griffon, but is mine...D.F.R.

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16. FRANK BILLINGS (1916-62) 465 x 56 x 30, 5495 gross tons, 9050 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 22½ x 36 x 60 with a 42 inch stroke. Built in 1910 by the Great Lakes Engineering Works, Ecorse, Michigan as the CHAMPLAIN for the Northern Lakes Steamship Company (J.H. Speddy, mgr.). Purchased in 1916 by Pioneer. Sold for scrap in 1962.
  17. G. A. TOMLINSON (1916-59) 524 x 54 x 30, 6361 gross tons, 9600 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 23½ x 38 x 42. Built in 1909 by the American Shipbuilding Company at Lorain, Ohio for the Douglas Steamship Company (J.J.H. Brown, mgr.). Purchased by Pioneer in 1916. Sold to the Gartland Steamship Company in 1959 and renamed HENRY R. PLATT, Jr. In service.



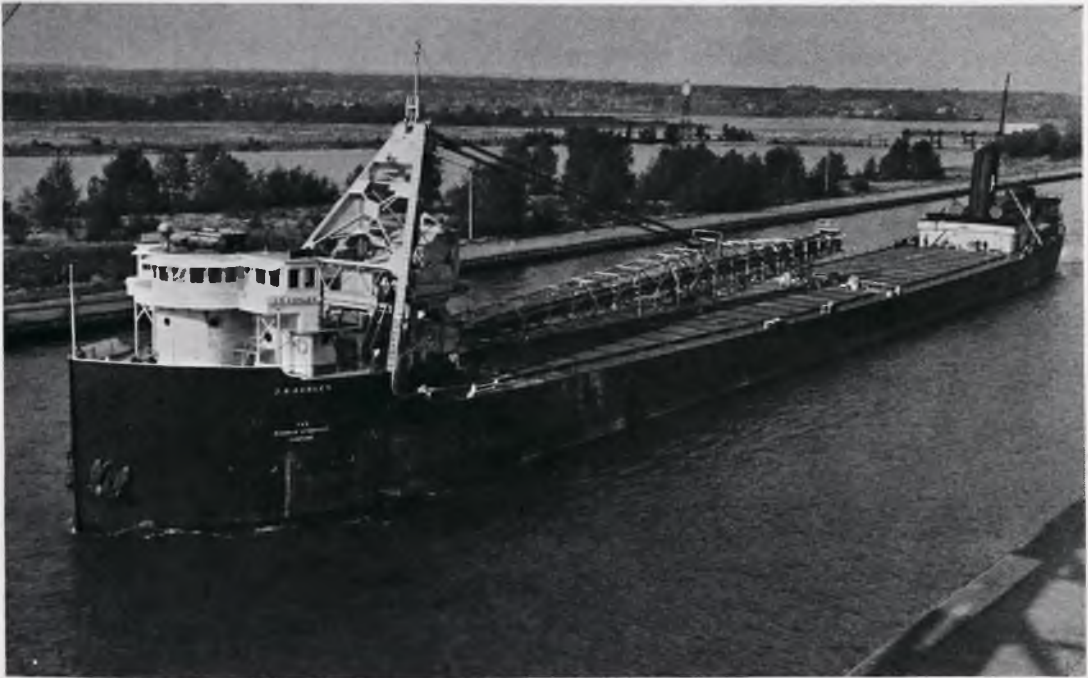
POLYNESIA

Pesha Photo, Dossin Museum Collection.

18. JAMES P. WALSH (1916-61) 500 x 52 x 30, 5326 gross tons, 8500 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 22½ x 36 x 60 with a 42 inch stroke. Built in 1905 by the Toledo Ship Building Company, Toledo, Ohio for the Ohio Steamship Company (C. O. Jenkins, mgr.). Purchased in 1916 by Pioneer. Sold to Marine Salvage in 1961. Resold to Eisen & Metall AG, Hamburg, Germany for scrapping. Broken up on July 18, 1961.
19. POLYNESIA (1916-24) 395 x 46 x 26, 3640 gross tons, 5700 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 19 x 30 x 50 with a 40 inch stroke. Built in 1897 by the Chicago Shipbuilding Company, Chicago as a steel schooner (barge). Purchased by James Corrigan in 1903. Engines were installed in 1907. In 1910, owners restyled the Australia Transit Company (Corrigan, McKinney & Co., mgrs.). Purchased in 1916 by Pioneer. Renamed A. D. McBETH in 1924. Sold to the Forest City Steamship Company in 1927. Sold to the Buckeye Steamship Company in 1928. Deleted from Lloyd's in 1941 (no trace).
20. PRICE MCKINNEY (1916-61) 452 x 54 x 28, 4671 gross tons, 7500 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 22 x 35 x 58 with a 40 inch stroke. Built by the American Shipbuilding Company, Lorain in 1908 for the Island Transit Company. Managed by J. J. Rardon in 1913 and Corrigan, McKinney & Co. in 1914. Purchased by Pioneer in 1916. Sold in 1961 to the Marine Salvage Company, Ltd. Resold to Eisen & Metall AG, Hamburg, Germany for scrapping. Arrived in Hamburg on July 17, 1961.

21. CHARLES L. HUTCHINSON i (1920-51) 600 x 58 x 32, 7215 gross tons, 12,400 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 24 x 39 x 65 with a 42 inch stroke. Built in 1910 by the American Shipbuilding Company, Lorain, Ohio as the WILLIAM C. MORELAND for the Interstate Steamship Company. Was wrecked on Sawtooth Reef, Lake Superior, October 29, 1910. Out of register until 1916, when a new bow section was added for Canada Steamship Lines Ltd., who renamed her SIR TREVOR DAWSON. Purchased by Pioneer in 1920 and renamed CHARLES L. HUTCHINSON. In 1951 was renamed GENE C. HUTCHINSON. Sold to Marine Salvage Ltd. in 1962. Resold to Redwood Enterprises Ltd. (Reoch Group) and renamed PARKDALE. In service.
22. W. H. McGEAN (1920-62) 500 x 56 x 30, 6014 gross tons, 9400 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines  $22\frac{1}{2}$  x 36 x 61 with a 42 inch stroke. Built in 1909 by the Great Lakes Engineering Works, Ecorse, Michigan as the STADACONA for the Inland Navigation Company Ltd. of Hamilton. Acquired in 1915 by Canada Steamship Lines Ltd. Purchased by Pioneer in 1920 and renamed W. H. McGEAN. Sold to the Ford Motor Company in 1962 and renamed ROBERT S. McNAMARA. In service.
23. A.D. McBETH (1924-27). See No. 19, POLYNESIA.
24. JAMES E. FERRIS (1924-61). See No. 15, F.R. HAZARD.
25. JOHN S. MANUEL (1924-61). See No. 14, E.L. PIERCE.
26. S.B. COOLIDGE (1924-44). See No. 13, AUSTRALIA.
27. PHILIP D. BLOCK (1925-36) 600 x 60 x 32, 7931 gross tons, 13,000 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines  $24\frac{1}{2}$  x 41 x 65 with a 42 inch stroke. Built in 1925 by the American Shipbuilding Company, Lorain, Ohio. Sold in 1936 to the Inland Steel Company. Lengthened in 1953 at Chicago to 672 feet, 9149 gross tons. Repowered with oil-fired geared turbines. In service.
28. W.D. CALVERLEY Jr. (1925-48). See No. 9, HAROLD B. NYE.
29. CHIPPEWA (1926-27) 260 x 44 x 22, 2310 gross tons, 3200 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 17 x  $28\frac{1}{2}$  x 48 with a 36 inch stroke. Built in 1920 by the Detroit Shipbuilding Company, Wyandotte, Michigan for the Independent Steamship Company. Purchased in 1926 by Pioneer. Returned to the Independent Steamship Company in 1927. Sold in 1930 to the Standard Dredging Company of New York. Sold in 1941 to the Chippewa Steamship Corporation of New York. Sold again

in 1946 to the China Merchants Steam Navigation Company of Shanghai and renamed HAI NGU. Renamed HAI ER in 1947. Registered in Formosa in 1950. Broken up at Kaohsiung, Formosa in 1954.



