



# Telescope

SUMMER, 2007  
Volume LV; Number 2



**DETROITHISTORICAL**  
**SOCIETY**  
*est. 1921*



**D O S S I N**  
**GREAT LAKES**  
**M U S E U M**

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## DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY / MARITIME AUXILIARY GROUP

### SAVE THE DATES:

#### Sunday, October 21, 2007:

Maritime Auxiliary Group Annual Dinner  
Sunday, October 21, 2 pm  
Blossom Heath Inn, 24800 East Jefferson, St. Clair Shores  
\$30 Detroit Historical Society/MAG members and their guests  
\$35 General public

This annual gathering of Great Lakes enthusiasts will feature a presentation on Michigan lighthouses and shoreline towns by author Larry B. Massie along with dinner and a silent auction. To RSVP, please call (313) 833-7938 by Monday, October 8.

#### Saturday, November 10, 2007:

Lost Mariners Remembrance  
Saturday, November 10, 6 pm  
Dossin Great Lakes Museum  
\$10 Detroit Historical Society/MAG members  
\$15 Guests  
Call (313) 821-2661, ext. 1, for more information.

#### Saturday, December 8, 2007:

Marine Mart  
Saturday, December 8, 1 – 3 pm  
Grosse Pointe War Memorial  
32 Lake Shore Drive, Grosse Pointe Farms  
\$5 per person (kids 12 and under get in free)  
Call (313) 833-1980 to rent tables

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**OUR COVER PICTURE . . .** The KEEWATIN is celebrating its 100th Anniversary.  
The Dossin Museum Collection.

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## *Era Of Elegance*

Over the last several months, Dossin Great Lakes Museum visitors have been responding enthusiastically to last winter's Museum Makeover. Of particular interest has been the Era of Elegance in Aaron DeRoy Hall. Drawing from the museum's collection of artifacts and photographs, the Era of Elegance returns guests to the glorious days of steamship travel on the lakes. Whether on a day trip to Tashmoo Park, an overnight excursion on one of the D&C liners, or a full cruise vacation on the SOUTH AMERICAN, the era of the passenger steamship evokes great memories.

One highlight of the exhibit is the collection of personal memories that were solicited from the public during preparation for the installation. Dozens of people responded, often donating photographs or documents as well. Submissions came from passengers, from people who worked on the boats, and from folks who simply remember watching these majestic vessels steam by.

As entertaining reading, short tales can be cathartic and fun, especially when they are ostensibly true. From an informational standpoint, they offer details and perspective that are lost daily in the passing of time. From a museum's standpoint they provided a rich trove of material that made Era of Elegance unique.

In their own words...

Many people recalled the familiar ships of the Georgian Bay Line, the last of the traditional cruise lines. Tom Rockwell of Grosse Pointe Woods wrote, "I worked at the Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island during the late 1950's as a bellman/bell captain while going through both undergrad and law school. At that time the NORTH AMERICAN and SOUTH AMERICAN, the Queens of the Georgian Bay Line, would stop at the Island during the week, but at different times, and their passengers would then disembark and spend a few hours on the Island.

"There was quite a rivalry between the crews of these two vessels. They were mostly college kids like myself, earning money for the summer in order to return to school in the fall. On Labor Day weekend, both ships would arrive on Mackinac together. In the evening the combined crews would come up to the Grand Hotel and put on a wonderful variety show for both the guests of the Grand as well as the passengers of the boats.

"When the variety show ended, their crews would return to their respective vessels along with the passengers. Guests of other hotels and even the townsfolk would meet at the Arnold dock downtown. All of us would watch the ships back out of their slips at midnight. The vessels would be



S.S. SOUTH AMERICAN - Photo by Tom Drake

entirely lit up, the respective house bands would be playing Anchors Away, and it was quite a site to see both the NORTH and SOUTH leave the Island together, and continue on their journeys into the dark, star-laden evening.

“As each ship backed away from their berth, the crew on the NORTH would yell friendly insults to their rivals on the SOUTH, and vice-versa. The SOUTH was a few feet longer, and the SOUTH crew would remind the NORTH about it. Also, the NORTH had windows on its C Deck, whereas the SOUTH had portholes. The SOUTH crew would yell in unison that “real ships don’t have windows, only houses had windows.”

“The Labor Day appearance of these two lovely boats, the variety shows at the Grand, and the fond farewell at the dock at midnight on a cool September Mackinac evening marked the beautiful end of the summer for both sailors and college kids alike.”

Writing from Duluth, Ms. JC Curtis described a month she spent aboard the SOUTH AMERICAN as a waitress. “I learned quickly to weave a zigzag

course, carrying a full tray for four, through tables during each sitting for dinner, lunch, and breakfast... We worked hard on the ship, starting about 6am, and stopped at about 9pm. We had about a half hour in the morning and a couple of hours in the afternoon for breaks. I figured out for the hours we worked the salary came to about 65 cents/hour.

“There were a lot of young people in the crew, we had lots of fun. It was glorious after work to go up on the poop deck and look at the stars. We’d talk, sing, someone always had a radio along. Long about 10 or so, all the gals would be told to go down below for the night. The guys got to stay out all night up there.” Not very fair, she thought.

Janice Littlefield had the best of both worlds. “In the summer, from the mid 1950’s to the early 1960’s, I would make a weekly trip with my Mother from the east side of Detroit to the foot of Woodward where “Grandma’s boat” stopped briefly in Detroit to pick up and drop off passengers. Grandma spent May through October as a stewardess on both the NORTH and SOUTH AMERICAN, tending passengers’ rooms along with a dozen or so other gals her age that were widowed or never married.

“Every week, I couldn’t wait to get on board to run down the long halls, past the grand salon, past the stage, and down the stairs, and find my favorite friends, Olga and Adeline. Most often they will be in the “Harem,” which was where the female crew members lived. Fascinated, I would stare at the bunk beds packed in extremely close quarters with the curved metal hull of the ship for walls, and of course brass portholes with hardware large enough to seal the ship against Grandma’s storm stories.

“The real thrill was in the freedom to explore the boat by myself. I’d pay attention to the details, peeking into the cabins, which were long and narrow, with two bunk beds, a small sink, a porthole, and commode. The rest of the ship was draped in luxury. Overstuffed leather couches and chairs that matched, fancy chandeliers, and nice carpeting, which made me feel like I was in a grand hotel!

“After this I would venture to the lowest deck at the stern to find my Mom and



The female crew members lived in the Harem.



Alice & Bob Lindsay on their honeymoon.

Grandma visiting in the “fantail,” which was the area designated for crew members to gather, get some fresh air, and relax. They weren’t allowed to mingle on deck with the passengers.”

Barry Byrwa, of Livonia, told of an extended day trip. “My first and last experience was aboard the SOUTH AMERICAN in the summer of 1967. My father, a Ford employee for 26 years, wanted my sister and a friend to experience Bob-Lo for an afternoon of fun. Little did I know we were in for more than anticipated.

