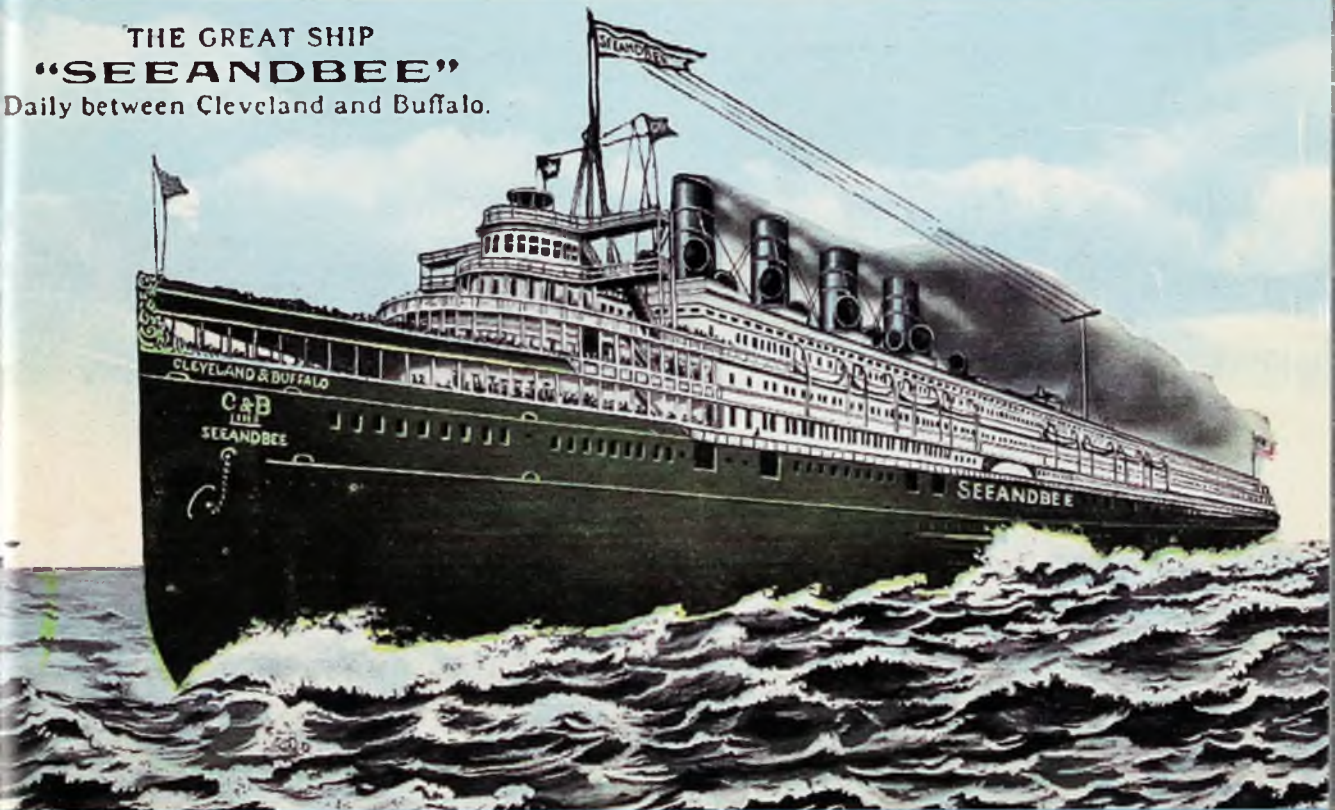




Telescope

SPRING, 2007
Volume LV; Number 1

THE GREAT SHIP
"SEANDBEE"
Daily between Cleveland and Buffalo.



D O S S I N
G R E A T L A K E S
M U S E U M

DETROITHISTORICAL
SOCIETY
est. 1921

DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY / MARINE AUXILIARY GROUP

MISSION: To educate and inspire our community and visitors by preserving and portraying our region's shared history through dynamic exhibits and experiences.

VISION: To create a shared sense of community and pride by celebrating the history and the unique culture of our region.

SAVE THE DATES:

Sunday, October 21, 2007:

Annual Dinner at Blossom Heath in St. Clair Shores

Saturday, November 10, 2007:

“Lost Mariners’ Remembrance” at Dossin Great Lakes Museum

Saturday, December 8, 2007:

Marine Mart at Grosse Pointe War Memorial

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OUR COVER PICTURE . . . Postcard from the heydays of passenger ships on the Great Lakes. The Dossin Museum Collection.

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DOSSIN GREAT LAKES MUSEUM NEWS

Record-breaking attendance greets Museum's Grand Re-Opening

A wave of members and visitors washed through the Dossin Great Lakes Museum for its Grand Re-Opening March 24 and 25. Over 4,100 people visited the Museum during the weekend event.

"This is the largest crowd on record for the Dossin Great Lakes Museum in its 46-year history," said Bob Bury, the Detroit Historical Society's executive director. "It is gratifying to see the public respond to everything that our donors, members, staff and volunteers put into making the Museum better than ever."

Besides a complete rejuvenation of the building and grounds, the Society installed several new exhibits alongside old favorites like the Edmund Fitzgerald anchor, City of Detroit III smoking lounge and William Clay Ford pilot house.

Attendance continues to be strong even several months after the event.

"The Dossin Great Lakes Museum has been and always will be a treasure, not only for the people of Detroit, but for the visitors who come from all over the world to learn about the Great Lakes way of life," said Bury. "With summer coming on, there is no better time to come see why this place is so special."



At the Grand Re-Opening of the Dossin Great Lakes Museum (l. to r.) Detroit Historical Society president Sandy McMillan, Detroit Historical Society executive director Bob Bury and his wife, Mary Anne, and Detroit Historical Society trustee Doug Dossin.



Photos from Detroit Historical Society

The WILLIAM CLAY FORD pilot house exhibit was a popular stop at the Grand Re-Opening of the Dossin Great Lakes Museum.

– September 28 gala to benefit Dossin Great Lakes Museum

The Detroit Historical Society and Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority will host a benefit gala to raise friends and funds for the Dossin Great Lakes Museum on September 28. The event, with the theme “Treasure Island,” will take place from 6 pm to 11 pm at the Museum. Guests should anticipate drinks, food, music, dancing and a swashbuckling good time.

“The Dossin Great Lakes Museum is a valuable resource for members and visitors who want to learn the story of the Great Lakes,” said Bob Bury, the Society’s executive director. “‘Treasure Island’ is going to be a fun way to support the Museum’s work on behalf of the community.”

The Detroit Historical Society will send invitations to the event in June. For more information, please call (313) 833-7935 or visit www.detroithistorical.org.

– New exhibition to celebrate metro Detroit’s boat and yacht clubs

Metro Detroit is a pleasure-boating paradise, where a summer afternoon under sail is as common as a walk in the park. This fall, the Detroit Historical Society will celebrate that tradition with a new exhibition at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum. “The Clubs: A Shoreside Tradition” opens September 22 and presents the stories of the boat and yacht clubs that are the keel of this culture. The exhibition will feature artifacts, photographs, narratives and more.