J.S. ASHLEY

Van Der Linden Photo,  
Dossin Museum Collection.

30. DAVID P. THOMPSON (1926-59) 579 x 58 x 32, 7612 gross tons, 11,350 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 24 x 38 x 65 with a 42 inch stroke. Built in 1907 by the Great Lakes Engineering Works, Ecorse, Michigan as the WILPEN for the Shenango Steamship Company (W.P. Snyder, mgr.). Purchased in 1926 by Pioneer and renamed DAVID P. THOMPSON. Converted to a self-unloader in 1957. Sold in 1959 to the American Steamship Company (Boland & Cornelius) and repowered with an oil-fired Skinner Unaflow engine. In service.
31. DONALD B. GILLIES (1934-61). See No. 11, JOSEPH G. BUTLER.
32. J. S. ASHLEY (1936-57) 524 x 54 x 30, 6361 gross tons, 9500 dw tons. Coal-fired quadruple expansion engines 18 x 27 x 41 x 63 with a 42 inch stroke. The original engines were from the LAFAYETTE. Built in 1909 by the American Shipbuilding Company, Lorain, Ohio for the A.T. Kinney Transportation Company. Purchased by Pioneer in 1936. Converted to a self-unloader in 1937, 6993 gross tons. Repowered in 1952 with an



CLARENCE B. RANDELL      Massman Photo, Dossin Museum Collection.

oil-fired Skinner Unaflow engine. Sold in 1957 to the American Steamship Company (Boland & Cornelius). Was renamed FRED A. MANSKE in 1962. In service. See TELESCOPE, July-August, 1968, page 131.

33. CLARENCE B. RANDALL (1943-62) 621 x 60 x 35, 9057 gross tons, 15,400 dw tons. Coal-fired triple expansion engines 24 x 41 x 68 with a 42 inch stroke. Built in 1943 by the Great Lakes Engineering Works, Ashtabula, Ohio for the U. S. Maritime Commission and purchased by Pioneer. Sold in 1962 to the Columbia Transportation Division of Oglebay Norton Company and renamed ASHLAND. In service.
34. GENE C. HUTCHINSON (1951-62). See No. 21, CHARLES L. HUTCHINSON (i).
35. CHARLES L. HUTCHINSON ii (1952-62) 642 x 67 x 35, 11,073 gross tons, 18,250 dw tons. Oil-fired geared turbines built in 1940 and rebuilt in 1951. Built in 1952 by the Defoe Shipbuilding Company, Bay City, Michigan. Sold in 1962 to the Ford Motor Company and renamed ERNEST R. BREECH. In service.



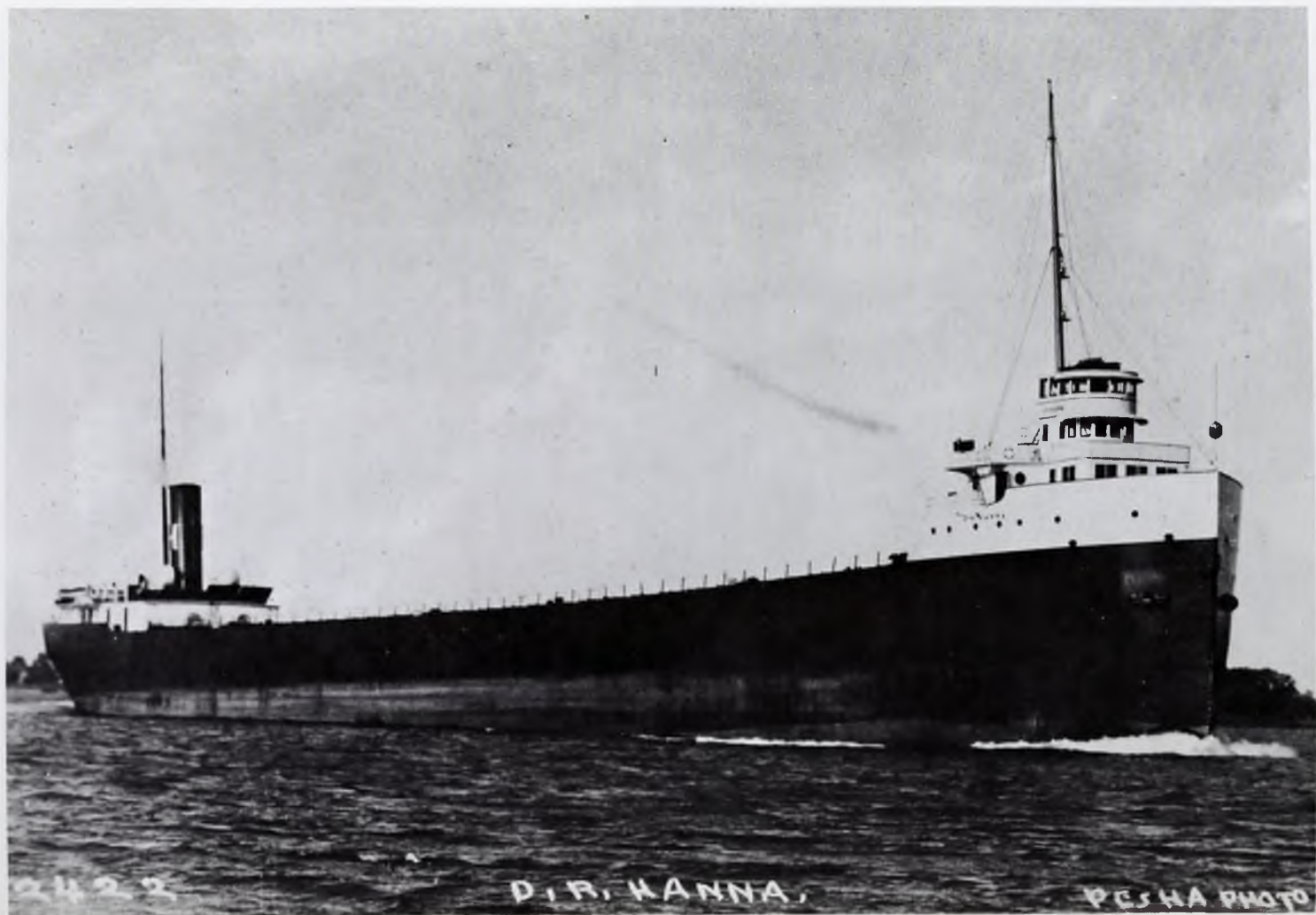
PIONEER CHALLENGER      Massman Photo, Dossin Museum Collection.

36. PIONEER CHALLENGER (1961-62) 730 x 75 x 39, 13,232 gross tons, 25,500 dw tons. Oil-fired geared turbines. Built in 1943 by the Bethlehem Shipbuilding & Drydock Company, Sparrows Point, Maryland as the fleet oiler U.S.S. NESHANIC (553 x 75 x 31). 1943 through 45 she saw service in the South Pacific winning nine battle stars. She was stricken from the Navy list and handed over to the U.S. Maritime Commission. Sold to the Gulf Oil Corporation in 1947 and renamed GULFOIL. Purchased in 1961 by Pioneer and converted to a straight deck bulk carrier by the Maryland Shipbuilding & Drydock Company, Baltimore and renamed PIONEER CHALLENGER. Sold in 1962 to the Columbia Transportation Division of Oglebay Norton Company and renamed MIDDLETOWN. In service.