We boarded at the Bob-Lo boat dock, and as I’d been to Bob-Lo before, I didn’t think anything of it until I noticed that people had luggage. I said to my dad that Bob-Lo guests didn’t spend the night on the island, but by that time he was engaged in conversation with a woman who later turned out to be an English teacher, with a group from Flat Rock High School, I think. They were going to Montreal and Expo ’67. My family and I did not become concerned until we steamed right past Bob-Lo. We went immediately to see the captain.

“My Dad wanted a row boat, but that was not going to be allowed. The Captain said we can not stop, and that we would have to stay on board until the SOUTH AMERICAN’s first stop, which was Buffalo, N.Y.. The Captain gave us a cabin, we had dinner with him at his table, and breakfast with him the next morning.

“My friend called his mother on the ship-to-shore phone and said, “Ma, I am out to sea and won’t be home for days.” It was more like the next day, when we returned to Detroit by Greyhound bus. It was a funny enough story that it was published in the newspaper back then.”

A familiar story is told by Kathleen Lindsay of Detroit. “My Mom and Dad, Alice and Bob Lindsay, took a honeymoon cruise on the S.S. NORTH AMERICAN in July of 1931. They left from Chicago with stops in Mackinac Island, Canada, Detroit, and Niagara Falls. On Sunday they stopped in Detroit. They attended church at Sts Peter and Paul Church on Jefferson. Being from Chicago, little did my mother know that fifty five years later she would be living a few blocks away in Lafayette Park!

“We moved to Detroit in 1943. I have fond memories of taking the boat to Put-In-Bay, Ohio. I was thrilled in 1947 when my parents took my sister and me on a weekend cruise on the D&C Line’s GREATER DETROIT to Niagara Falls and back. When the ship docked in Detroit, Dad said “I think the Tigers are playing,” and off we went to the game at Briggs Stadium. What a great way to relax and have fun.”

Stories of the D&C Line steamers were plentiful. Dearborn resident Bob Brasie wrote in great detail about a trip he took as a child. “One day in midsummer we drove down to Detroit, to the foot of Woodward, to get on the GREATER DETROIT for an overnight trip to Buffalo. The ticket office was a visual marvel to me, being eleven at the time, given the walls were adorned with many half models of a variety of vessels and ships.

“We watched our car disappear into a large black opening in the side of the ship just as we were boarding. Our starboard side cabin was small, with two sets of built in bunks, a tiny lavatory with toilet and sink, and a square window that had upper and lower sashes that could be individually lowered or raised to obtain ventilation that was somewhat

complimented by louvers in the cabin door. The cabin was a light gray monotone, which gave it a rather Spartan atmosphere.

"After depositing our few bags in the cabin we made our way to the front upper deck below the pilot house. There was a light breeze coming up the river from the SW. The big steam horn went off and the ship was underway a little after 5 p.m. The breeze increased as the ship made its way into the wind going down river. It was fun seeing all the buildings, the variety of vessels that were tied up, and watching traffic on the river as the ship headed for Lake Erie. Other than an occasional blast from the steam horn, the wind was probably the loudest sound as the ship itself seemed to make no noise except for the splash of the bow wave.

"We watched the scenery pass by until it came time for us to have dinner in the dining room that was one flight down from the upper viewing deck. The tables were covered with white linen cloths, the china was white with a medium blue trim stripe and the "D&C" letters in old English script. The heavy plated silverware was also monogrammed with D&C. There were several waiters in attendance. We could watch the shoreline go by as we ate.

Following dinner we toured the ship. On the deck below the dining room there was a salon area with a window that offered a view down into the engine room. The engine laid on its side and the huge piston rods and crack shaft were readily visible as they slowly revolved. The engine did not seem to make any noise, however there was a low but steady rhythm that could be felt in the deck. We watched as the crewmen made their way around to the various points that needed oiling or checking as the engine ran.

"We went from there out onto the deck, where we watched one of the massive paddle wheels as it turned. We could see this by looking down through a post hole type window that was in a box next to the outside wall of the salon." While these were the largest paddle wheels in the world, "the big wheels were encased in the hull and were not readily visible" from the outside.

"From there we ascended to the top deck. Which was actually the roof of the upper cabin deck, to tour the Gothic Room. This was a magnificent structure maybe 25' wide and about 120' long, the interior of which was hand carved

oak in the style of an old European home or maybe an Abby. The view out over the water of the distant shore was grand, as we could see early lights of evening on both the north and south shores of Lake Erie.

"We later returned to the cabin to go to bed, as it had been a long exciting day, and found the small space was a bit stuffy, even though the windows were left open at both the top and bottom. However dropping the upper sash helped relieve some of the warm air. A squall came up during the night that blew rain into the cabin so the window had to be raised some, as the over hang of the deck above helped shield that area. We were up at 6:30 a.m. the next morning as the ship was nearing Buffalo. We had breakfast in the main dining room, were soon disembarking and waiting for the car to re-emerge from the black hole in the side of the vessel."



Theodore Kesman - served on the Tashmoo

A favorite submission came from Roland "Ted" Likert, Jr. of Detroit. "Late August 1943, as two 14 year old boys, both members of the Downtown YMCA, we rode our bicycles from Detroit to Niagara Falls (thru Canada) arriving late on the third day. Nightly, we stayed at YMCA facilities along the way and encountered very little automobile traffic due to wartime gas rationing. Late the fifth day we rode into Buffalo, placing our bikes in the cavernous vehicle hold of the CITY OF BUFFALO for a dark and stormy overnight return passage to Detroit.

"We marveled at the ship's beautiful woodwork, Grand Staircase, and Main Dining Room (although we lacked the money to dine there). The next morning we rode our bikes down the landing ramp at a dock just downriver from the Bob-Lo boats. Indeed the end of a most memorable boyhood adventure."

The shortest submission came from Dennis Williams of New Boston. "My parents, Joseph and Margaret Williams, were married in Detroit in 1940. That night they took the D&C to Cleveland to begin their honeymoon. Somehow, two towels found their way into my parent's luggage."

Don Lewis of Shelby Twp. wrote, "Boy, did you strike a memory for me regarding all the great boats going up and down the Detroit River. My grandfather had a house right on the river just south of Amherstburg, directly across from the Bob-Lo dock. In fact, when the COLUMBIA or the STE. CLAIRE made the turn, they came close enough we could talk to the people on the boat, if they could hear us over the band playing.

"Since the Livingstone Channel was not open yet, all the boats went both ways in front of my Grandfather's place, so I can remember the different sound all the boats made as they "tooted" as they approached each other. He knew all the boats names, including the ore boats. There was a fleet of boats we called "cigar boats" that had rounded sides.

"Dad tells the story of a time he and mom took the D&C to Buffalo, and coming back, they expected to pass Amherstburg about 1 a.m. Mom and Dad were out on the deck hoping to see Grandpa, when the captain saw what they were trying to do, he blew the "greeting" whistle, and out came Grandpa in his nightshirt and cap to wave to them."