A Rare Spotting Indeed!

by ALAN MANN

Much like an avid birder, adding a rare species to one's life list, boat spotting is very similar. It is however, an exercise made much easier in modern times by the amazing "up to the second" means of information exchange. Yet back in the 1940's and later, this was far from the case with "by chance" sightings the norm for most. And during this early period, there was certainly much "to spot." My viewing area was the St. Clair River where the ships were frequent and often "up close and personal." At any given time day or night it was not unusual to see four or five vessels all within view. And since it was wartime, mixed in were several newly built war ships heading downbound to eventual overseas assignment. It was a ship watchers' delight! What about a military vessel passing upbound? This was quite unusual, but in all my years of boat spotting, the "species" I caught August 19, 1942 turned out to be the rarest in over 60 years of chasing down ships on the Great Lakes.

Let's set the scene. 1942 was our family's first year for a summer cottage (at Port Lambton) on the St. Clair River. As primitive as the structure was, its best feature was location, close proximity to the busy St. Clair River. Our permanent home was about 10 miles inland at Wallaceburg, it a busy port connected to the Great Lakes system. Boat watching was not entirely new but the St. Clair River afforded more frequent sightings. My academic approach to ship watching had not begun as yet. However, in this particular August of '42 instance, reaction of others looking south in the St. Clair made me realize something special was about to pass. Cars were pulling over

and passengers gawked at this strange sight which slowly came into view. I had never seen anything like it before. It was a boat, and a big one, painted gray with the most unusual feature being that it was almost entirely flat except for a pilot house and four tall smokestacks on the starboard side. Overheard amongst the growing crowd on the shoreline, was mention of paddlewheels. Sure enough I could see under the flat top, a paddlewheel churning up the water. I had enough knowledge by that time to identify the D & C passenger vessels that passed by including the GREATER DETROIT, CITY OF DETROIT III and WESTERN STATES. They all



Dossin Museum Collection

had paddlwheels. And why did this flat top have paddlewheels? This was a rare sighting indeed!

Chat amongst the gathering adults continued and I listened in. I learned that the strange vessel was a former Great Lakes passenger vessel. But there was never any mention of Seeandbee nor her new name (which I discovered later) Wolverine.

CLEVELAND
PORT STANLEY, CANADA



and BUFFALO
CEDAR POINT, PUT-IN-BAY

Although I went on filling out the summer swimming and boat watching, the summer of '42 sighting continued to haunt me. Our local newspaper did not carry any account nor was I able to consult anyone who could provide details. My membership in the Detroit Marine Historical Society was about 10 years away at that point. For the present at least I had to be content with the sighting little realizing at the time how important this opportunity would be realized years hence. Slowly over the next few years details emerged.

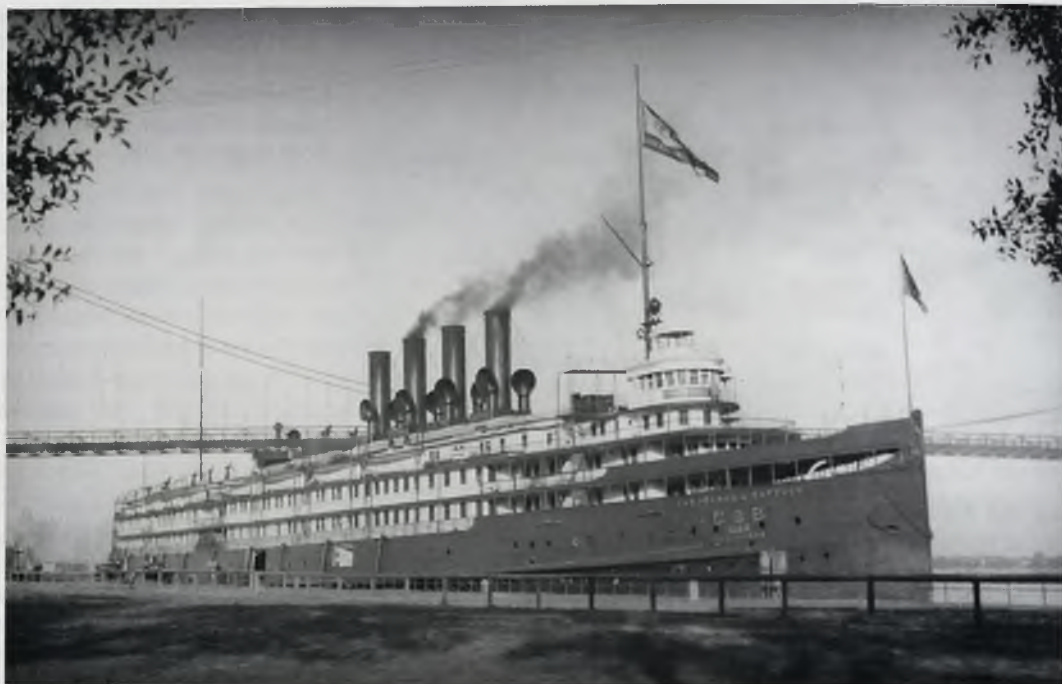
The U.S. military was rather desperate for hulls after Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941 (a date we Canadians came to know well.) To build a new aircraft carrier would take months or years. Vessels for training pilots were needed now. After deliberation amongst U.S. naval and air officials it was decided to convert a Great Lakes vessel into an air craft carrier. Apparently the car ferry CITY OF MIDLAND was considered but the SEEANDBEE, built in 1913 for the C & B Transit Co. for overnight Great Lakes

vacation packages was the ultimate choice. After negotiations with her owners, the superstructure was removed at Cleveland where she had been moored and then the hull was towed to Buffalo for conversion to an air craft carrier. A decline in patronage had brought financial duress to the owners so they were glad to part with the hull for a good cause.

Conversion at Buffalo was quick. The vessel named WOLVERINE was undergoing sea trials in Lake Erie in August of 1942. I later calculated WOLVERINE passed upbound in the St. Clair River on August 19, 1942, the day of my rare sighting. She continued on to Chicago where she would be based. There was no worry about enemy attacks on Lake Michigan but the WOLVERINE's hull accustomed to rest during the winter, would be exposed to cold Lake Michigan ice as she operated year around. Beginning in September of 1942, WOLVERINE trained hundreds of U.S. pilots. A second conversion took place as well when the Greater Buffalo underwent a similar conversion and was named U.S.S. SABLE.



SEEANDBEE at Mackinac Island



Ship Data

SEEANDBEE U.S. 211 085
Steel hull passenger vessel built for C & B Transit Co. 1913 by Detroit Shipbuilding Co. Wyandotte, Michigan.
484 x 58 x 24 GT 6381 NT 3434
1939-leased to T.J. McGurie, Cleveland & Buffalo Steamship Co.
1941-purchased by Cleveland & Buffalo Steamship Co.
1942-- Sold to U.S. Navy, stripped of superstructure at Cleveland(March-May) hull towed to Buffalo for rebuilding as air craft carrier.
1942-August underwent sea trials, under own power moved to Chicago where based, operation year around until 1945 training pilots.
1945-id) when second world war over
1947-sold to A.F. Wagner Iron Works, Milwaukee, towed from Chicago to Milwaukee for scrapping



Photos from Dossin Museum Collection

Reprinted from Telescope, March-April, 1972

CAN A MAN TRAVEL OVER A HUNDRED MILES, ADRIFT, IN STORM-TOSSED WATER FOR THREE DAYS AND LIVE? THIS IS THE STORY OF ONE WHO DID, AND BY TELLING HIS STORY CLEARS UP A MYSTERY!