The author wishes to express gratitude to Mr. Michael Crowdy, Editor of the MARINE NEWS and to the Central Record of the World Ship Society for the painstaking assistance in preparing this article.

COVER.....

This picture of the FRANK BILLINGS was taken by the late Frank Taylor and is from the Dossin Museum Collection.



D. R. HANNA

Pesha Photo, Dossin Museum Collection.





## CURATOR'S CORNER

by  
ROBERT E. LEE, *Curator,*  
*Dossin Great Lakes Museum*

Visitors to the Museum now see a bright addition as they come up the walk to the entrance. Thanks to a generous gift from the Historic Memorials Society in Detroit, we now have an outdoor glass-enclosed bulletin sign to announce our special events and exhibits. This sign is similar to those used by churches with changable letters that can be set up in a matter of minutes, to welcome delegates to conventions, special groups of visitors, public meetings, and civic events.

The Museum was also the beneficiary of another gift, this from the Louisa St. Clair Chapter of the D. A. R., for the purchase of audio-visual equipment for the DeRoy Hall. Through this gift we have purchased, and now have in use, a second 16 mm sound projector, and a Roberts stereo tape player-recorder. Anyone who has been forced to sit through the change of reels in a movie will know the usefulness of the second projector, and thanks to the tape equipment we are now in a position to tape programs and special events with professional quality, in addition to providing background music in the area during appropriate occasions.

We, and our staff, are very appreciative of the generous contributions of the Historic Memorials Society and the Louisa St. Clair Chapter, and we are justifiably proud of the new acquisitions, so when you're in ask us to show them to you. We'll be mighty happy to do so!

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## *The RIDDLES of FELICITY*

by MELVIN E. BANNER

Among Michigan Historians, especially those whose areas of concern involve the Great Lakes, the *Felicity* may prove to be one of the vital links of communication between the Indian, the Voyageur, and the fur trader.

The sloop *Felicity*, while seemingly of minor importance, diligently plied the waters between Detroit and Michilimackinac delivering necessary trade items to those in need of

them.

During her years of service on the lakes the fur trade assumed gigantic proportions in the economy of the period. Thus, the *Felicity* became a minor ship, during a major period, and one of the vital links in the fur trade.

To those ardent searchers for historic truth, the riddle of the *Felicity* raises a few historic waves

on the waters. First of all there is the riddle of her birth. Was it in 1773, 1774, or 1775? Secondly there is the riddle of her demise. Where or when did it occur, and under what circumstances? Lastly, what historical importance may be attached to the log of Samuel Robertson and his conversation with Black Peter.

This article attempts to spread out what pieces are known, fitting them into a coherent pattern, then closes, fully knowing there are many missing bits. It is hoped that from some reader may come the bits that are missing.

Sources indicate that the *Felicity* a single-masted fore-and-aft rigger vessel<sup>1</sup> was launched somewhere between 1773<sup>2</sup> and 1775<sup>3</sup> at Detroit. She carried a five man crew and was outfitted with six swivels. Her commander in 1773 was listed as John Loughton<sup>4</sup>.

A report of October 27, 1777, brings to light information that her crew included eight men, one of the eight being *Master to Command*. Another man acted as both bo'sun and gunner. Four swivels are mentioned as being on the ship at this date<sup>5</sup>.

Now, bearing these facts in mind, let us examine the pieces of this puzzle that we have on hand:

A report in 1780 by Alexander Grant concerning *His Majesty's Armed Vessels on Lakes Erie, Huron, and Michigan*<sup>6</sup> reads:

*The sloop Felicity with Norman McKay, Captain*

Force on board 6

No guns

4 swivels

6 muskets

5 men current

25 men actually wanted to complete the roster.

Grant's report of August 1, 1782<sup>7</sup> lists the following interesting information:

15 muskets

6 parts pistols

20 spears

Range on gun deck; 57' 6

Breadth in feet; 16

Depth of hold; 6'

Draft of water when laden 6'

Burthen in tons 55; in barrels bulk; 200

The hold fill; 20'

Estimates of troops carried 40

Estimates of barrels carried; 50

Built in Detroit 1774

Condition of hull & rigging; good

The *Felicity* is listed as carrying four guns in this report.

Another report of a year later, 1783, lists the *Felicity* number seven and of 45 tons burthen. She is carrying a crew of 12 men and 12 troops and can carry 67 men with five men being used as merchantmen. It could handle 934 souls<sup>8</sup>. (? Ed.)

This may lead one to believe that very few trade goods were shipped with this large number of souls on board.

The *Felicity* was owned by Simon McTavish and George McBeath<sup>9</sup>, presumably of Scottish ancestry. Both men were active as suppliers to dealers in trade items, among whom was John Askin. Askin was one of the outstanding dealers engaged in the fur trade in the Detroit area and lower lakes region. Russel has indicated that the launching of the *Felicity* took place at Detroit in

1775, and that she was of 30 tons burthen.

A letter from John Askin to Todd and McGill dated at Montreal, May 8, 1778 reveals that: *A Major DePeyster has taken my vessel into the Service. A Mr. Robinson I believe, will sail with her by the 10th. He is now rigging*<sup>10</sup>.

DePeyster was in His Majesty's Service, and a personal friend of John Askin. The *Felicity*, being involved in His Majesty's Service on the lakes, was to be used for shuttle service between Detroit and Michilimackinac. This included all British ports wherever her services were needed. This proved to be a most lucrative appointment for John Askin.

Samuel Robertson, sometimes called *Robison* by John Askin, and *Robinson* by Lt. Governor Patrick St. Clair of Michilimackinac, had been sent to the firm of Phyn & Ellice, London based, to Detroit to command a small vessel on the lakes for some merchants in 1774.<sup>11-14</sup>

Robertson was a native of Scotland and an experienced shipbuilder and carpenter. He became part owner of two small vessels with Askin and Jean Baptiste Barthe<sup>15</sup>. He later married the younger daughter of John Askin at Michilimackinac in 1778<sup>16</sup>. Robertson's log is a very important piece of our puzzle.

The firm of Phyn and Ellice supplied the needed supplies for those who dealt with the voyageurs, and had established trading posts along the lake ports and inland places.

Another reference to the induction of the *Felicity* into the King's

*Fresh water navy* on the lakes is found in Bolton's letter to the Adjutant General, dated December 15, 1777, which says<sup>17</sup>. *Master of the Felicity said (the) vessel is employed in the King's Service.* Bolton expressed disbelief further in his letter, but he later states; *She (the Felicity) may be a . . . . . proper vessel if His Excellency General Haldimund thinks it proper to employ her.*

The *Felicity*, as well as the *Welcome*, carried rum, troops, trade items, grain, furs, and sealed communications between Detroit, Erie, Niagara, Sandusky, and Michilimackinac<sup>18</sup>.

Further evidence that the *Felicity* was inducted into the King's Service may be found written by Capt. Harrow to Capt. Grant<sup>19</sup>. *The Felicity arrived at Michilimackinac about 6pm. Capt. McKay to (take) His Majesty's Sloop Felicity to Detroit* (dated July 30, 1780).