With decks lined with windows and a regular schedule, the S.S. TASHMOO was known unromantically as the "glass hack." However, familiarity made her a big favorite on the river during this period. Mrs. Eleanor Rule of Dearborn remembers, "the TASHMOO was a beautiful boat. I rode it many times, as I lived on Harsens Island during the summer for many years. I would run down to see the boat dock, and let people off going to Tashmoo Park. It was a treat to sit on the upper deck to watch the beautiful lake and feel the breeze. What a treat to dance to a band on the main floor, and get food and snacks."

The TASHMOO's sinking was remembered by many people. Kay Shaw of Harrison Township wrote, "My dad, Theodore Kesman, served on the TASHMOO and was with it when it "sank" in 1936. We have a few souvenirs from the TASHMOO, and...stories Dad told about his time on the boat. It was where he met my Mom the day before the TASHMOO went down."

Charlene Polulak of Sterling Heights called it a "Night to Remember." "That's what my dad would refer to whenever he told the story of "the boat that sank." He was twenty one years old at the time, out for an evening of fun with his girlfriend and his friends from PAL of Hamtramck on the evening of June 18, 1936.

"He told about the wonderful music that was played up until everyone was led off the sinking TASHMOO (similar to the band on the TITANIC). The Captain and crew didn't want to cause a panic. Women were taken off first from the second deck. Soon, it became necessary to move people to the third deck. My dad left the ship from there just before it sank.

"Dad recalled getting on the back of a coal truck, along with his date and other passengers, near the docks in Amherstburg. The driver dropped them off where the steamer COLUMBIA picked them up, for the return trip to Detroit. When my Dad arrived back in Hamtramck, the 6 a.m. church bells were ringing. He took his date to her job at a bakery and then returned to his parent's home on Prescott Street. My Grandfather asked my dad, "Where the hell have you been, Kid? Do you realize what time it is?" My dad replied, "The boat sank," an unlikely story that my Grandfather didn't believe.

“That evening in the Detroit News there was an article about the sinking of the TASHMOO. Lo and behold, there was a photograph of my dad and his date and other passengers standing by the COLUMBIA after returning to Detroit – proof that he really was a “survivor” of the sinking.”

With a million good memories, there has to be a bad one. Marcia Pilliciotti of Detroit rode the “three broad decks” of the TASHMOO, “over 600 windows, holding 1,400 passengers. On this morning’s trip, a speedboat with five people in it was foolishly circling the TASHMOO, trying to get as close as it could. After several noisy revolutions, it had caught the attention of hundreds of children. They were thrilled to watch this dangerous game. The speedboat got caught in a wave that rebounded off the TASHMOO hull. Tipped the small craft over and spilled its five occupants into the water. Only three people could swim. Two other passengers drown.

“The news of the accident quickly spread around the TASHMOO. ...Our mother remembers most of the people on all three decks, going to watch on the left side of the ship. They wanted to see what was going on, but they did not realize they might cause the same outcome to their boat. Neither my mother, nor her mother, knew how to swim and were panic stricken. ... Through the pandemonium, a ships employee grabbed a bullhorn and yelled directions. ‘Get back! Get back to the other side of the ship, or we’ll tip over, too.’ Eventually, people listened to

him and moved back to the other side of the boat. My mother did not remember the rest of the boat ride, landing on Tashmoo Island, or anything else that happened. She just knew that she would not go on a boat, again.”

The ultimate compliment that a ship can receive was forwarded by Arnold Tash. “When my Father was young and his friends asked him where he wanted to go, he always said “On the TASHMOO.” My father and mother loved to dance. Before they were married they took many trips on the TASHMOO, and won some trophies with their good dancing. My Father’s name was Charles Pawlowski, but all his friends called him Charlie Tash, because of his love for the boat. Finally he decided to change his last name legally to Charles Tash, as everyone knew him by that name.

“I was fourteen years old at that time, so my last name was also legally changed to Tash. My Father has been dead for 51 years now. But my wife and I, three sons and their wives, and five grandchildren still carry on the Tash name.”

Don Hoffman wrote from Yuma, Arizona, to recall several trips as a young man. “As a child I remember many summer mid-week excursions to Bob-Lo with my mother and her sisters for a picnic there. Trips to Bob-Lo were always fun, but the best part was having a Boston Cooler at the Vernor’s Plant at the foot of Woodward after the cruise.

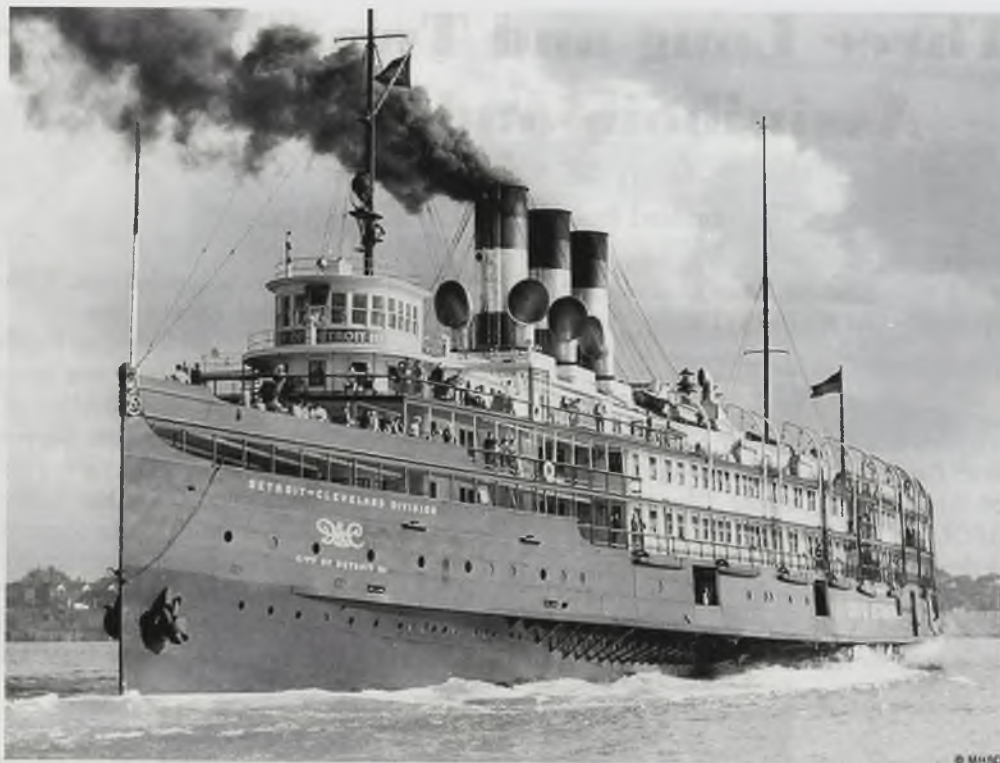
“My parents took me to Put-In-Bay several times on the steamer PUT-IN-BAY, but that trip took longer. I recall how slot machines appeared once we got into Lake Erie, and they seemed to attract a lot of adults.

