

THE LIGHTSHIP

LAKE



LORE

MARINE SOCIETY

Vol. XX, No. 4

July / August, 1999

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our first joint dinner meeting with our sister organization, the Marine Historical Society of Detroit, was held on Saturday, May 15th at the Port Huron Museum, with 55 people (members & guests) in attendance. The evening's entertainment program was supplied & presented by Bill Worden of Detroit who spoke on a subject obviously close to his heart, *Bob-Lo Steamer Columbia - Past & Present*. His interesting and fact-filled slide presentation also covered the history of many other ferries of the Detroit area in the early years of this century, including, of course, the immensely popular Bob-Lo steamers which was well appreciated by his audience. Afterwards, William Hoey, an Advisory Council Board Member of the M.H.S.D., presented Bill Worden, on behalf of the Society, a \$100 check for the Columbia Steamboat Restoration Fund.

The evening's activities also included the usual after dinner raffle of four prizes generously donated by the M.H.S.D. which were two copies of *Ahoy & Farewell, Vol. 2*, plus two nautical theme coffee mugs. The lucky book winners were Herman Chapman of St. Clair Shores, MI and Peter Lukasak of East China, MI. The coffee mug winners were Hugh Leitch and Howard Miller, both of Sarnia, ON. We also had a brief business meeting in accordance with the Lake Huron Lore Constitution. The three incumbents of the Board of Directors, seeking another 3-year term of office were returned unopposed, namely Gene Buel, Fred Miller and Andy Rosales.

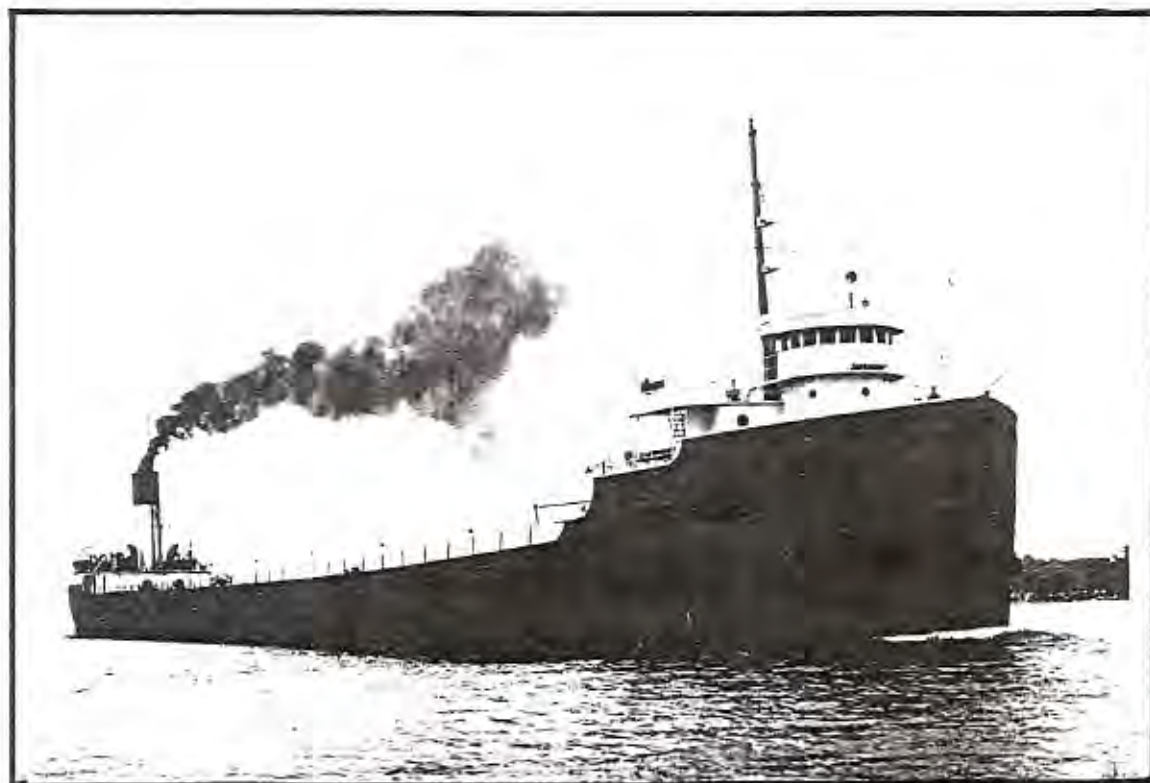
Announcement - At the Lake Huron Lore Director's Board meeting, held on Tuesday, June 15th, there was a change made in the Executive Committee. Paul Schmitt is now the Society's Vice President and Cy Hudson has assumed the position of Treasurer.