As with all things, time began to take its toll. The *Felicity* began to show her age. Records of 1794 indicate that she is now owned by John Askin<sup>20</sup>, and plans have been made to build another sloop to replace her.

The final plans were completed on September 20, 1795, and three months later the *Francis* slid down the ways<sup>21</sup>. As a matter of record, the *Felicity* had replaced the *Welcome* after the latter had been lost in a storm in 1781<sup>22</sup>.

Commodore Grant had reported the *Felicity* as being in need of repair as early as 1782<sup>23</sup>, and a year later stated *The Felicity brought letters . . . its supplies short, and its*

condition poor<sup>24</sup>. Eight months earlier she had been reported in need of a new keel<sup>25</sup>.

Thirteen years after the DePeyster report, Capt. William Mayme, after reporting the storage of gunpowder in the hold of the *Felicity*, suggested that the powder be moved to the *Dunmore*, nearby<sup>26</sup>. This powder had been stored relative to the evacuation orders given by Colonel England of the Detroit Arsenal. The fortifications were to be moved from Detroit to the Canadian shores.

At a Board of Survey Proceedings held for inspection of the *Felicity*, the report stated that 267 barrels were stored on board with 258 usable barrels, seven half-usable, and two barrels spoiled<sup>27</sup>.

A question arises; *Is this the same gunpowder that Colonel England wrote about to Alexander Mc Kee, which concerned the Felicity?* Wrote England; *She. . . may not be able to hold all the powder and fixed ammunition that is here*<sup>28</sup>. And one may further query; *Is Colonel England referring to the evacuation of the arsenal at Detroit?*

Tragedy is narrowly averted by the *Felicity* as she was driven ashore during a storm in 1797<sup>29</sup>. Before the years end, a fatigue party of sol-

diers removed the powder from the hold of the *Felicity*. As an added reward for their bravery, all were given an extra measure of rum.

With historical incidents to her credit, marine historians may find the *Felicity* worthy of prolonged consideration and discussion<sup>30-33</sup>.

Perhaps they may find that the sloop *Felicity* could prove to be one more vital link in that interminable chain of events which shaped the fur trade into such a prosperous undertaking.

At the same time they may find that the *Felicity* contributed greatly as another link in contributing to the disintegration of Indian culture and mores. Even today, the gallons of *white man's milk*, or brandy, that was transported up and down the lakes by the *Felicity* is staggering to the imagination!

Lastly, the most intriguing piece of this puzzle is; who were those black sailors reported by Black Petre to Samuel Robertson as written in the log of the *Felicity* for October 31, 1779<sup>34.35.36</sup>? Where might they come from? Where did they go? And finally, did those on board the *Felicity* understand fully all the implications involving black sailors as reportedly seen by Black Petre?

#### Bibliography of sources. . .

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2. Wisconsin Historical Collection; Volume XI, page 199. (cite hereafter as W.H.C.). . .
2. Ibid; page 199. . .
4. M.P.H.C; book 10, page 618. . .
5. W.H.C; Volume XI, page 187. . .
6. M.P.H.C; book 10, page 618. . .
7. M. P.H.C; book 17, page 588. . .
8. M.P.H.C; book 24, page 14. . .
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10. John Askin, 'Letterbook for 1778' Volume I, page 84.(cited hereafter as J.A.L.). . .
11. Ibid; Volume I, page 49-50. . .
12. M.P.H.C; book 11, pages 424-28. . .
- 13 Johnson, Ida A. 'Michigan Fur Trade' page 83. . .
14. W.H.C; Volume XI, pages 203-12. . .
15. W.H.C; Volume XIX, pages 237-40. . .
16. J.A.L; Volume I, page 68. . .
17. M.P.H.C; book 19, pages 336-7. . .
18. Ibid; page 467. . .
19. M.P.H.C; book 9 page 601.

... one was seldom idle



on the *IDLEWILD*!

By J. F. HENDERSON

(The author of this article was closely associated with Great Lakes shipping for 45 years. He was born in Detroit in 1882, and shortly after the adventures described here he came ashore to join his father in operating the Detroit River Iron Works, which is still located on East Atwater Street. Until his retirement from business in 1947, he was widely known as the man to call when something *broke down*. Pieces of the engines and other gear from many freighters, ferries, tugs, and excursion boats passed through his shop, as well as work for many Detroit-area industries. Since retirement, Mr. Henderson has been living on a small acreage near the Blue Ridge Mountains west of Charlottesville, Virginia. His address is Route 2, Box 200, Charlottesville, Va., 22901. Ed.)

When I was a young boy I wanted to be a marine engineer, and I started by taking a job as oiler on the old *Idlewild*, one of the early sidewheel passenger boats running out of Detroit. Her name had originally been

*Grace McMillan*. Her owner, the Star-Cole Line, had another boat called the *Durias Cole*, also a side wheeler but with stationary paddles. The *Idlewild* was one of the first boats in the area to have feathering buckets on her wheels.

Before I joined the ship in 1904, she had run from Detroit to Port Huron, stopping at several points in the Flats along the St. Clair River. After the larger boats of the White Star Line took over that run, the *Idlewild* carried excursions from Detroit down to Sugar Island. I had ridden on her several times as a boy attending Harper Avenue Methodist Church picnics. I was always fascinated by the engine.

The *Idlewild* was chartered for the 1904 season by A. R. Lee, of Detroit to run on the Niagara River from Buffalo, N. Y., to Tonawanda, to Idlewild Park on Grand Island. She carried 2 to 3 hundred excursionists down to the park in the morning, left them for the day and brought them back in the late afternoon. One night each week she took a party on a moonlight ride down the river.

She was a pretty sight with her big *walking beam* rocking up and down above the hurricane deck. Unless you're an old-timer, you probably haven't seen this, so I will describe it. Boats of this type had one cylinder about three to five feet in diameter and with a ten to twelve-foot stroke. The diamond shaped beam, about 20-feet long, rocked on a center pin in a gallows frame. One end of the beam was connected by two bridle rods to a cross head on the piston rod. At the opposite end, a long connecting rod ran from the beam down to the crank-pin that turned the paddles. The boat was open from engine room through top deck wide enough to accommodate the various rods.

In addition to the usual deck officers and crew, the *Idlewild* had a chief engineer, second engineer, an oiler for the chief (me), two firemen and a coal passer.

The chief engineer, named Doran, was an old timer with lots of old time ideas. One day it became necessary to raise the floating head on

the air pump, which was operated by rods coming down from the walking beam. There was no chain hoist on the boat so I asked the *Old Man* if I machine sho

could go to the machine shop and borrow a pair.

His reply was *No. What would you do if you were out on the lake and had to raise the head?* I had to admit I didn't know. *Well*, he said, *you go up forward and ask the mate for a one-inch line about 50 feet long.*

When I brought the line, he said, *Take the rope up and hang it over the walking beam, letting both ends hang down.* This done, he had me fasten the ends to the floating head and then place a long stick between the ropes and start twisting. *This*, he said, was a *Dutch windlass.*

It took a lot of twisting, but eventually the head began to rise. I twisted until it was up about two feet, then I put blocks under and lowered it onto these. Now I had plenty of room to get inside the pump and work on the valves. When I had finished, I had the long job of untwisting the rope.

*I know you could have done the job in half the time with a chain hoist*, the chief said, *but I want to teach you to be self-reliant.*

Later boats had steel gallows frames to support the walking beam, but the *Idlewild's* frame was made of large timbers. One day the chief wanted to put a one-inch bolt hole through a timber. I asked him if I could go to the shipyard and borrow an auger. I should have known better. Instead I got a new example of the question I had been asked so often. This time: *What would you do if you were out in the lake and had no auger?*

He had me get a three-foot steel rod and put one end in the forge fire. The idea was to burn the hole

through the timber. I did it, but I had to get that rod red hot a good many times for this; another lesson in self-reliance.