“During the summer of 1948, between my sophomore and junior years at U of D High School, I spent four weeks as a cabin porter aboard the S.S. CITY OF DETROIT III. That summer, the ship’s task was to provide a pleasurable seven day cruise of the Great Lakes. The trip originated on Saturday evening in Buffalo,” and stopped in Cleveland, Detroit, Mackinac, and finally Chicago. The return trip included a stop in Midland, Ontario. “The route covered a distance



One of the many documents received for the exhibit was this “Certificate of Service” sent by Kenneth David Ayton





CITY OF DETROIT III

of 2400 miles through three of the Great Lakes. I was quite an adventure for a sixteen year old youth who had not been away from home before.

“I have first hand knowledge of every square inch of brass in the original [Gothic Room], as one of my duties was to polish it every day. I was on a first name basis with my can of Brasso and polishing cloth.”

One person wrote regarding the largest and last of the Great Lakes cruise ships – the AQUARAMA. Vicky Colwell explains, “After I graduated from Grosse Pointe High, I got a call telling me I’d been hired to work in the ship’s office on board the AQUARAMA. I was as thrilled as an 18 year old could be! I was working with Captain Morgan Howell, and it would be my job, as radio operator, to stand with the captain on the bridge in emergencies, and if the ship sank, to be the last to leave with the captain on a rubber raft off the top deck. How romantic! For two summers, I sailed aboard that beautiful ship, and it will be part of my life, full of adventures, that I’ll never forget.”

These remembrances added a personal touch to the story that Era of Elegance told. An unexpected bonus was the opportunity to meet many of the contributors when the exhibit opened. The letters, now in the archives, are a welcome addition to our tremendous collection of artifacts from the steamboat era. Thanks to all who contributed, and if this article stirs more memories, please write them down and send them on.

Special thanks should go out to the local media for promoting this project, particularly to Neil Rubin of the Detroit News who wrote two enjoyable articles which drew the greatest measurable response. We also received other warm remembrances and artifacts not mentioned here. Due to spatial constraints, many of the letters were edited, and some had to be omitted. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me through the Detroit Historical Society.

Joel Stone, Curator  
Detroit Historical Society

# Three Long and Two Short for Assiniboia and Keewatin

By Gordon P. Bugbee

Reprinted from Sept., 1965 Telescope

This year 2007 marks the 100th Anniversary of the passenger vessel KEEWATIN.

Word comes that the Canadian Pacific Railway will end its Great Lakes steamship services at the close of this shipping season. The two liners ASSINIBOIA and KEEWATIN have now finished carrying their summer loads of passengers between Port McNicoll on Georgian Bay and Fort William at Lake Superior's Canadian lakehead. But they continue in autumn service carrying freight and a

few passengers on their scheduled runs. When they tie up for this winter, an era will pass.

For eighty-two years the Canadian Pacific has served this route. The Clyde-built iron propellers ALBERTA, ALGOMA and ATHABASKA of 1884 were the first ships built for this line. Supposedly, they furnished a temporary lake link for two portions of a transcontinental railroad that until 1886 remained to be joined around Lake Superior and Georgian Bay. But the steamers were not diverted to other routes as expected when the railroad was finished. ALGOMA was lost off Isle Royale in late 1885, and the line replaced her in 1889 with the





KEEWATIN passing thru the MacArthur Lock with tourists waving from the viewing platform.

Collingwood-built steel propeller MANITOBA, ample evidence that the line would stay. ALBERTA and ATHABASKA had long lives, running in later years as freighter, and were finally broken up about 1948. MANITOBA continued as a passenger ship until retired in 1950.

These were probably the most advanced lake steamships of the 1880's, but they were much outclassed by the larger and more elaborate liners ASSINIBOIA and KEEWATIN, built in 1907 at Govan, Scotland. Despite their foreign origin, this pair is typical of the twentieth century Lake Superior "propeller" passenger ships which are probably the most distinctly "native" form of lake ships. With their engines located far aft, they left the best part of the ship available for passenger cabins over their cargo decks. Modern ocean liners like ROTTERDAM and CANBERRA are taking advantage of this arrangement. Others of this Lake Superior class included the Anchor Liners TIONESTA, OCTORARA and JUNIATA (the latter being now rebuilt as MILWAUKEE CLIPPER), Canada Steamship Lines' HURONIC, HAMONIC and NORONIC, and the Northern Michigan liner MINNESOTA.

We can think of no other place in North America where (until now) one could enjoy the luxury of a

"boat train", except at Toronto. There on Wednesday and Saturday noons in summer, a train left northbound for the three-hour ride to Port McNicoll. The train arrived beside a small park of colorful flowers, while the liner lay waiting beyond, her sides sparkling white in afternoon sun. After sailing at 3:15 p.m., the ship (ASSINIBOIA on Saturdays, KEEWATIN on Wednesdays) spent the waning daylight hours crossing Georgian Bay, and transited Lake Huron by night. In early morning the steamer wended her way up the placid St. Marys River, due at the Soo at 9:45 a.m. On Sunday mornings, the two liners met here.

Our most vivid memories of these ships come from a 1962 trip on KEEWATIN, starting at the Soo. As we cross from the American to the Canadian shores on the ferry (now replaced by a bridge), we can see our ship with its huge funnel, silhouetted in morning sun, moving toward us from downriver. She pulls in at the Government wharf beside the smaller steamer NORGOMA. (NORGOMA has since ceased her week-long round trips between Owen Sound and the Soo via the North Channel behind Manitoulin Island.)

We board KEEWATIN at a narrow foyer aft, where there is a newsstand, barber shop and purser's window. Most staterooms are on the lower of the



The KEEWATIN passes the Georgian Bay cruise ship SOUTH AMERICAN on her way to Buffalo.

two passenger cabin decks above, while public rooms dominate the upper deck. Forward is the galleried main salon, two decks high. It is called the "flower well" for its array of potted plants hanging from the ceiling or seated on the gallery crossbeams. On the upper deck, a drawing room is forward of the flower well, with comfortable chairs, card tables and writing desks. At the other end is the entrance to the dining room amidships, perhaps the ship's most popular feature. At the tables along the side walls are big windows giving a splendid view from the lofty position. The seats here swivel on fixed bases. A high, vault-shaped ceiling in the center relieves the cramped 'tween deck dimensions common to ship cabins.

To go aft on this upper deck, to reach the cocktail lounge and the ballroom, we must pass along the promenade around the gallery (or else take a stairway aft from the lower deck). The promenades are too narrow for lingering; but one deck higher is the broad sun deck with steamer chairs and even a children's playground of swings and slides.