LAKE HURON ODYSSEY



By C. E. STEIN
Associate Editor
TELESCOPE

Have you ever stood on a high bluff facing one of the Great Lakes and, gazing at the heaving, up-curving rim of the far horizon, idly re-constructed in your mind's eye, a montage of ships bygone, once bulking solidly, within your view?

Have you ever wondered about the sailors manning those vessels? Did they all reach port in safety ... ships and men?

No! Not a square mile of the surface of the Great Lakes is there that has not produced locale and scenery for marine tragedy or classic heroism. Some played out their drama before an audience, most agonized and perished unknown or, survived their own lonely personal hell.

Take the sailing vessel EXCELSIOR and a

member of her crew for examples. The EXCELSIOR, U. S. official number 7350, was built as a three-masted bark at Buffalo, New York and launched during the year 1865. She was a decently large vessel for her time measuring 156' x 30' x 12'. A query for information addressed to the National Archives in Washington brought the following meager response: "*Last managing owner, E. Foote. Since the place, date, and person for the surrender of her last known document are not of record here, we have not been able to determine, precisely, the vessel's ultimate fate. The official number book indicates that the vessel was 'lost' but gives no further details.*"

By a fortunate quirk of circumstance the 'ultimate fate' of the EXCELSIOR is not now a mystery. Readers

of *Telescope* are all of an ilk. Individually they will have noticed that their deep interest in Great Lakes memorabilia actually seems to attract to them, like a magnet, odd artifacts and unusual items of marine content.

Now it happens that my son-in-law in Kincardine is a confirmed collector of furniture primitives. A while ago, in an old driving shed near North Bruce he spied an old hutch. It was in sad shape stacked out of the way against a rear wall. It was water-marked, white with dust, splattered with chicken droppings. Its hardware was green with verdigris; one glass in the upper cupboard door was cracked. It was damp and the two lower doors and the two drawers of the lower cabinet were swelled shut. A bargain was struck with the owner and the old maple hutch, for when sanded off, such wood it proved to be, was cleaned up and transported to the family home where it was placed on a side veranda, sheltered, yet exposed to the long afternoon sun for drying out.

A couple of weeks after its acquisition I turned up for a weekend visit and was taken aback to see the junky display on the veranda in plain view of passersby on the street. However I had previously learned to keep quiet, because invariably, the old creaky wicker rocker, or the set of drawers heavy with layers of green oil paint or a scabrous table of one visit, had been refinished and transformed, into a thing of beauty even I could appreciate, by the next visit.

"Here is something you might be interested in. I found it when I was able to get the drawers open," my son-in-law said, handing me a blue bookkeeping portfolio. The book was bound in linen. It measured ten and a quarter by nine and three-quarter inches. It was a looseleaf book neatly held together by a dark blue lace emerging from dark blue grommets and neatly tied with a double bow knot. The ends of the cord were still clenched in grey metal ferrules. A fancily scrolled label, on the cover, was topped with the coat of arms of the Province of Ontario and proclaimed the book to be *The Bookkeeping Portfolio, entered according to the Act of Parliament of Canada, in the year 1870, by the Chas. Chapman Co., Manufacturing Stationers, London, Ontario*. The label also provided four dotted lines sub-titled: *Name, School, Class, Subject*. The name line had Dr. J. G. Scott inscribed in flowing black ink penmanship. The class line had the words Southamptton, Ontario written in.

"No. ., not the book.. What's written in it!" my son-in-law prodded.

I opened the book. A yellowed sheet of paper, a divider bearing the words *Day Book Journal*, protected a half dozen white pages ruled with red and blue lines for day book entries.

The half-dozen pages were covered with rather large angular script. The effort was titled *Day Book Journal of Charles Gestron*, and the last page was signed: Charles Gestron, Buffalo, New York, and dated November 2, 1871.

Scanning the journal I realized I had in my hands the handwritten account by the sole survivor of the fate of the bark EXCELSIOR!

Readers will recall that when the freighter DANIEL J. MORRELL foundered off Pointe aux Barques near the American shore of Lake Huron November 29, 1966, the frozen body of one of her deckhands, that of Saverio Grippe, washed up across the lake at Inverhuron, as did oars and flares bearing her name.

Synoptic survey charts of Lake Huron reveal a peculiar pattern of water currents which, regardless of wind and wave direction, deposit floating debris from the American side of Lake Huron along the beaches of Ontario from Bayfield north to Southamptton.

This pattern of water currents is responsible for the recurring manna of flour floating up on the east shores of Lake Huron at different times during the last hundred or so years, beginning with the finding, between Point Clark and Kincardine, of three hundred barrels of flour from the cargo of the propellor GOLIAH which exploded, burned and sank off Port Sanilac in September of 1848.

None of the crew of the GOLIAH were ever found. The harrowing details of how close any of them ever came to the safety of the Canadian shore no one will ever know.

There is now, however, thanks to the discovery of Charles Gestron's journal in the drawer of the old maple hutch, a first person account of such a voyage across Lake Huron. Properly the story begins with a cyclonic storm that swept the Great Lakes during the middle of October in the year 1871. Many ships were caught, swamped, and destroyed in its path. The bark EXCELSIOR was caught, down bound, in the upper reaches of Lake Huron near Spectacle Reef Sunday morning, October 15, 1871, and became a casualty. The lone survivor of the crew of nine persons actually crossed one hundred miles of Lake Huron's windwhipped waters in sixty hours. Following the survivor's journal we will let him tell his story in his own words:

"Captzin Gantz came to us at the pumps and said goodbye boys and shook hands with us and said we are going boys. I went aft with the Captain to the yawl boat. Ed and the second mate were at the wheel steering her. We ran, the Captain and I, with each a knife to cut the boat tackle falls, but we were too late, for an immense wave swept over the vessel burying her beneath the waves ... crushing her right down under the waves by the weight of water on her deck. I don't

think the old girl was full of water at all for it was only a minute or two previous that we had sucked the water out of the pumps with a poiling suck. I had just hedged to sucker out at the pumps ... that was six o'clock in the morning as near as I can judge,

"I went down under water some distance with the suction of the vessel sinking. When I came to the surface I was alone. I looked around for something to cling to to save myself. I saw a piece of the roof of the cabin not far off. I swam to it and got on it. It was about fourteen feet wide and sixteen feet long. It was broken off the after part of the cabin. After getting on top of the cabin roof, I looked around and saw, some distance off, and out of reach of me, four of the crew. I saw them clinging to what apparently was a plank, I saw them and they saw me but they soon disappeared from sight.

"There were some things floating around, planks off the caking and some provisions. The only thing I could get hold of was some apples that floated near me. I got hold of them and put them in my pockets. The piece of the cabin roof that I was on was broke in two. The mizzen mast went through and it broke off in the middle of the hole the mast went through. Two of the planks of the roof. ...one on each side of the hole ... projected ...passed outward. I sat in that hole in the cabin roof holding on to the projecting broken off planks on each side of me, with my arms resting on it and my legs and feet hanging down in the water.

"I was washed off repeatedly, from my seat, by the seas. I was pretty warmly clad with woolen clothes. I had on an oilskin coat and oilskin pants and a sou'wester on my head To these probably I owe my life as it retained the heat of my body around me for the oil clothes were airtight. The seas would run all over my frail support making it very difficult to hold my place and I was washed off repeatedly.

"All day Sunday and Sunday night the wind blew a fierce gale and a heavy sea was running. It required the use of all my senses and strength to carry me through that awful long night. Monday morning, the sixteenth, it began to moderate. The wind died away and the sea ran down, sometime during the day it became smooth enough for me to stand on the roof of the cabin which was a great relief to me though my feet were terribly swollen.