One day the second engineer, who was on the afternoon watch, asked me to stay in the engine room as he wanted to leave for a few minutes.

carried it to the King Iron Works in Buffalo, on a one-horse dray the *Old Man* hired. I thought we would never get there. They started on the new one and we returned by streetcar. When we got back the rest of the crew had installed a patched cross-head we kept as a spare, ready for the next morning's run.

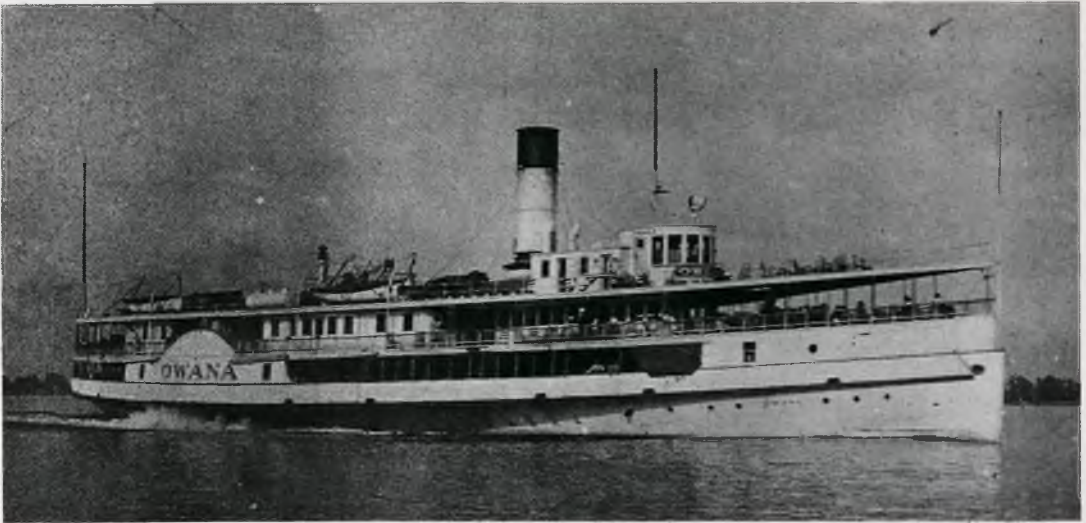


He had barely gone when there was a loud bang! I looked up and saw that steam was pouring from the stuffing box around the piston rod. The noise awakened the chief. He came running in and told me, *Get up there and tighten the packing.* I stood on the cylinder head and tightened the nuts on the stuffing box. As soon as the steam stopped enough for the *Old Man* to see what was wrong, he shut the engine down...and none too soon! The crosshead was broken, throwing the work all on one bridle rod, and it was bent. About one more stroke and I would have been blown so high they would never have found me.

We dropped anchor and whistled for tugs from Tonawanda. They towed us a few miles to our own dock and by this time we had the crosshead off. It weighed about 150 pounds, too heavy to take on a streetcar, so we

I took it upon myself to measure the width of the straps that held the crosshead brasses and found the pins could be made a half-inch larger, adding about a third to their area. I suggested this to the chief, and also that instead of sharp corners we use a large radius on the pins. I thought this would prevent us ever breaking another crosshead. He agreed, and we had the shop make the change.

The patched crosshead lasted about three days before it broke. The new one was near finished, so the *Old Man* took the straps and crosshead brasses to the shop for machining to fit the larger pins. I was to stay until the job was done, then hire a dray and return the parts to the boat. He returned to get some sleep, for when I got back all hands would have to work to get the engine ready



for the morning trip.

The *Idlewild* must have been about 40 years old when I was on her. She didn't have ballast tanks, as modern boats do, but instead had large oaken barrels called hogsheads. These were filled with sand, and the deckhands were kept busy rolling them from one side of the boat to the other to keep her on an even keel. When another boat would pass the passengers would all rush to one side to see her, causing the *Idlewild* to list and the poor deckhands to roll the barrels uphill. These boys certainly earned their beans and coffee!

One day coming up the river to the coal dock at Buffalo, we were rolling quite a bit in the choppy water. One of the trim barrels got loose, rolled across the deck, and landed *kerplunk* in the river. *That's one less we'll have to roll*, observed a work-wearied deckhand.

Finally the season was over and we returned to Detroit and laid up at a dock owned by the Detroit Lumber Co. We blew off the large boiler and were getting ready to wash it. We had a small *donkey* boiler that we

intended to use to supply steam for the pump. To avoid smoking up the boat, the chief ordered a gangplank laid from the ship to the dock, this to be a platform for the boiler so the stack would be clear of the boat.

I had hold of a rope on one side and another man was on the other side. Someone yelled, *Now all pull*. We did...my rope broke and I fell backward into the water. On the opposite side the water was full of floating logs kept there by the lumber company. Luckily for me, there were no logs where I went in. As soon as I realized where I was, I started swimming and eventually came up. I asked one of the men, *Why didn't you come in after me when I was so slow coming up?*

*Well*, he said, *I saw your hat come up and I knew you wouldn't be far behind*. At that I was luckier than a deckhand on the *Owana*, on which I shipped out the following season.

One Sunday we had just come from Toledo and were nearing the dock at the foot of Griswold when a red-haired boy, a deckhand, was leaning on the rail and waving at the girls



on another boat. This time he made the mistake of leaning on the movable section of rail, the place for the gangplank to be put out. Someone had neglected to fasten it, and when Red leaned on it the rail fell into the river with him hanging on. The engine was turning over slow as we were to land very soon. The side-wheel caught the rail section and threw it out behind. It came up but no Red. The Harbormaster found his body a short while later.

The *Owana* of the White Star Line was a *modern* boat, so the excitement was of a different kind than that on the old *Idlewild*.

The first day we were putting the boilers in shape ready to get up steam, and all were very dirty. With no steam there was no hot water for washing up, so each man threw a pail tied to a rope into the river and hauled up his own water. I was the last one to wash up, and as I was very dirty, I washed not only my face, but my head as well. When I was through, I reached for my towel, only to find it wasn't where I'd put it. Then one of the men said, *You can't dry yourself until you're clean*. I took one look in the mirror and you should have seen me! Some smart guy had thrown lampblack into my pail. Everyone went down to eat and left me to clean up. Soap and cold water would not touch it, so I got some Gold Dust Cleanser. Boy it was strong! I think there was lye in it, but it got the job done...and I missed my dinner.

Now I know they expected me to fly off into a rage, but I took it as a good joke, and they never bothered me again. I think they were a bit ashamed of themselves.

Later I thought I found out who threw the lampblack in my wash water for the oiler on the other watch, Charlie, was very handy with the stuff. On hot summer nights when it was too hot for the deckhands to sleep in the forecabin, they would

sleep up on deck. When they were fast asleep, Charlie would sprinkle lampblack on their faces, then he would tickle them with a straw so they would rub it in. Sometimes he would sprinkle a little in their ears.

On their way down to breakfast they would pass the engine room, so I got a good look at them. They were a tough looking bunch, and if they ever got their hands on the guilty party I believe they would have heaved him over the side.