On this up bound trip we cross the river to one of the American locks, the MacArthur Lock. A few hours earlier, we were in the throng of tourists on the viewing platforms at the MacArthur Lock. Now

we are the lucky ones, looking down at tourists waving to us from these platforms as we lock through. Beyond the locks is a "museum" of bridges. First is the new high level steel arch of the highway bridge, still unfinished in 1962. Beyond is the railroad bridge, a sequence of a lift span and a draw span at the American channels, and a swing span at the Canadian lock's channel across the river. In broader waters once again, we pass the Algoma Steel plant on the Canadian shore, proceeding toward the still more open waters of Whitefish bay toward Lake Superior.

This hour takes us to the dining room. Passengers are served in two sittings. Except at breakfast, the menus have colored covers showing places along the Canadian Pacific railroad system: Lake Louise, the Houses of Parliament and the like. At our luncheon meal, we find that two of our table mates come from New Jersey and the other two come all the way from England. At one point in our meal, we hear a familiar melodious chime whistle far away, sounding the traditional "three long and two short salute". Above the dome of the dining room, our KEEWATIN's deep-throated whistle replies. Moments later, in brilliant white, the Georgian Bay cruise ship SOUTH AMERICAN sweeps

majestically past, bound from Duluth to Buffalo on her regular seven-day trip. Passengers at her rails wave to us, and doubtlessly our own are waving back from the sun deck above us.

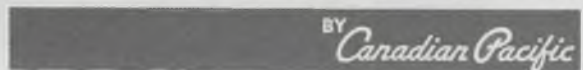
Tea is served at four o'clock in the ballroom. The chairs lining its walls are now augmented by carpet-covered folding camp stools, and the room is soon crowded with people chatting and sipping tea. Bouillon is served in similar fashion at 10:30 in the mornings.

After tea we slip unobtrusively down to see the engine room. KEEWATIN's quadruple-expansion engine is all the way aft, with only a short tailshaft. This practice differed from earlier CPR ships like MANITOBA, which had another cargo hold aft of the engine. (Counting from the forward end, the cylinder sizes are 23 1/2", 48 1/2" and 70", with 45" stroke). KEEWATIN has hand-fired coal-burning boilers with an induced draft that calls for her tall stack. The stack of ASSINBOIA was shortened in the early fifties during her conversion to oil fuel; this distinguishes the sisters. Again, when the stack is placed so far aft, the smoke and cinders are carried aft to fall clear of the fantail.

By dinnertime, the daylight subdues, beginning a sunset that holds its glow for about an hour afterwards. The dining room's warm paneling takes



KEEWATIN's tall stack.



on a mellow tone now. After our meal, the passengers gather under the "flower well" for "sing song". The songs we sing seem to come from the "good years" when our KEEWATIN was new. "Home on the Range" makes us think of those passengers whose journey will continue westward toward the Pacific by train in the morning. After "sing song", there is dancing to phonograph music in the ballroom.

Friday morning brings a brief call at Port Arthur while the first sitting passengers are at breakfast. We of the second sitting are at breakfast while KEEWATIN moves up the Kaministiquia River to dock at Fort William. After breakfast we transfer shore to the Royal Edward Hotel for a night's stay while our ship lies over to unload and load freight.

What is to be seen in what we expect to be an overgrown frontier town? In entering Port Arthur we have already seen the fantastic skyline of huge grain elevators that stretch along Thunder Bay between the neighboring cities, with all the appearance of a great city of their own. Out in the harbor are large rafts of pulpwood logs, tended by tugs and waiting to be moved down Lake Superior to the Soo. In both towns, there are beds of colorful flowers everywhere, recalling a similar fondness for flowers one sees in England. Back along the river,

the grain elevators are more isolated, now having the primeval quality of Norman cathedrals set against the backdrop of Mount McKay and see far off into the distance. And finally there is the Kakabeka Falls, in Canada second only in height to Niagara. Hiring a taxicab for the morning allows good sightseeing.

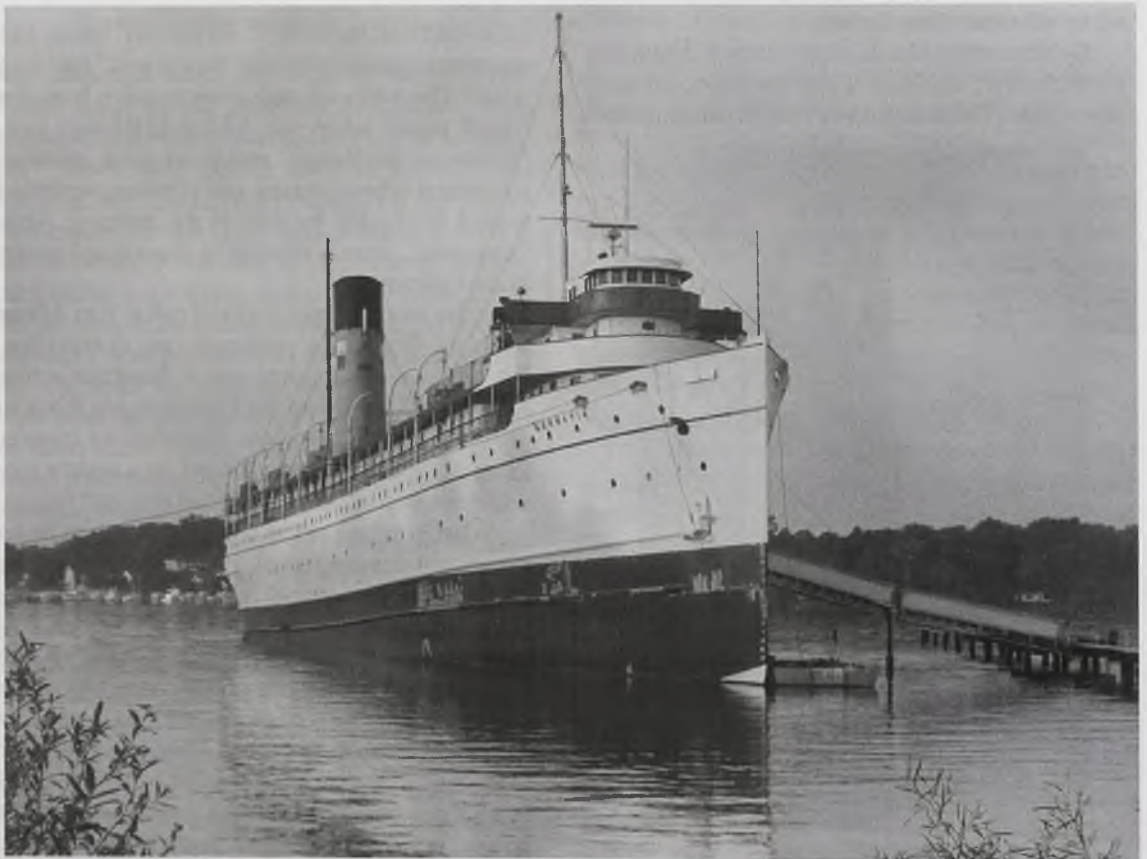
Our trip back seems to go more quickly. We sail from Fort William Saturday afternoon, again calling at Port Arthur before steaming out of Thunder Bay past the land formation known as “the sleeping giant”. At this hour we don life jackets for lifeboat drill on the sun deck. The crew rehearses preparing a lifeboat, pushing it out beyond the deck’s edge and back again. We are in good hands. In afternoon, we skirt the eastern end of Isle Royal before land falls away again for the rest of the day.