"I broke off a piece of board and used it as a paddle to keep my craft before the wind though I did not know which way I was going but thought I must be going somewhere. I tore up a piece of the canvas covering of the roof and put my board against it then set my back against that. It made a very good sail and helped along some. All day Monday I was floating about this way. I was pretty tired and well used up as previously described, without food except for the few

apples I had picked up and which I had eaten on Sunday. My both feet started to give way. I had stood upright on my feet ever since I got up on them on Monday morning. Never sat down afterward until taken off.

"After dark on Monday I saw a light which afterward proved to be Southampton light on the Canada side of Lake Huron and at the mouth of the Saugeen river where it enters Lake Huron. During Monday night my mind began to wander and I began to lose my senses and consciousness, I seemed to be in a dreamy study. I was aware of it myself and only by a great effort could I arouse myself. All that long Monday night, my second night on my frail support, I stood on my feet and waited and watched for the coming of the next morning. I did not suffer from a sense of hunger, but the want of food and my long exposure in the water had made me weak and I suffered a good deal from cold, I could see the light all night at Southampton.

"Tuesday morning, October 17, after daylight some fishing boats put out from Southampton to lift their nets. There were several of them. I was seven or eight miles out on the lake. They looked at me but thought I was a buoy or a root of a floating tree. I saw them plainly enough but apparently I became unconscious and was unable to make any sign to them, I was in sort of a dream. The fishermen worked at their nets until late in the afternoon and then were about to leave to go home when one of them saw me move my arm and he said it was a man. My movement of my arm must have been unconscious for I found it impossible to consciously attract their attention. One of the fishing boats, the one that the man was on who saw me move my arm, came out to me and took me off what had been my little ship of refuge since Sunday about six o'clock. When the boat came alongside my frail craft I saw them but made no motion to get in their boat. I stood like a statue. They tried to arouse me from my stupor by speaking to me but I could make no reply.

"They took hold of me and by force lifted or moved me into their boat and took me ashore where they treated me with the greatest kindness at the fishermen's boarding house at Southampton. Allan McDonald of Goderich owned the boat and was captain. With him were John Graham of Kincardine and George MacAulay of Saugeen. Southampton. They treated me, and in fact all of the people ashore treated me with the greatest kindness possible. One lady sent a dollar to me, and several of the people sent me small sums to aid me to get home A good doctor there was very kind to me giving me his attention and welcome.

"I had drifted from near the American to the Canadian shore at Southampton, a distance of one hundred miles, on my cabin roof.



Photo from Mann Historical Files

CARTEGENA - Cut-off Project 1960-61, St. Clair River

responsible for engineering aspects of the project. Many families would move into the area who would be shopping in local commercial outlets and children would be enrolled in schools in either the U.S. or Canada depending where permanent staff chose to live for the planned two year project.

Once all the preliminary plans were worked out the project could begin. Cost of the project turned out to be \$4,369,170. It was estimated over 22 million cubic yards of spoil (extracted earth) would be moved mainly by suction dredge. Standard Dredge Co. of New York and for a portion of the contract, Canada Dredge & Dock Co. were the main constructors involved in the massive project. Several sub contracts were awarded. For example Clifford Roy, who was manager of the famed Canada Club hunting lodge on Squirrel Island, was given the contract to transport Corps of Engineers officials to and from the work site.

The huge dredge CARTEGENA, second largest in the world at 272 ft. appeared at Port Lambton in July of 1960. The mammoth rig would also spend some time in the Chenal Ecarte, moored in inland waters in Canada near Wallaceburg. It was a self contained vessel with a bunk house, galley and recreation room. For the most part, the CARTEGENA would however be stationed at the delta work site in the lower St. Clair River. Workers from Canada departed daily from the Port Lambton

government dock while U.S. staff departed from nearby Algonac. Work would be carried out 24 hours a day, seven days a week as long as weather permitted.,

Donald Harrett, a second war overseas veteran with the Royal Canadian Air Force was one of the local skilled trades workers hired. A Port Lambton resident for the past several years, he talked about his role in the cut off channel project.

"I worked full term on the project beginning in April of 1960 and finishing when things wound down in December of 1961. I was a welder learning a great deal and meeting many fine people," he said. Don described a typical day by recalling mainland staff commuting to the work site by boat, assembling daily at the Port Lambton dock by 6:45 a.m. for the approximate 15 minute commute for a 7 a.m. start. They experienced a wide range of weather including early morning dampness, fog, bitter winter winds, snow and sleet, but contrasted by wonderful weather with a placid St Clair River coloured by the rainbows of a rising sun. Permanent dredge company staff would work during the night shift.

"Carving out of the new channel was a combination of clam digging and suction dredging. To form what would eventually be called Seaway Island, the spoil was first piled around the perimeter and then the extracted mud was distributed evenly

over the surface. The 27 in. suction pipes had to be moved periodically in order to maintain an approximate depth of about four feet. I welded huge pontoons which formed the floatation devices for barges used in conjunction with the project," he recalled.

The cold winter of 1960-61 was a factor in delaying the project Don Harrett went on to explain.

"It got so cold that it took about two hours to melt the ice in order to complete some of the threadings on the pipes. As the cold continued, they finally called a halt to work. The dredge CARTEGENA was then moved in to the Chenal Ecarte (Snye River) at the Mac Construction dock. From December 21 (1960) until February (1961) work at the site stopped but I continued welding on shore," Don stated.

Don Harrett was asked if anything unusual was drawn up through the suction lines. He replied with a surprising story.

"One time we ran into parts of an airplane. Some of the undercarriage fuselage and even the machine guns were picked up. It was a world war two Kittyhawk that somehow missed landing at Selfridge Field which is located near Mt Clemens, not too far from where we were working. There was some other stuff like an oxygen tank and some cables but nothing else of interest like the airplane," he remembered.

There were about 40 regular crew on the CARTEGENA mostly from the southern United States, Texas, Louisiana, Kentucky and Georgia. Some of them had a difficult time with the cold weather. Don Harrett stated there were approximately 30 from Walpole Island who worked on the project, a number who lived on the Canadian mainland and others who commuted from the United States. It was a truly international undertaking.

Finally, by December of 1961 the massive two year project was completed. No longer would Great Lakes ship captains have to fret while nervously picking their way through the narrow and twisting St. Clair Delta shipping channel. There have been very few mishaps in this stretch of the St. Clair passage once the cut off was completed.

There was an aftermath to the story, one that ended in near tragedy. By early December of 1961 with the project completed, the CARTEGENA set out on an expected five week journey to Baltimore. After clearing the St. Lawrence River system, the huge tug drawn dredge headed into the Atlantic Ocean during a period when violent winter storms were prevalent. Along the Atlantic seaboard about 250 miles east of Nantucket, a raging storm hit. Don Harrett, although not aboard, later learned the tug winch malfunctioned causing the bridle to snap. The CARTEGENA was on her own for three days subject to the whipping whims of the raging weather. The U.S. coast guard cutter ACUSHNET was called but attempts to tow the dredge to safety failed. The CARTEGENA 's crew was taken aboard the cutter and the dredge was abandoned and rode out the storm on her own

The 1960-61 St. Clair cut off project had a profound effect on the area. With families moving into the area, children were enrolled in schools, a definite economic boom was felt in both nearby Michigan and Ontario. Families enjoyed local amenities and some of the migrant workers married local gals. And of course ever since, vessels have been able to sail through the area unimpeded by that once dreaded section of the St. Clair Delta passage.