Midnights we changed watches, and the cook always had a meal ready for us before he turned in. One night he set out a large bowl of stewed prunes, known by the crew as *Anchor Line strawberries*. I ate a few, but the others didn't care for them, so somebody suggested, *Lets let the cook know we don't want any more of these*, and with that he chucked them out of an open porthole. I said that I thought his action was an error... *Now the cook will think you ate 'em all*. The next night, sure enough, there was another bowlful. So, the same boy said, *Now we'll show him we really don't like them*, and threw bowl and all overboard.

The cook understood the message and we got no more *strawberries*.

That fall, 1905, I went before the U. S. Steamship Inspectors and took their examinations, which I passed. They gave me a license for first assistant engineer of all boats up to 2,000 gross tons, and second assistant on all tonnage.

That license was what I had wanted, but now I had it, I never used it. My father wanted my brother, Will, and myself to join him in the business at the Detroit River Iron Works.

So, my brief career on the lakes came to an end, but for the next 42 years I would be working on more boat engines than I had ever imagined.



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*March 3...*Mitsui O.S.K. Lines will inaugurate a regular service from the far east to Montreal and Great Lakes ports via Cape of Good Hope this year

*March 8...**S. T. Crapo* left her winter berth in River Rouge, Michigan at 8 A.M. after taking on 150 tons of coal at a Windsor Coal dock. She headed upriver for Alpena, Michigan, where she will get bulk cement for Detroit and Toledo.

*March 9...*The British freighter *Montcalm*, in regular Seaway service during the shipping season, was reported in a leaking condition 420 miles southeast of Halifax, N. S. Commercial tugs and the Coast Guard cutter *Active* are proceeding to the scene. A US Coast Guard report said a truck in one of the holds broke loose and ripped a 12-foot hole in the ship's side.

*March 10...*Fighting an ice field 35-miles long, the *S. T. Crapo* reached Alpena, Michigan. She and the Coast Guard cutter *Bramble* were stuck several times and made only 36 miles in 14½ hours yesterday.

...Arison Shipping Company, of Miami, Florida, announced it has purchased the Georgian Bay Line in a move indicating possible reestablishment of cruise ship operations on the Great Lakes.

*March 11...*Aiding the icebound *S. T. Crapo*, the Coast Guard cutter *Acacia*, too, became stuck in Lake Huron ice. Loaded with cement for Detroit on the season's first run, the *Crapo* was halted off Port Sanilac, Mich. At about 7:25 P.M. the *Crapo* and the *Acacia* collided. The *Acacia* was stopped suddenly by a windrow of ice; the *Crapo* was about 1,000 yards behind. This skipper of the *Crapo* ordered full-astern and a hard right rudder and engaged the bow thruster. Because of his quick action, the *Crapo's* bow was turned slightly at the time of impact, giving the stern of the cutter a glancing blow. The cutter's skipper reported a bent plate

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**GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS**

and damaged welding on two supports above the water line. No damage was evident on the *Crapo*. *Acacia* was ordered into Port Huron for checking.

*March 12...*After spending the night in the ice pack, the *Crapo* was freed at 8:15 A. M. by the cutter *Bramble* and she resumed pecking her way thru the ice toward Port Huron. She completed her run to Detroit later in the day.

...Controlling interest in Canada Steamship Lines Ltd., has been acquired by the Power Corporation of Canada, Ltd. The transaction was completed by the sale of a subsidiary firm, Trans-Canada Corporation Fund, for \$3.8 million and 400,000 common shares in the steamship fleet.

...Plans to relocate a bridge from the old Lachine Canal as a replacement for a bridge at Lock 2 on the Welland Canal, damaged by a ship last October 14, have been cancelled by the D. O. T. The permanent closing of the Lachine Canal has been deferred pending a court injunction taken by the Hall Corporation, to keep it open. The future disposition of the old waterway will be examined by a firm of planning consultants hired by the D. O. T.

*March 14...*The ore boat *Col. James M. Schoonmaker* has been chartered for three years by Republic Steel Corporation from the Interlake Fleet of Pickands Mather & Company. Apparently as a result of this charter, two Republic boats will not sail this season. They are the *J. E. Upson* and the *Peter Robertson* (a. *F. J. Earling*; b. *Robert B. Wallace*). Both vessels are laid up at Ashtabula, Ohio.

...Carl H. Stuber has been named senior vice president, and Floyd May vice president of Cleveland Tankers, Inc.

...The Liberian freighter *Vainquer* was abandoned by its crew about 140 miles southwest of New Orleans, La., after an engine room explosion. She sank within a few hours. All but one of the crew were picked up and taken to New Orleans. She was headed for New Orleans from Vera Cruz, Mexico, with 20,000 tons of raw sugar. She was launched in 1957 at Montreal and operated by the Canadian subsidiary of Wilson Marine Transit as the *Alexander T. Wood*. Last July (1968) as the *Vainquer* she upbound when at Port Huron she broke down with a twisted crankshaft. She lay there for days while a crew of diesel experts from Texas machined the shaft straight. Finally she was towed as a dead ship to Detroit where further repairs were made, and it was not until September 15, 1968 that she was able to clear for deep water.

*March 16...*Higher Great Lakes levels are forecast for the coming summer. The prediction by the U. S. Lake Survey that levels may top last year's by

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**GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS**

up to 11 inches is good news for boaters, commercial shipping and hydroelectric power interests, but reason for apprehension by shoreline property owners.

*March 17...*Celebrations to mark the 10th Anniversary of the St. Lawrence Seaway will be held on Expo Islands June 26, near the same site where Queen Elizabeth II and President Eisenhower had officially inaugurated the Seaway in 1959.

...Halco's tanker *Cove Transport* (a. *Leecliffe Hall*) was towed to Whitby dry dock from Toronto, by the tug *Queen City*.

...Three Great Lakes shipping executives were elected to membership in the American Bureau of Shipping at their annual meeting in New York. They are Richard P. Eide, manager of the marine department of Cleveland Cliffs Iron Company, Robert H. Lucas, president of Fraser Shipyards, Superior, Wis., and Christian F. Beukema, vice president-lake shipping, U. S. Steel Corp.

*March 19...*The first important thawing of Great Lakes ice has begun. High temperatures and westerly winds have destroyed most of the ice in the Chicago area, opened up some clear water at the entrance to Green Bay, caused jamming in the west approach to the Straits of Mackinac (windrows are now 3 to 5 feet), rotted and opened up ice fields in southern Lake Huron, cleared most of the western end of Lake Erie, and piled up windrows along a line from Port Colborne to Ashtabula. Ice on Lake Superior has changed little as the mercury remains near freezing.

...The tug *Laurence C. Turner* arrived in Cleveland this afternoon with the tug *Wyoming* lashed alongside after an all-day trip from Conneaut, Ohio through melting ice. The *Turner* had sailed from the Great Lakes Towing Company boatyard in Cleveland on March 18 to pick up the *Wyoming*, which sank several months ago at her moorings in Conneaut. The *Wyoming*, which was raised a few weeks ago, will be reconditioned in Cleveland.

...A Coast Guard icebreaker reports blue ice 18 inches thick in the Straits of Mackinac and as far west as Lansing Shoals. Windrows in the area range up to five feet thick, but it is melting.

*March 20...*The Cape Bretton Development Corporation is terminating its coal contract with Ontario Hydro at the end of this year. (Upper Lakes' two self-unloaders *Cape Bretton Miner* and *Ontario Power* were engaged in this trade).

...*Sir Hugh Allen*, the Montreal Harbour vessel, which had been retired last year by the National Harbours Board, has been donated to the Museum of Science and Technology at Ottawa.

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*March 21*...Victor L. Preisser has been appointed president of Litton Great Lakes Corporation, a division of Litton Industries.