Mark Your Calendar - Our 1999 excursion on the *Hammond Bay*, operated by longtime L.H.L. members, David and George Lee, will take place on Saturday, August 7th. The day trip begins at 10:00 am when the boat departs the Leeland Gardens Dock, located approximately 2 miles south of the Sombra Ferry Dock, and proceeds to Wallaceburg, Ontario where the town is holding it's annual WAMBO weekend. There will be lots to see during the three hour visit including antique boats, cars, trucks, agricultural items, along with non-stop entertainment in the downtown area. We expect to arrive back at Leeland Gardens about 6:00 pm. The cost will be \$23 (US) or \$30 (Canadian), which includes a light lunch. A "no alcohol on board" restriction will be enforced. Tickets and further information may be obtained from Gene Buel of Marine City (810) 765-5423, or Cy Hudson of Sarnia (519) 336-1952. As in previous years, U.S. ticket holders can park their vehicles at Marine City, near the ferry landing, and transportation will be provided to the *Hammond Bay*. Early reservations are recommended as ticket sales are limited to the boat's capacity of 40 people. Please be sure to be at Leeland Gardens by 10:00 am as the *Hammond Bay* must be at the Walpole Island Bridge for it's 11:00 am opening in order to proceed further up the Chenal Ecarte (Snye) and the Sydenham River to our destination, Wallaceburg, 10 miles ahead.

New Members - L.H.L. wishes to welcome on board Ed Kuiper & Patricia Szoldra, owners of The Inn at Lock Seven, Thorold, ON., Capt. Wm. & Caroline Hoey of Grosse Ile, MI, Kenneth & Janet Graafeiland of Fair Haven, N.Y., David Wobser of Findlay, OH, John Bacheller of Port Huron, MI and Michael Bacheller of Port Huron, MI.

Note - With this issue, we have included, for each member, a 2" x 3" *Lake Huron Lore* auto window decal. If you require additional decals, they may be obtained for a cost of \$1 from our Treasurer at our Museum address.

*** NAME THIS SHIP ***



SEE ANSWER ON PG. 4

** Photo from Jim Hoffman Collection **

Where Worn Out Ships Go To Die

By Will Englund & Gary Cohn of the *Baltimore Star*

Alang, India - This is where the world dumps its ships, worn out and ready to be torn apart. To the left and right, ships lie stranded along 6 miles of beach, in a hundred stages of demolition. Tankers, freighters, fish processors and destroyers - smashed, cut, listing, smoking - are packed close together. This is the end of the line.

Thirty-five thousand men have come to this once-deserted stretch on the Arabian Sea to labour for the shipbreakers. They live in hovels built of scrap, with no showers or latrines. They have come from poor villages on the other side of India, lured by wages that start at \$1.80 a day, to work at dangerous jobs, protected only by their scarves and sandals. They suffer broken ankles, severed fingers, smashed skulls, malarial fevers, cholera, dysentery and tuberculosis. Some are burned and some are drowned. Nobody keeps track of how many die here from accidents and disease. Some say a worker dies every day. There is a shadow of death on this face, says Ram Lalit, a 22-year-old worker. "This place is haunted by death. But it is better to work and die than starve and die."

The U.S. Navy, which for years has insisted on scrapping its ships in the United States, now wants to send more of them abroad - here to India, or to similar beachfronts in Pakistan or Bangladesh. With its American scrapping program entangled in environmental and worker safety problems, criminal charges, bankruptcies and lawsuits, the Navy has decided to drop its old policy. To escape the turmoil in its domestic program, it could simply export more of its obsolete ships - laden with asbestos, PCBs, lead, toxic sludge and other hazards - to South Asia. If more are sent to Alang, the U.S. government ships will add to the long ranks of broken hulks from Norway, Japan, Greece and Russia that meet their end on the 190 plots where smoke and dust obscure the sun and the crash of steel and the guttural rasp of the torches drown out any other sound.

The beached ships tower over the hundreds of workers who strip them apart, men who know they are expendable. "All burden to the labourers and none to the owners," says Shive Cheren Bharti, 36, who has worked at Alang for 14 years. "There's no risk to them. If 20 people were to die at once, the owners wouldn't care." Then his face inexplicably lighting up in a big grin, he says, "We're the hopeless people of India."