Aerial photograph looking downstream on the Southeast Bend Cutoff channel, 700 feet wide, five miles long and 27 feet deep, which will replace the hazardous Southeast Bend channel. The 27 inch pipeline dredge CARTEGENA in foreground, and the 20 inch dredge SHUNIAH are busily at work.



A big cut-up on the lower St. Clair River is the hydraulic dredge SHUNIAH engaged in scooping out the new Southeast Cut-off channel. It is part of the multi-million dollar Great Lakes connecting channels project started by the United States Army Engineers in 1957.

Reprint from *Telescope* - November, 1960



The "Business End" of the 27-inch Hydraulic Dredge CARTEGENA boring into the depths of the St. Clair River at Southeast Bend. The total amount of material removed, 22,000,000 cubic yards of sand and soft clay would cover the entire area of Belle Isle for a depth of 15 feet.

Reprint from *Telescope* - November, 1960

Aerial photograph looking Northeast from Lake St. Clair, of the Hydraulic Dredging work being performed on the New Cut-off Channel, Lower St. Clair River. The dredges SHUNIAH and CARTEGENA are busy scooping out material for this new passage.

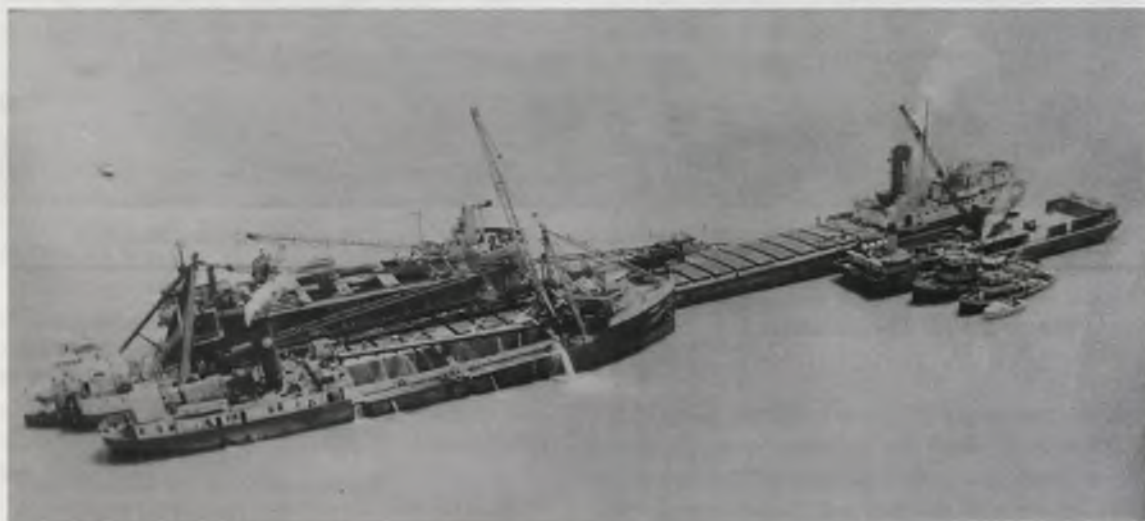


Photo from Mann Historical Files

An example of one of the many mishaps in the narrow St. Clair Flats Channel prior to 1960.

A.M. BYERS US 207504 built American Ship Bldg. Co. as straightdecker 1910

524, 54 x 30 6364 GT. (CLEMENS REISS 1959) (JACK WIRT 1970) Scrapped - Valencia, Spain, June 7, 1974

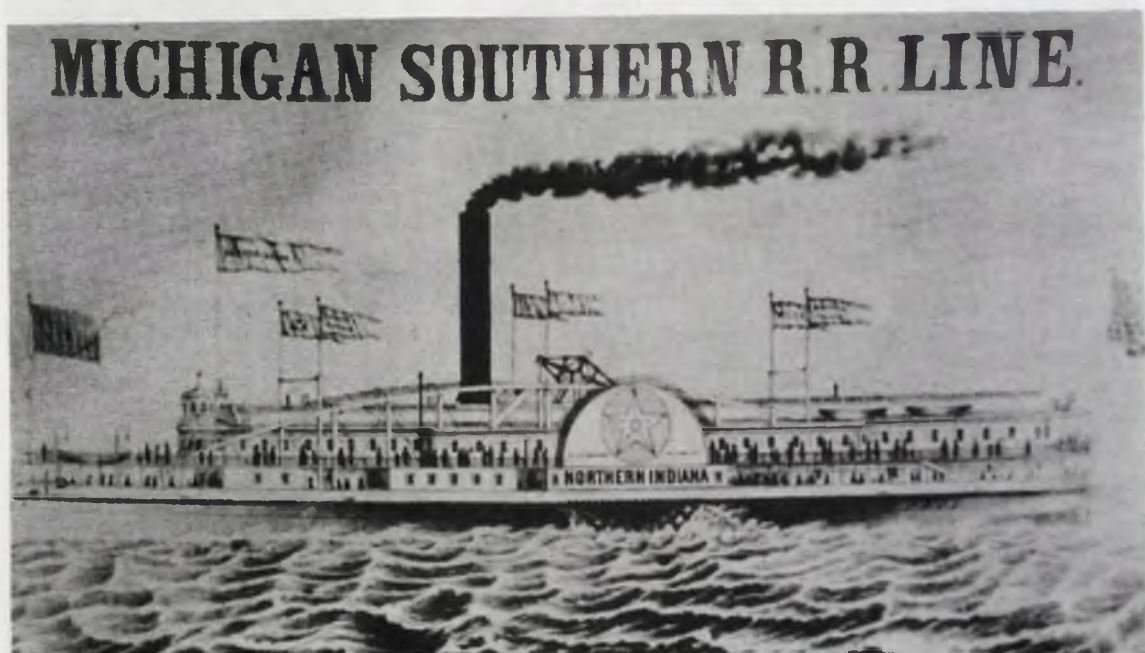
Downbound in St. Clair River Flats area, April 19, 1956 with 9,800 T limestone for Buffalo collided with upbound E.M. FORD recently purchased by Huron Cement. BYERS sunk - no loss of life. Raised May 9, 1956 by McQueen Marine tug ATOMIC, lightered by Algonac. Taken to Toledo for repairs.

Reprinted from *Telescope*, March-April, 1971

LAKE ERIE

... *the NORTHERN INDIANA fire*

By C. E. STEIN



McDonald Collection - Dossin Museum

Subject of this article, the NORTHERN INDIANA as she was proudly shown on a contemporary lithograph.

'Twas on Lake Erie's broad expanse,
One bright midsummer day,
the gallant steamer Northern Indiana
Swept proudly on her way.
Bright faces clustered on the deck,
Or, leaning o'er the side,
Watched carelessly the feathery foam,
that flecked the rippling tide.

In the middle of the last century, the dramatic settlement of our mid-continent was played across the marine horizon of the Great Lakes to the accompaniment of a symphony of expansion. In the year 1852, the Michigan Central Railroad launched two, huge for their time, passenger

steamers to carry settlers across Lake Erie from Buffalo to Toledo, where railroad connections could be made to Cincinnati, Chicago, and points west. NORTHERN INDIANA and SOUTHERN MICHIGAN were the names of the sister ships.