As we breakfast again Sunday morning, we find ourselves moving toward the Canadian Soo. Locking down presents a startling experience: the horizon rises above our dining room window until only the rough stone of the lock wall can be seen.

Before long, we steam out of the lock, and the world reappears again. Downriver, KEEWATIN comes about and up alongside the Government dock, and then pulls herself into a berth that extends toward the shore. In the meanwhile, ASSINIBOIA has appeared around a bend from below, and glides past our bow at close range to tie up at the dock’s outer berth.

Regretfully, we part with our ship at the Soo, off for a week on the lower St. Marys River. We reach our destination that afternoon in time to see our KEEWATIN pass silently down bound. But it seems a little less “our” ship now, as we stand on the shore and think of the friends we have made who are still aboard, and the rest of the trip to Toronto that we are missing.

**Postscript:** The KEEWATIN was withdrawn from service at the end of the 1965 season. She was sold for scrap to Marine Salvage of Port Colborne, Ontario, but was never in danger of being dismantled. Several offers were put forth to save the KEEWATIN and on





June 27, 1967, she arrived at her new home in Douglas, MI. to begin a new life as a museum-ship. The KEEWATIN is open Memorial Day thru Labor Day for tours.

With the departure of the KEEWATIN and ASSINBOIA, only the Georgian Bay passenger vessel SOUTH AMERICAN would operate on the lakes in 1967. She was withdrawn from service after successfully carrying passengers to Expo 67 in Montreal.



Chateau Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies



Banff Springs Hotel, world renowned resort hotel.



The histories of Canada and the U.S.A., are joined on the great waterway that joins the two countries and every port on the voyage has something of interest.

# Storm Nov. 1913

Many devastating storms have hit the Great Lakes, but none as severe as the "White Hurricane" that occurred between Fri. Nov. 7 and Mon. Nov. 10, 1913. America's deadliest maritime disaster affected all the Great Lakes except Ontario, caused by a meteorological chain of weather events never seen until that time nor since. A total of 11 ships were sunk, 31 known stranded and human cost was reported as at least 248 lives. Property damage was heavy. High winds, blinding snow and freezing temperatures combined, causing ships to ice up, become top heavy, risking capsizing. Towering waves, reported 35 ft high, slammed ships causing steel rivets to pop, deck plates to split. Given that few maritime (electronic) assists existed at the time, ship masters sailed by their wits and experience. Yet these two requisites were ineffectual to captain and crew caught on the open lakes in the exceptional weather circumstances that late fall of 1913.

The storm ravaged unabated for nearly three days. Mysteries attributed to the unusual conditions remain unsolved today. For example, why were corpses washed up on Lake Huron shores wearing marked life vests from another ship? Only in recent years have remains of lost ships been discovered.

The violent storm duly affected those on land as well. By referencing the historic pages of the Wallaceburg News, we have extracted some interesting news items from the Colwell family owned publication. "Sunday night (Nov. 9) for the

first, mother earth donned her white wear with especial folds and frills on the front street (James St.) and Monday morning, merchants had to get outside with snow shovels and remove the great pile of winter's garb from their store front. It has never been known when the first snow was so heavy or came with such fuss and bluster."

The Lee family, still engaged in local marine matters today (as 4th generation sailors) have claimed a long association with area waterways. The White Hurricane of 1913, seemingly was of only passing consequence to one of the hearty Lee family members at the time. "Bob Lee and his wife went by launch to Becher (north of Wallaceburg on the Sydenham River) on the stormy Sunday afternoon when the wind was blowing a hurricane. A little breeze like that don't bother a good sailor like Bob."

Further reporting indicated several local residents stranded at rural locations, taking refuge wherever lodging was available. Afraid to challenge the severity of the blinding blizzard, road routes were unrecognizable. With ferocious winds combined with sheets of snow,

modestly built abodes for most, the three day blow must have instilled extreme apprehensiveness into hearts of affected folks, given the needs such as tending animals, keeping warm, maintaining food supplies and uncertainty of the unknown, simply striving to survive.







D.R. VANALLEN, St. CLair River, built Chatham, Ont. 1874

Mann Historical Files

St. Clair River communities were affected by an extra dimension during the November, 1913 weather blast. Although the St. Clair River is an inland and generally protected waterway, it did rear its ugly demeanor that November nearly 90 years ago. Reflecting effect on Sombra village, events tied in with a tragic link to the devastating hurricane.

On Thursday Nov. 6, the 249 ft. Canadian Interlake Line package freighter REGINA pulled into Sombra dock (approximate site of the present

ferry dock at foot of King St.) to onload baled hay. Weather conditions at the time were normal. Spending most of the day moored in Sombra, by late Thursday, lines were released and the REGINA headed upstream. The day before (Wed. Nov.5) the steamer D.R. VANALLEN (built in Chatham, 1874) had also moored at Sombra taking on 200 tons of pressed hay. By the time REGINA had docked, the VANALLEN was well into Lake Huron.



This older ferry was named WHITELEY and ran regularly between Marine City and Sombra from 1911 to 1919.



Kelly & Hughes, S.E corner of King & Water, Sombra, Ont. suffered severe damage during 1913 storm. Replaced by a china shop in 1987 by Bill Laing

By Fri., Nov. 7, weather conditions began to deteriorate. Temperatures dropped, winds accelerated, but to locals this was just another late fall storm. The Sombra (to Marine City, Mich.) ferry service (operated by Tom Whitley) continue to serve patrons. Local Sombra businesses, Kelly & Hughes, Sicken Lumber Co., Hargroves General Store, Thistle Rubber Co., and the Sterling Bank, carried on as normal. Weather, always a conversation topic, however, soon gained concerned chat as winds continued to build with heavy snow falling. It was soon sensed the area was in for a good November weather blast. "Button down the hatches." may have been uttered as villagers headed to the safety and comfort of their homes. Concern was realized by families of this sailors community as many loved ones were still out on the lakes with their ships.

By Sat. Nov. 10 it was realized the entire area was caught in extreme weather conditions of unseen proportions. The next week's edition of the Wallaceburg News reported Sombra effects... "Kelly & Hughes lost their chimney, part of their store roof, window glass and their big store sign was swept away... Tom Whitley's ferry was damaged and his dock smashed... Sicken Lumber Co. lost part of their

dock... a portion of the Grand Union Hotel porch was ripped off... several small boats tied to docks were pounded to pieces or swept away...no trains were running, unable to break through the snow. " Thistle Rubber Co. then on stilts over the water, nearly tumbled into the St. Clair River during the storm, later convincing owner Emma Dalgety to move the structure inland where the building sits today.