...Spring's first gale broke up and 'rearranged' the ice cover all over the Great Lakes, the Weather Bureau reported. It said all drift ice had piled onto shores or the edges of solid ice fields. Gale warnings remained in effect for the entire lakes system. Winds of nearly 50 miles per hour swept open waters on some places.

...The first ship of 1969 sailed through the Straits of Mackinac. She was Huron's *S. T. Crapo*. Bound for Lake Michigan ports with cement from Alpena, Michigan, the *Crapo* was led through heavy ice by the cutter *Mackinaw*.

*March 22*...Huron's second ship, *Paul H. Townsend*, opened the commercial season at Cleveland today.

...Pickands Mather & Co. reports its Interlake Fleet Division steamer *Henry G. Dalton* has been chartered to Wilson Marine Transit Co. for the 1969 season. She did not operate during the 1968 season and is currently laid up at Erie, Pa.

*March 27*...The Navy will lay the keel of the *U.S.S. Grand Rapids* (PG-98) on May 5 at Tacoma, Washington. It is the first Navy vessel to be named after Grand Rapids, Michigan, in 23 years. The other ship named after the city is a patrol frigate, built in 1943, which served but four years.

*March 28*...V. J. Saballe, a retired Navy captain, has been named Commissioner of Chicago's seaports, with responsibility for setting up a security system for Calumet Harbor and Navy Pier at Chicago, Illinois.

...Col. Ray S. Hansen has been named Buffalo District Engineer for the Corps of Engineers, effective in July. The appointment supersedes that of Col. Delbert M. Fowler, announced previously. He has been assigned elsewhere.

...H. Lee White, Board Chairman of American Steamship Company, announced closing of the transaction by which the Gartland Steamship Fleet has been acquired by American Steamship as previously reported.

...Sault Ste Marie, Michigan announces it will officially participate in the 10th Anniversary of the Seaway.

*March 29*...Renaming of three ore boats of the Republic Fleet was announced by Thomas F. Patton, chairman. They are the *Col. James M. Schoonmaker* which will become the *Willes B. Boyer*. Boyer is Republic's president. The *John B. Cowle* will be renamed the *Harry L. Allen*, for their vice president and general manager of operations. The *Finland (a. Harry Coulby)* will be renamed *Peter Robertson* after the company's vice president for research and planning.

## GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS

The former *Peter Robertson*, together with the *J. E. Upson* have been withdrawn from service.



*Peter Robertson*, sold in Republic's shift of names and ships in their fleet.

Massman Photo-Dossin Collection.

March 31...Coast Guard Captain John M. Austin, group commander and captain of the port of Sault Ste Marie, received the Legion of Merit, the Nation's fifth highest military award, in ceremonies at the Soo today. Captain Austin won the award for his work as commander of Coast Guard forces along the Vietnam coast last year.

...The Coast Guard icebreaker *Mackinaw* with the cutter *Acacia* and the tug *Kaw*, joined the cutter *Naugatuck* at the Soo today. The three cutters are scheduled to lock up to break open the St. Mary's River and Whitefish Bay. One vessel will return to the lower river to complete breaking open the channels there.

...At Port Colborne, Ontario, the self-unloader *Manitoulin* was reported mak-

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ing about 3 MPH through heavy ice in Lake Erie. She has a load of coal for Hamilton and is expected to arrive late tonight, making her the first thru the Welland Canal downbound.

...The self-unloader *Gleneagles*, with a cargo of stone, is expected to be the first vessel out of Port Colborne into Lake Erie.

...The *Hochelaga* was headed from Hamilton for the Welland Canal with the likelihood of becoming the first upbound passage when the canal opens.

...The sandsucker *C. W. Cadwell* is the first ship into Toronto in 1969 with a load of sand from Niagara-on-the-Lake.

*April 1*...Robert H. Lucas, president and chief executive of Fraser Shipyards Inc., Superior, Wisconsin, reports he has sold his interests in LST Corp., the parent company of Fraser Shipyards, and has resigned as president and a director.

...*Canadian Century* opened the season at the Welland Canal by passing upbound at Lock 1 at 0800 hrs.

...Sale of *Peter Robertson* and *J. E. Upson* for \$95,000 each, *Philip Minch* for \$85,000, and the *Harry W. Croft* for an undisclosed figure was announced today. All went to Sea-Land Service for trade-in purposes.

*April 3*...The U. S. Department of Health, Education & Welfare announced the U. S. Public Health Hospital (Marine Hospital) at Windmill Point at the head of the Detroit River will close June 30.

...The Marine Engineers Beneficial Association signed a union contract with U. S. Steel Corporation and the Bethlehem Corporation covering engineers and certain other employees on the Great Lakes bulk fleets of those companies. Lack of a contract has delayed spring fit-out for these fleets by an estimated two to three weeks.

...The Canadian freighter *Ralph Misener* suffered extensive damage in her engine room as she was moored at Port Colborne preparing to sail. Damage was caused by a fire laid to a ruptured fuel line.

*April 4*...The Canadian self unloader *Thunder Bay* passed through the Mac Arthur Lock to open the 1969 season at the Soo. She cleared the lock at 0745.

...C.S.L.'s self-unloader *Hochelaga* struck the Conndaut, Ohio breakwall stern-first while turning with two Great Lakes tugs. Her cargo was transferred into C.S.L.'s self-unloader *Manitoulin*.

*April 6*...the *Medusa Challenger*, outbound in the Chicago River was held up 45 minutes by the Outer Drive Bridge. After electricians got the bridge open

## GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS

and the *Challenger* steamed away into Lake Michigan, the bridge wouldn't go down. It stayed open for an hour and twenty minutes, causing a monumental traffic jam.

...The U. S. Coast Guard icebreaker *Westwind* passed upbound through Iroquois Lock, bound for Lakes duty.

...The Canadian icebreaker *Alexander Henry* locked upbound at the Soo, bound for the Lakehead to open the harbor at Fort William-Port Arthur.

...In Whitefish Bay, the freighter *Herbert C. Jackson* is undergoing engine repairs after a breakdown on April 4. She is expected to get underway tonite.



*Maj Ragne at Iroquois Lock, September 29, 1968.*

Photo by George Ayoub

April 7...The first vessel from overseas upbound in the Seaway was the Swedish freighter *Maj Ragne* of Vestervik.

...First downbound ship was the Canadian bulk-freighter *Lake Manitoba*.

...The *Westwind* cleared the Welland Canal this morning and began working with the cutters *Bramble* and *Ojibwa* to clear shipping lanes at the east end of Lake Erie.

...Ford Motor's *John Dykstra* opened the season at Marquette, Michigan, by loading a cargo of ore.

April 8...The *Leon Falk, Jr.* (a. *Winter Hill*) opened the Duluth-Superior navigation season.



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**GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS**

...Channels were opened at Buffalo, N. Y., with difficulty as the icebreaker *Westwind* escorted the *J. Burton Ayers* out of the harbor and through 30 miles of icepack.

...*Henry Ford II*, of the Ford Motor Fleet, has been loading iron pellets at the new dock at Escanaba, Michigan. She developed several leaky rivets plowing through the ice, and spent yesterday making repairs at the dock.

...The tugs *Amherstburg* and *Atomic* towed the *Hochelaga* to Port Colborne to have repairs made to her wheel and rudder.

...The *J. N. McWatters* ran aground on Chrysler Shoal, just below Riverside, Ontario, in the St. Lawrence River where she was sownbound. The tugs *Sinmac* and *Salvage Monarch* were unable to pull her off. The bulk carrier *John O. Mc. Kellar* tied up alongside the *McWatters* with the two tugs in hopes that a combined effort might do the trick, but this didn't work either. Finally, the barge *Mapleheath (a. Toiler)* was towed down from Kingston by the tug *Daniel McAllister* to unload the forward end of the ship.