Alang exists because of the tide. It is one of those places where a host of geographical circumstances come together to create exceptionally large differences between the twice-daily high and low tides. Coupled with a soft, shelving beach, the tides at Alang make shipbreaking possible with a minimum of construction. There are no piers or drydocks. Ships are simply run on to the shore. Giant merchant vessels powered by thunderous engines and navigated by satellite signals carry the goods and fuel that enable the modern technological world to exist. Yet a ship ends its life at the hands of several hundred practically barefoot men, and the beginning of that process depends on the phase of the moon.

Twice a month, at the full moon and new moon, tides are at their highest, and this is when a ship can be driven the farthest on to the beach. And, just as a ship is launched with a bottle of champagne smashed across its bow, the dismantling begins with workers on the beach hacking open a coconut and offering a prayer for protection to the elephant god, Lord Ganesh. But prayers aren't always enough. On Jan. 8th, 1997, the men at plot 37 were cutting up a Greek freighter called the *Vakis-T*. Eight workers were cutting a section at deck level. "I was 2 feet away," says Shiv Shankar, 38. "I was talking to them. The last thing I said was, Why don't you work faster? Its time to get this job over with." The whole section broke off and plunged 35 feet into the ship's hold. Three men died of head injuries. Five survived. None were wearing a hard hat. "It was their call to death," says Shankar, with a shrug. But not everyone here is so acceptable of fate. "The joint that broke was almost rusted through," says worker Sita Ram. "The shipbreaker should have known it was weak. But the shipbreakers have no regard for life. Alang is a colony of the dead - breathing, walking dead men."

Workers in Alang begin stirring around 7:30 a.m. Some wash from a bucket on the muddy ground outside their huts. Others squat by puddles, dipping toothbrushes in the yellow water and cleaning their teeth. There's early morning coughing all around. The workday begins, no different from the day before or the day after. A cutter takes a torch to an engine room pipe, and the residual oil inside bursts into flames. Nearby, smoke rolls

from a smothered fire, mixing with the acrid fumes of burning steel and paint. A little farther off, a ship's deckhouse is pushed off its perch and plunges 60 feet to the hold below, with a crash that sends a huge dust cloud swirling. Pairs of workers carry oxygen canisters on their shoulders, cushioning the load with their all-purpose safas, traditional Indian scarves. Gangs of a dozen or more men, plastic sandals on their feet, chant in unison and hoist heavy plates of steel on to their shoulders. Others heft cutting supplies alongside the beached ships.

The most sought-after ships are those that fly the American flag. Greek tankers and Russian trawlers are the bread and butter of the scrapyards, but a shipbreaker knows that a U.S. merchant vessel was built with high-grade steel, was well-maintained and will be clean of grease and sludge when it arrives. It will be laden with asbestos and PCBs, but Indian shipbreakers don't worry about environmental damage or exposing workers to hazardous substances. And, anyway, almost all the world's ships (except the newest) were built with asbestos and PCBs.

With most ships here, the breakers begin cutting from the bow and work their way aft, leaving the bottom plates to the end. A tanker can be dismantled in about seven weeks; a warship takes considerably longer, because it is full of compartments and hard-to-cut armour plate.

Any equipment that can be reused is sold through second-hand dealers on the road from Bhavnagar. Buyers can find, in varying states of repair: sinks, toilets, chairs, mattresses, life jackets, china, telephones (with and without dials), lumber, doors, desks, fire hoses, colanders, mixers, pumps, water fountains, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, washing machines, diesel engines and surgical tables. But items such as these account for only about 4 % of a shipbreaker's income, says Bhavin Shah, overseer on the demolition of the American tanker, *Keystone Rhode Island*. The money is in the metal. And the secret to making it, he says, is to break the ship and sell it quickly. It's not surprising that the shipbreaking industry developed in India. Labour is cheap. There's a domestic market for steel. The owners are driven. The workers and their few advocates are powerless. In a developing nation beset by corruption, poverty and overpopulation, government regulation is ineffectual. The owners of the scrapyards operate with impunity. But they are a product of the system, not its creators. India rewards those who help themselves. "Naturally, the shipbreakers want to put labour into a better position," says H.K. Agrawal, one of the more prominent scrapyards owners in India. Conditions are poor, he concedes, "But 15 years ago there was nothing. In my eyes, a lot has been done here - tell you why I like this business - create jobs for 200 to 300 people and run it like a family. I'm sure I'm getting some profit also."