Photo from the Dossin Museum Collection

Sister ship, SOUTHERN MICHIGAN is shown here in an unusual, if not unique photograph from a daguerreotype taken in 1853, and owned by the Dossin Museum. We know of no earlier photo of any Great Lakes Ship.

The NORTHERN INDIANA, built by Bidwell & Banta, at Buffalo, New York, was an elaborately fitted-out vessel, equipped with every possible comfort, convenience, and safety measure technically possible for her era. Her three hundred foot, six inch long wooden hull was braced with the new longitudinal curved arches. She had a comfortable width of thirty-six feet-eight inches; and was of 1,475 tons burthen. Her vertical beam engine powered her thirty-eight-feet in diameter paddle wheels to drive her through the water at eighteen miles per hour.

Most ships, through some quirk, or series of happenings, are nicknamed. The NORTHERN INDIANA was the "Hard luck sister."

During the night of June 22, 1852, thirty-five miles west of Cleveland, she collided with the schooner PLYMOUTH on Lake Erie. The PLYMOUTH, carrying a cargo of 10,000 bushels of wheat, valued at \$6,000, sank immediately and, while the steamer saved her crew, the schooner and her cargo were a total loss.

During a southwest gale, off Dunkirk, New York, September 21st. of the same year, her hull was wrenched so badly that both of her arches parted. Near the tail end of the gale her engine broke down and for five hours she wallowed in the troughs of the waves while temporary repairs were made. She barely maintained sufficient power to get into Toledo after her ordeal.

The years 1853 and 1855 were entirely uneventful for the Northern Indiana, However, in 1854, on August 15, as she was leaving Monroe, Michigan, the fluke of an old anchor, imbedded in the bottom of the harbor tore a long gash in her bottom, and she had to go into a Detroit drydock to have it repaired. While in Detroit her passenger cabins were also refinished.

Ah, who beareth that cloudless sky,
That smiling bends serene,
Could dream that danger, awful, vast,
Impended o'er the scene,
Could dream that ere an hour had sped,
That frames of sturdy oak,
Would sink beneath the lake's blue waves,
Blackened with fire and smoke?

Around eleven o'clock of a pleasant, sunny summer's morning on July 17, 1856, the luxurious, newly refurbished passenger liner was about seven miles east of Point Pelee. She was on a W.S.W. $\frac{1}{2}$ W. compass course, almost dead in the eye of a brisk breeze, bound from Buffalo to Toledo carrying one hundred and four passengers and a crew of forty-three.

The previous day, almost at the scheduled minute of departure from Buffalo, the master of the steamer, Captain Pheatt, had doubled up in

convulsions and had to be taken ashore. The Northern Indiana was running, this morning, under the command of first mate William H. Wetmore. As a result of the delayed departure the ship was running forty minutes late as she neared Pelee Passage. A long, continuous plume of black smoke poured from her to attest that her wood-passers were busy keeping steam pressure at top level. .

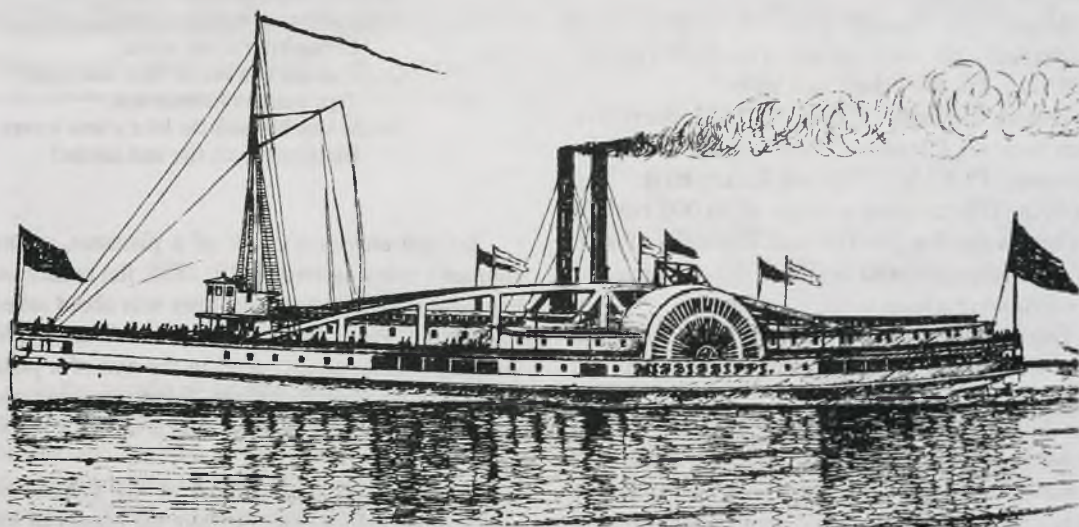
A seaman sought the captain's side
A moment. Whispered low.
The captain's swarthy face grew pale,
He hurried down below.
Alas, too late! Though quick and sharp
And clear his orders came,
No human efforts could avail
To quench the insidious flame.

Suddenly, with no warning, and for no known cause, a sheet of flame flared and enveloped the engine room. First engineer Frank Farrar, blinded by the fiery blast, was unable to stop the engine. He was found by his brother, second engineer John Farrar, and led out of the inferno. The oilers and wood-passers were also led to safety. In less than three minutes the flames ate upwards around the stacks to the top deck and spread from rail to rail amidships cutting off those passengers and crew trapped in the stern area from going forward.

the bad news quickly reached the deck,
It sped from lip to lip,
And ghastly faces everywhere
Looked from the doomed ship.
"Is there no hope " no chance of life?"
A hundred lips implore;
"But one," the captain made reply,
"to run the ship ashore!"

Running full speed into the wind made the NORTHERN INDIANA from midships aft into a blazing furnace with forced draught. Passengers and crew, unlucky enough to be caught aft, were forced to the fantail by the flames. There, panic-stricken, they threw overboard all material which would float, then, children in parent's arms, husbands and wives, hand in hand, jumped overboard.

John Graves of Buffalo, New York, secured the only available life preserver he could find about his wife and lowered her into the water. Then he himself jumped with his seven year old son, Thomas, clinging to his neck. The boy apparently loosened his grip when they struck the water and did not come to the surface. Harriet Ackroyd, of London, England, survived, but lost her mother and father, her husband and two sons, and all the communal family possessions. The third engineer, Harry Derbyshire, asleep at the time was burned about the legs getting out of his cabin and dived over the rail, When picked up later he was found relaxedly sitting in a tub, arms akimbo, legs and feet dangling in the water.



First to arrive with aid to the stricken NORTHERN INDIANA was the new steamer MISSISSIPPI.

A sailor, whose heroic soul
 That hour should yet reveal,
 By name, Frank McAllister, eastern born,
 Stood calmly at the wheel.
 "Head her northwest," the captain shouts,
 Above the smothered roar,
 "Steer for Point Pelee without delay"
 Make for the nearest shore!"
 No terror pales the helmsman's cheek,
 Or clouds his dauntless eye,
 As in a sailor's measured tone
 His voice responds, "Aye, aye!"
 Two hundred souls, "the steamer's freight,
 Crowd forward, wild with fear,
 While at the stern the dreadful flames
 Above the deck appear.
 Frank McAllister watched the nearing flames,
 But still, with steady hand
 He grasped the wheel, and steadfastly
 He steered toward the land.
 The flames approach with giant strides,
 They scorch his hands and brow;
 One arm, disabled, seeks his side,
 Ah, he is conquered now!
 But no, his teeth are firmly set,
 His knees upon the stanchion pressed,
 He guides the ship again.