The steamer REGINA? The vessel that departed Sombra dock on Nov 6 was lost in Lake Huron with all hands. It was not until 73 years later (in 1986) divers located her hull, upside down with a three foot gash in her bottom. The REGINA was located 3 miles off shore in Lake Huron between Port Sanilac and Lexington (Mich.) divers speculating the hull hit bottom, took on water and plunged to her doom.

The VANALLEN? Fortunately she survived the White Hurricane, but took a severe battering, most of her Sombra-loaded hay rolling off her decks. Sombra resident Fred Rathburn was first reported lost on his ship, however he did survive, later returning home telling about his perilous 86 hours being tossed about on Lake Huron. Charlie Katney of Sombra was aboard the steamer HENRY B.



Mann Historical Files

Whiteley's Ferry at Customs & Immigration Office / Grand Union Hotel, Sombra, Ont. battered by Nov. 1913 storm.

SMITH, lost when the 10,000 ton vessel foundered in Lake Superior. Several other Sombra sailors including Capt. U.S. Cody were able to survive the White Hurricane, Cody able to bring his ship WILLIAM A. PAINE to safety after a harrowing adventure on Lake Erie near Astabula, Ohio.

All told, eight ships sunk in Lake Huron and one each in lakes Superior, Michigan and Erie. No Sombra residents survive today who could relate first hand the Great Storm of November, 1913. But its effects must have been severely felt and discussed for many years to come.

Alan Mann  
January 2003  
MANN HISTORICAL FILES



Mann Historical Files

Grand Union Hotel, Sombra, Ont. - Built in 1906 of cement blocks made in Sombra.  
Upper porch damaged by winds during Nov. 1913 storm.

# GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS



Editor: Greg Rudnick  
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Thanks for assistance in preparing this issue to:

Rod Burdick	Dan Kaminski	William Keller
Dick Lund	Alan Mann	Jim Sprunt
Lake Carriers Association		Scanner
Wheelhouse		

APRIL, 2007

Apr. 1 ... H. LEE WHITE opens Silver Bay with a load for Cleveland.

Apr. 2 ... Str. RESERVE had a bearing on her steam turbine overheat while upbound to Duluth, near the Apostle Islands. The turbine was slowed to 40-50 rpm and RESERVE was escorted by the tug SUSAN HOEY.

Apr. 3 ... PUFFIN becomes the first salt water ship of the year into Toronto.

... The former Rochester-Toronto ferry, SPIRIT OF ONTARIO I, has been sold to FRS, a German firm. They plan to operate the ferry across the Straits of Gibraltar from Spain to Morocco. FRS paid \$30 million for the vessel, but the City will still have to pay the Australian builder \$20 million over 14 years.

Apr. 5 ... Tug GLENADA responds to a distress call from the fish tug MARION G. off Thunder Bay, Ontario. The GLENADA tows the vessel back to port.

... NINDAWAYMA has been sold to Upper Lakes Shipping, Ltd.



Photo by Greg Rudnick

H. LEE WHITE opens Silver Bay to navigation.

... Carferry WOLFE ISLANDER returns to her summer dock at Kingston, Ontario

... CAPTAIN HENRY JACKMAN departs lay up in Owen Sound.

Apr. 6 ... Str. EDWARD L. RYERSON departs her Sturgeon Bay lay up dock.

... Ice re-froze in the St. Marys River. KATMAI BAY broke out a channel for LEE A. TREGURTHA, ALGOMARINE, CANADIAN OLYMPIC, AMERICAN REPUBLIC, tug DOROTHY ANN, and barge PATHFINDER.

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GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS •

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Photo by Greg Rudnick

Str. RESERVE experiences turbine problems.

Apr. 9 ... MV FEDERAL OSHIMA will be the first salty upbound through the Soo. She had to lighter into a barge in the lower river before heading to Algoma Steel at the Soo.

... Icebreaking on western Great Lakes came to a close. The operation on the U.S. side consisted of USCG vessels MACKINAW, HOLLYHOCK, MOBILE BAY, NEAH BAY, KATMAI BAY, and BISCAYNE BAY.

... Soo Locks tour vessel, CHIEF SHINGWAUK was vandalized.

Apr 10 ...Salt water ship REBECCA is the first salty of 2007 into the Twin Ports. She went to the CHS Elevator in Superior to load.

... Charlevoix, MI will not get a buoy tender to replace the retired ACACIA, according to a Coast Guard spokesman. Coverage of the area will be provided by MACKINAW.

... Tanker SICHEM ANELINE, with a cargo of benzene, grounded in the St. Lawrence River near the eastern end of the Island of Montreal.

Apr. 12 ...ISOLDA opened Indiana Harbor to salties for 2007.

Apr. 13 ...ENGLISH RIVER was escorted into Buffalo by the NEAH BAY and CCG GRIFFON. Ice outside of Buffalo was heavily windrowed.

... Under the National Lighthouse Preservation Act, the General Services Administration has listed several Great Lakes lighthouses to historic/civic entities. They are Duluth Harbor Inner Breakwall, Cleveland East Pierhead, Michigan City East Pierhead, Conneaut West Breakwall.



Photo by Greg Rudnick

Tug GLENADA rescues fish tug near Thunder Bay, Ontario.

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• GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS

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Photo by Greg Rudnick

Former Manitoulin Island ferry NINDAWAYMA sold to Upper Lakes Shipping, Ltd.

... CATHERINE DESGAGNES opened the 2007 season in Marinette, WI when she arrived at Marinette Fuel & Dock Co. with pig iron.

Apr. 14 ...KATMAI BAY is working in heavy ice in Whitefish Bay.

Apr. 15 ...SICHEM ANELINE freed with the help of tugs OCEAN BRAVO, OCEAN JUPITER and OCEAN INTREPID. The tanker proceeded to Section 56N where inspections will be carried out.

Apr. 16 ...Essar Global of India intends to purchase Algoma Steel for \$1.85 billion.

Apr. 19 ...McKiel Marine has sold some tugs, and their property and buildings in Tracy, Quebec to McNally International.

Apr. 20 ...The Algoma Board unanimously approves sale to Essar Global. Shareholders must vote in June.



Photo by Greg Rudnick

Soo Locks tour boat CHIEF SHINGWAUK was vandalized April 9, 2007

**GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS •**

Apr. 22 ...NINDAWAYMA tow up the Seaway is underway, towed by RADIUM YELLOWKNIFE and COMMODORE STRAITS.

Apr. 24 ...USCG buoy tender ALDER still out of service with a bad seal in the controllable-pitch propeller system. A seal in one blade is leaking.

... NINDAWAYMA tow is delayed at Iroquois Creek.

Apr. 25 ...Fire in the mess hall damaged the U.S.S. FREEDOM, under construction in Marinette, WI.

... SICHEM ANELINE got underway from Montreal after grounding. No damage to her hull was found and her steering gear was repaired

Apr. 26 ...Coal shipments in March totalled 1.2 million tonnes, a decrease of 28% over 2006. The decrease is attributed to low Lake levels and lack of dredging.