*April 9...**Maj Ragne* is the first saltie in the port of Toronto, Ontario.

...The Harbor Commission of Milwaukee voted 6 to 0 to make John A. Seefeldt Port Director. He has been acting Port Director since the resignation of Mr. Brockel.

*April 10...*The *J. N. McWatters* was removed from the shoal today. Cause of the accident was laid to an ice flow that floated down on top of the marker on the shoal.

*April 11...*Zip Code 48222 of the U. S. Post Office was again open for service when the Westcott Company vessel *J. W. Westcott II* began mail deliveries to shipping passing Detroit. It is the 75th consecutive year of this unique mail delivery service.

*April 12...*Crews began reporting aboard U. S. Steel ships following conclusion of labor negotiations covering marine personnel.

*April 13...*The first ocean ship into the Port of Toledo, Ohio was the West German freighter *Castor*.

...*Howard Hindman* downbound the Welland Canal on what may be her last trip.

*April 14...*C. S. L.'s bulk-carrier *Baie St. Paul* grounded at noon at the south end of Lake Huron near the St. Clair River, while downbound with a load of grain for Montreal.

*April 16...*The icebreaker *Westwind* has been relieved of her assignment in the east end of Lake Erie and is expected to sail for Baltimore, Md., soon.

GREAT LAKES AND SEAWAY NEWS



*U. S. C. G. icebreaker Westwind at Iroquois, Ont., April 6.*

Copyrighted Photo by Howard Kirkby.

...Four more control gates at the Soo were opened yesterday and three more to open April 21, when all 16 gates will be open in an attempt to bring Lake Superior down to a more normal level.

...The Canadian ship *Grand Hermine* loaded 880,061 bushels of soybeans at Toledo, Ohio. Although records are not kept on this commodity for each ship, officials of the Board of Trade and the Port Authority can't remember there ever being a bigger load. She is headed for Port Cartier, Quebec.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

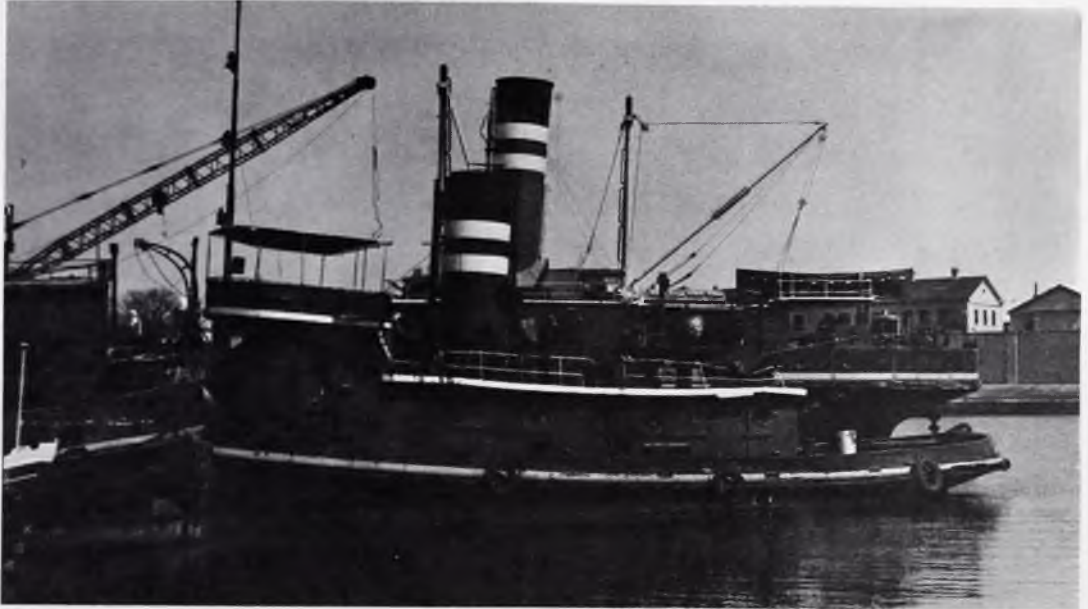
...The tug *Captain M. B. Donnelly* of McAllister-Pike is being rebuilt at Kingston, Ontario.

...The harbor tug *Fire Chief* of McAllister-Pike is now at Kingston, Ont. She was removed from Montreal after her unexplained sinking at that port.

...C. S. L.'s *Lemoyne* (a. *Glenmohr*) has been sold to Steel Factors of Montreal who will run her in the iron ore trade according to reports.

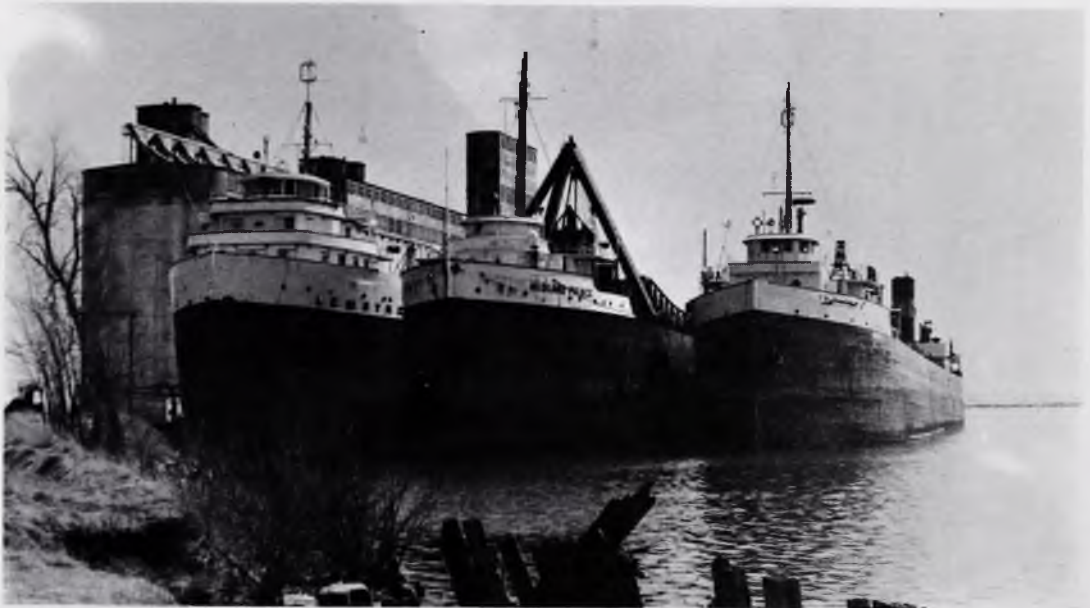
...The *Buckeye*, owned by Steel Factors, will be sent to Montreal. She is unseaworthy for ocean transit.

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*The tug Firechief*

Photo by Howard Kirkby



*Lemoyne, Buckeye, and Midland Prince laid up at the elevator  
at Portsmouth, Ont.*

Photo by Howard Kirkby.

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TELESCOPE, the Institute's journal is published six times per year and covers Great Lakes topics. Its editors welcome opportunity to review manuscripts for publication, sent to Great Lakes Maritime Institute; Dossin Great Lakes Museum; Belle Isle; Detroit, Michigan 48207. The organization makes no payment for such material and editors cannot be responsible for statements of the authors of articles that appear.

Other communication with the Institute should go to the Coordinating

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1965

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