First mate Wetmore ordered the wheelsman, Frank McAllister, to head the vessel for Point Pelee. The wheelsman turned the ship and stayed at his post for fifteen minutes, at which time the fire stopped the engines. The NORTHERN INDIANA lost her steerage way and drifted helplessly. McAllister's hands were burned, his clothes were smouldering, his eye lashes and hair singed, when he finally left the wheelhouse.

An attempt was made to launch the lifeboats. The first one, the bow boat, was swung out on the davits. The fierce crackling of the flames and the hysterical cries of the passengers sent a surge of people into it. So many clambered aboard while it was still at deck level that the lines parted, spilling all the occupants into the water. Only one person, Harry Stevens, a black wood-passer, detailed to man the boat, managed to swim back to the NORTHERN INDIANA. He was hauled back on board with the aid of a pike-pole in the hands of John Farrar.

The other lifeboats were aft of the wheelhouse, three on each side, and this area was enveloped in flame. These boats could not be reached.

All those still on board crowded into the forepeak for protection from the heat. The ship's officers darted into corridors and cabins, when the smoke and fire allowed, making every effort to find any who might be trapped. A bow anchor was let go. This brought the nose of the steamer around into the wind again so that the fire and heat blew away from the people crowded into the forepeak.

The first mate called out encouragement. A ship was coming to their rescue!

Looming close, the huge new 2,000 ton Michigan Central liner MISSISSIPPI was heading for them, throwing up a foaming white bow wave and high out-flung waves in her wake. Her master, Captain Samuel Langley, down bound from Detroit to Buffalo, in the Pelee Passage, had noticed the first burst of orange flame shoot up around the NORTHERN INDIANA's stacks from his position five miles away and had immediately headed his vessel for the burning ship. He brought up three hundred feet to windward and dropped his seven lifeboats, which he already had swung out and manned.

The lifeboats took off the passengers and crew still huddled in the forepeak and picked up survivors in the water nearby. Dr. J. R. Bigelow, of New York, a passenger on the MISSISSIPPI, rendered first aid to the burned and injured.

Within an hour of the beginning of the disaster, the upbound steamer REPUBLIC, under Captain Weaver, arrived from the east and picked up survivors still clinging to life preservers and planks, or debris, after being forced to jump off the stern of their burning ship.

Two sailing ships, the GLADIATOR, a two-masted fore-and-after, and the barque PEARL, commanded by Captain Sloan of Malden, swept in and combed the lake for survivors. Still further east, an unidentified schooner was tacking toward the scene.

The MISSISSIPPI, having most of the survivors, headed back to Detroit, where she arrived at 5:30 in the afternoon. News of the disaster immediately drew a crowd to the waterfront, and Detroit's Mayor Hyde called a town meeting at the dock of the J. L. Hurd Company. Ninety passengers arrived destitute of money, luggage, and with only the clothes they wore

on their back. John Owen was appointed Treasurer. It was necessary to raise \$1,200 to send these passengers to their destinations, and \$800 was collected on the spot.

The REPUBLIC pulled into Detroit at midnight with more survivors, including Albert Dollerden, second mate of the NORTHERN INDIANA. Capt. Weaver, when interviewed, stated that the NORTHERN INDIANA had burned to the water's edge. He had put a towline on the hulk, towed it out of the steamer lanes and had beached it on Grubb's Reef near the wreck of the MAYFLOWER. Captain Weaver had spoken to the GLADIATOR and she had picked up no survivors. He did not know if the PEARL or the unidentified schooner had picked up anyone. He commented that if the fire had to happen, it was lucky that the NORTHERN INDIANA was running late and was exactly where she was, else both the MISSISSIPPI and the REPUBLIC would have been forty minutes further on their courses and would not have seen the fire, nor have been close enough to render assistance.

The barque PEARL and the schooner J. R. LUMMIS, the latter commanded by Captain Andrew Holling, with Charles Morley as first mate, passed Detroit upbound on the following day in tow of the tug QUEEN.

The trip sheet had not been brought off the NORTHERN INDIANA. To the best knowledge of the ship's clerk, one-hundred and four persons survived; forty-three being crew. Twenty six persons were believed missing. Approximately \$2,000 more relief money was collected. Those with homes or places to go were sent on their way, and several part-families of English emigrants stayed on at Detroit.

Saturday morning, July 19th, the downbound passenger steamer RUBY, docked at Detroit with two more survivors off the NORTHERN INDIANA. These two had been picked up by the schooner B. R. LUMMIS off Point Pelee in Lake Erie on Thursday afternoon. One was a Miss Jane Cox.

A native of England, she had crossed the Atlantic to New York, taken a train to Buffalo and boarded the NORTHERN INDIANA at that port. The other survivor was Captain John Tracy of Enniskillen Township, in Lambton County, Canada West. Capt. Tracy was not a Lake captain. He had

also been born in England, near London. He began an education for the medical profession, but when gold had been discovered in Tasmania he had sailed to the South Pacific. Later he returned to England and obtained a commission in a cavalry regiment. No records hint why or when the captain became a resident of Ontario, nor why he was in Buffalo to board the NORTHERN INDIANA. It might be surmised that he and Miss Cox were affianced, that he had met her train at Buffalo and was escorting her, for they were married soon after.

...or, it well could have been the propinquity of events which prompted their marriage.

As the B. R. LUMMIS was bound for Chatham, on the Thames River, the couple had stayed aboard the schooner and did not disembark at Detroit. Shortly before dark, on Thursday, the LUMMIS had accepted a tow up the Detroit River from the tug QUEEN, which was bound for Sarnia. When the QUEEN cast off the towline of the LUMMIS in Lake St. Clair, she took Miss Cox and Captain Tracy aboard for passage up the St Clair River.

About 4 o'clock Friday afternoon, the small tug sank near the mouth of the south channel. After another two hours in the water the two survivors of the NORTHERN INDIANA disaster, as well as the six crew members of the QUEEN's crew, were rescued by the steamer PLOUGHBOY, commanded by Captain Duncan Rowan. The PLOUGHBOY upbound for Lake Huron ports, transferred the rescued group to the steamer RUBY, which vessel deposited them safely on dry land at Detroit the following morning.

Diligent, though pucky, research has failed to uncover the mode of transportation employed by Miss Cox and Captain Tracy to reach their new home in Lambton County. Did they proceed by boat or, did they prefer a land conveyance? Not many would blame them if they completed their journey on dry land!

The verses quoted above are from an anonymous poem entitled JOHN MAYNARD. Although likely written for another lake disaster, the verses seemed tailored for this one; especially when we inserted the names inherent to this story. (C.E.S.)

GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS



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Thanks for assistance in preparing this issue to:

Rod Burdick	Skip Gillham	William M. Howell
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JANUARY, 2007

Jan. 2 ...AMERICAN CENTURY (ex COLUMBIA STAR) unloaded western coal at the Upper Harbor hopper in Marquette. As COLUMBIA STAR, it is highly unlikely she was ever in Marquette.

Jan 3 ...HERBERT C. JACKSON was the last vessel to load at the LS&I Dock in Marquette using manual opening of the ore pockets. During the winter, the pockets on the north side of the Dock will be automated like the ones on the south side.