... MV ARCTIC, Fednav's ice-strengthened freighter, departs Quebec City for Jiangyn, China to undergo a major re-fit. This will add approximately 20 years to the life of the vessel.

... NINDAWAYMA tow arrives in Port Weller.

Apr. 27 ...Cleveland-Cliffs Inc reported pellet shipments at 2.6 million tons for the first quarter of 2007, down from 2.9 million in 2006.

... Ferry PELEE ISLANDER opens her season.

... Stone cargoes to date in 2007 total only 200,000 tons, down because mild weather in November and December, 2006 enabled quarries to ship more stone than normal.

Apr. 27 ...CHI-CHEEMAUN sails out of Sarnia on sea trials after being re-powered with four new Caterpillar diesels.

Apr. 28 ... The deed to Toledo Light has been turned over to the Toledo Lighthouse Preservation Society.

... VOYAGEUR PIONEER arrives at Marinette Fuel & Dock Co. with a cargo of pig iron. It is the first time a Voyageur Marine vessel called at this port.

Apr. 29 ... A faulty valve in Lock 6 resulted in extra water being released into Lock 5, washing out the Road between Glendale Ave. and Lock 5. Lock 6 west is closed for assessment.

**MAY, 2007**

May 2 ... ALDER is back in operation after being out of service since March 8.

... YANKCANUCK is going into service on the east coast for Purvis Marine.

May 3 ... TRILLIUM was out on Toronto Bay on trials in preparation for her new season.

May 6 ... YANCANUCK is downbound in the Welland Canal.



Toledo Light was turned over to the Preservation Society April 28, 2007

Photo by Greg Rudnick

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• GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS

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Photo by Greg Rudnick



YANCANOCK heads for East Coast

May 7 ... HMCS HALIFAX heads up the Welland Canal to visit Upper Lake ports.

May 10... DAVID Z., EARL W., and WOLVERINE lay up in the north slip in Sarnia, because of a lack of agreement with the American Maritime Officers' Union.

... Ferry BADGER develops a problem with one of her engines and misses a sailing. Repairs are not expected to take long.

May 13 ... The Norfolk Southern Coal Dock in Sandusky was damaged by a conveyor belt fire after loading the Str. ARTHUR M. ANDERSON. One hundred feet of conveyor belt were destroyed and had to be replaced.

May 18 ... Spirit of LaSalle cruise line opens for business between Menominee, Michigan and Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin with service provided by GRANDPA WOO III, soon to be renamed SPIRIT OF LASALLE, and ISLE ROYALE QUEEN III.

May 20 ... The barge service to Wallaceburg is on hold, pending dredging of the Sydenham River. The service was deemed successful.

May 21 ... Str. RESERVE departs Duluth after turbine repairs are completed.

May 22 ... U.S. Lakers moved 9.9 million tons of dry bulk cargo on the Great Lakes in April, a decrease of 3.8%. Iron ore loading and coal were in line with 2006. Limestone was 9% lower.

... The downbound tug OLIVE L. MOORE and barge LEWIS J. KUBER ran aground in Lake St. Clair below the crib light above Buoy 19. The pair were released by the wake of the upbound PRESQUE ISLE.

May 24 ... Str. EDWARD L. RYERSON is down bound in the Welland Canal on her way to Quebec City with taconite. Her return trip is a cargo of fines loaded at Contrecoeur for Chicago. This is the first Seaway trip for the RYERSON.



WOLVERINE, DAVID Z. and EARL W. laid up in Sarnia because of strike.

Photo by Greg Rudnick



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**GREAT LAKES & SEAWAY NEWS •**

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Photo by Greg Rudnick

**BADGER** experiences mechanical problems May 10, 2007

... **DETROIT PRINCESS** journeys to Toledo to take part in the ceremonies pertaining to the opening of the new I-280 bridge over the Maumee River.

May 25 ... Tug **JOYCE L. VAN ENKEVORT** and barge **GREAT LAKES TRADER** released 200-300 gallons of oil into the St. Marys River when a fuel transfer pump malfunctioned.

May 28 ... Title to the museum ship **WILLIS B. BOYER**, under the leadership of Paul LaMarre III, has been transferred from the City of Toledo to the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, which will save the vessel from the scrapyard. Mr. LaMarre has plans to revitalize the vessel, once the largest bulk freighter in the world.

May 30 ... Gary Burnham is sentenced to 30 months in prison and is required to pay \$750,000 to Holly Marine Towing after he sank their tug while sailing as Captain with a forged Master's license.

May 31 ... USCG evacuated a seaman from tug **OLIVE L. MOORE** 16 miles from the Charlevoix River. The seaman was experiencing severe bleeding.

... McKiel tugs **WYATT M.** and **JARRETT M.** guide the **JAMES NORRIS** into the drydock at Port Weller Shipyard.

... St. Lawrence Seaway reported a decrease in passages and tonnages for the year to date. The year-to-date total of 923 passages carrying 922,000 tons represents a reduction of 205 vessels over 2006, or 18.2% and 255,400 tons.



Photo by Greg Rudnick

Museum ship **WILLIS B. BOYER** is transferred to port authority.

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## MEMBERSHIP - FYI

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Many boat watchers along the lakes want to travel aboard a lake freighter. The only chance for the public to board a freighter is through non-profit boat raffles that occur every year. There are two such boat raffles for you to enter, but there are some restrictions. Guests must be 18 years or older, adhere to all company policies and procedures, be flexible for ports of departures/return and be able to climb stairs and ladders.

Trip for four adults aboard the str. **EDWARD L. RYERSON** during the 2008 season.

Drawing is February 2, 2008. Ticket donation is \$10.00.

For tickets or info, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

ISMA Toledo #9 Boat Trip Raffle  
P.O. Box 16720  
Oregon, OH 43616

Trip for four adults aboard an **Interlake Steamship Company** vessel or **Canada Steamship Lines** vessel during the 2008 season. Other raffle prizes include day trips aboard smaller cruise/tour boats.

Drawing is March 1, 2008. Ticket donation is \$10.00

For tickets or info, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

ISMA Port Huron #2 Boat Trip Raffle  
P.O. Box 611634  
Port Huron, MI 48061-1634

## See The Lights - Lighthouse Tour Package

Tour package available from June 1 thru October 31, 2007.

Spend two nights at Langeland House Bed & Breakfast in Muskegon, MI and enjoy a day's tour of some of west Michigan's famous and scenic lighthouses. Choose from eight area lighthouses: South Haven, Holland, Grand Haven, Muskegon, White River (Whitehall), Little Sable Point (Silver Lake), Ludington North Pierhead and Big Sable Point. Reservations and tour itinerary must be made at least one week in advance.

For information contact Langeland House Bed & Breakfast, 1337 Peck, Muskegon, MI 49441 or visit their website: [www.langelandhouse.com](http://www.langelandhouse.com).



**BACK COVER:** The KEEWATIN in all her splendor. Photo from the Dossin Museum Collection.



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