Jan 11 ...Howard Hindman died in Owen Sound at age 90. He was President of Hindman Transportation Co.

Jan 14 ...The year 2006 was the worst grain shipping year for Duluth/Superior. High Asian demand and reasonable rail rates have moved the flow west.

Jan 15 ...DUC D'ORLEANS has been donated to the Sarnia Sea Cadets and the Historic Port of Sarnia. She was built in Sarnia as a Fairmile in 1943 (Q0105). She was retired in 2006 after the owners acquired a newer vessel.

Jan 17 ...MESABI MINER closed out the coal season at the Midwest Energy Terminal, loading the final cargo of the 2006-2007 season. After delivering the cargo to Marquette, she will lay up in Superior.

Jan 21 ...EDWARD L. RYERSON arrived at Sturgeon Bay for lay-up.

Jan 26 ...The ALGOVILLE caught fire as a welder's torch ignited oil in the cargo hold. No damage was done.

Jan 27 ...PACIFICO TRADER (ex ALGONOVA) sailed from Halifax for Columbia to be a bunkering vessel.

Jan 30 ...The 37-ft. tug, ANDREA J., owned by the Edward G. Gillen Co., sank in 25-ft. of water in Milwaukee.

FEBRUARY, 2007

Feb 7 ...Shipments of ore originating from Great Lakes ports were 60.4 million net tons. Low water levels and undredged ports held back tonnage of all cargoes.

Feb 8 ...Fr. Peter J. Vanderlinden passed away at Port Huron Mercy Hospital.

...JOSEPH L. BLOCK laid up in Sturgeon Bay beside the WILFRED SYKES.

• GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS



Photo by David Michelson

EDWARD L. RYERSON closes Soo Locks for season.

Feb 9 ...The Secretary of the Interior transferred Holland Harbor South Pierhead Light, known as "BIG RED," to the Holland Harbor Lighthouse Historical Commission. The present structure was erected in 1907.

...Heavy ice conditions in eastern Lake Erie made it impossible for the CANADIAN TRANSPORT to enter Buffalo or Conneaut with her cargo of salt. The TRANSPORT headed for Nanticoke, and laid up, still loaded with salt.

Feb 12 ...A large ice flow driven by a brisk NE wind pinned the Auto Ferry DALDEAN to a seawall in Marine City for over an hour.



Photo by Greg Rudnick

CANADIAN TRANSPORT lays up in Nanticoke with a cargo of salt.

GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS •



Photo by Greg Rudnich

BISCAYNE BAY is kept busy with icebreaking chores.

Feb 14 ...Davie Quebec Shipyards of Levis, Quebec announced that they will build two vessels for a Norwegian firm, Cecon As. There are options for four additional ships

Feb 23 ...Ferry service to Harsens Island has been stopped by heavy ice.

Feb 24 ...NEAH BAY tried unsuccessfully to break open Fairport Harbor to prevent flooding. The SAMUEL RISLEY was expected to try her hand at breaking out the harbor.

...After three hours, RISLEY gave up trying to break out Fairport Harbor and departed for another mission – accompanying a tanker.

Feb 26 ...CHARLES M. BEEGHLY has been renamed HON. JAMES A. OBERSTAR after the Minnesota representative friendly to shipping interests.

Feb 28 ...Ice continued to prevent ferry service to Harsens Island.

MARCH, 2007

Mar 1 ...The HON. JAMES A. OBERSTAR has been renamed CHARLES M. BEEGHLY. The congressman felt having a ship named in his honor was inappropriate....and not politically expedient.

...Great Lakes Towing started work at their Cleveland shipyard on a tug for Petchem Inc. of Connecticut.

Mar 3 ...ALGOSEA was traveling west in Lake Erie when she became trapped in heavy ice driven by high winds.

...The Ferry ARNI J. RICHTER, which runs from Northport on the Sturgeon Bay Peninsula to Washington Island, was prevented from doing so by heavy ice. The ferry returned to Northport to await the BISCAYNE BAY's arrival from St. Ignace.

• **GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS**

Mar 4 ...BISCAYNE BAY arrived and broke a path for the ferry, which arrived on the Island approximately 2:00 p.m.

Mar 5 ...MOBILE BAY assisted the ARNI J. RICHTER to Washington Island as the ice had not yet blown out into the Lake as expected.

Mar 6 ...Upper Lakes Group has purchased the Port Weller Drydocks and will rename the company Seaway Marine & Industrial, Inc., joining a group of five independent companies called Great Lakes Marine & Industrial, Inc. Upper Lakes also bought Pascol Engineering in Thunder Bay.

Mar 8 ...JOSEPH L. BLOCK arrived to open the season in Escanaba, followed by the Barge GREAT LAKES TRADER and Tug JOYCE VAN ENKVORT.

Mar 10 ...JOSEPH L. BLOCK was assisted by USCG MACKINAW.

Mar 13 ...MACKINAW locked up through the MacArthur Lock with the BISCAYNE BAY to open Whitefish Bay.

Mar 14 ...A crane collapsed at Port Weller Drydocks, killing the operator.

...SAM LAUD departed layup in Cleveland to begin the ore shuttle from C&P Lakefront Ore Dock to Mittal Steel upriver.

Mar 15 ...BISCAYNE BAY arrived in Duluth to begin icebreaking, relieving the disabled ALDER, out of service with a leaking seal on her propellor.

Mar 16 ...MESABI MINER left Duluth/Superior with western coal for Marquette, opening the Twin Ports.



Photo by Greg Rudnick

USCG ALDER out of service with propellor problems.

GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS •



MESABI MINOR opening Marquette March 17, 2007, unloading western coal.

Mar 17 ...MESABI MINER arrived in Marquette to unload.

Mar 20 ...Welland Canal opened with the first vessel, CSL TADOUSSAC, downbound.

Mar 21 ...Montreal – Lake Ontario section of the Seaway opened with first vessel, ATLANTIC ERIE, upbound.

Mar 22 ...Wisconsin's replica schooner DENIS SULLIVAN rescued three fishermen who abandoned their sinking boat in 6-ft. seas off Islamorada in the Florida Keys. A one-foot hole was punched in the side of the SULLIVAN during the rescue.

Mar 24 ...ROGER BLOUGH opened the Soo Locks to commercial traffic.

...MICHIPICOTEN loaded the first ore cargo at the LS&I Dock in Marquett

SALES AND RENAMINGS:

... EARL W. OGLEBAY has been renamed EARL W.

... DAVID Z. NORTON has been renamed DAVID Z.

... ALGONOVA has been renamed PACIFICO TRADER.

CORRECTION:

The vessel towed up the Canal to the Port Colborne Scrapyard was TECHNO ST. LAURENT, mistakenly identified as TECHNO VENTURE in the last issue. She had been re-named KRISTIN in 2001, but the new name had not yet been painted on. It is not known what use, if any, is going to be made of the vessel.

Photo by Rod Burdick

• GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS



Photo by Greg Rudnick

ROGER BLOUGH opens the Soo Locks for 2007



Photo by Mark Shumaker

ALGONOVA has been renamed PACIFICO TRADER and sailed for Columbia.

BACK COVER: USCG MACKINAW close-up on February 28, 2007, coming through a track in the ice it has come to know well over the past several days. Photo courtesy of Dick Lund. Visit <http://dlund.20m.com/index.html>



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U. S. COAST GUARD

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