Footnote: Scrapping Safety - A proposed U.S. Congress act would require the Navy and MarAd to sell ships for breaking only to countries with environmental and safety regulations similar to those in the U.S.A. - Marine News - August, 1998

Editor's Note: As a note of interest, four of the numerous Great Lakes vessels scrapped at Alang, India were the *Hallfax* and *Scott Misener* (3) in 1990 and the *William A. Reiss* (2) and *Robert C. Norton* (2) in 1994.

Answer to Name This Ship (Pg. 2)

The Stmr. *Francis E. House* (b) (U.S. 203917) was built in 1907 by Chicago Shipbuilding Co. at Chicago, Illinois as Hull # 72. Dimensions were 605'-9" x 60' x 32'. Launched as the *William B. Kerr* for the Weston Transit Company. Sold to Pittsburgh S/S Co. and renamed *Francis E. House* in 1910. Sold to Kinsman Marine Transmit Co. in 1966 and renamed *Kinsman Independent* (1). Vessel went aground in St. Marys River in August, 1973 and suffered major bottom damage. Sold for scrap to Marine Salvage of Port Colborne, Ont. in May, 1974. Vessel towed in tandem with Stmr. *James Davidson* by Polish tug *Jantar* to Santander, Spain. The tow arrived there in July, 1974 and were cut up shortly after.

The Editor always welcomes member's comments, suggestions & contributions.

NAUTICAL NEWS

HISTORIAN OF THE YEAR

At the recent annual dinner of the Marine Historical Society of Detroit, held at the St. Clair Inn, St. Clair, MI, one of our long time members and frequent contributor to *The Lightship* newsletter, Alan Mann of Wallaceburg, Ontario, was awarded the prestigious Historian of the Year by the M. H. S. D. Congratulations Al, it was well deserved. He also joins a small number of other previous winners of the award who are also members of Lake Huron Lore. These gentlemen are Rev. Peter J. Vander Linden of Marysville, Mich. (1977), David Glick of Matlacha, Florida (1982), Ralph K. Rogers of Saginaw, Mich. (1992), and E.B. (Skip) Gillham of Vineland, Ontario (1994). To these previous Historian honorees, we impart our congratulations.

RENAME

The *Tug Malcolm*, a familiar sight in the Bluewater area until she was sold to Beyel Bros. of Cocoa, Florida by Malcolm Marine of St. Clair, MI last July '98 has been renamed Matthew Beyel.

NIAGARA II UPDATE by Ron Beaupre

On Saturday, May 15th, at Tobermory, Ont., the former sandsucker *Niagara II* was scuttled by setting off explosive charges set in her hull. She was sunk as a dive attraction in Little Cove a few miles east of Tobermory, in Georgian Bay.

To add some additional excitement to the affair, 4 gasoline bombs were exploded above decks just before the big blast opened up her hull. The explosions forward were sufficiently large enough to send steel plates flying off both port and starboard bows.

One of the projectiles skipped across the water more than 200 feet and narrowly missed a man in a kayak. This piece of shrapnell was estimated to be 3' x 4'. She rolled over onto her starboard side and went down bow first into 90 feet of water. After striking her bow on the solid rock bottom, she began to roll back upright again as her stern disappeared below the surface.

MARINE SCENE

10 years ago ... (1989)

Kinsman Enterprise (1) cleared Port Huron on August 26th under tow of the *Tug Malcolm* for Port Colborne. The ship, locally known as the "Bean Boat", was purchased from Kinsman by the Port Huron Terminal Company in 1979 for use as a storage barge for sugarbeet pellets, sunflower seeds and corn. In 1989, the vessel was sold to Marine Salvage Co. of Port Colborne, Ont. and towed to Aliaga, Turkey where she was cut apart for scrap steel.

15 years ago ... (1984)

As the saltwater vessel *Timur Swallow* was departing the grain elevator dock at Sarnia, with the aid of the tug *Barbara Ann*, she lost control and struck the seawall in Port Huron causing considerable damage to the wall.

20 years ago ... (1979)

American Steamship Company's new 1,000 foot self-unloader, *Indiana Harbor*, was christened at Sturgeon Bay, Wisc. by Mrs. Frederick G. Jaicks, wife of Inland Steel's Chairman of the Board. The *Indiana Harbor*, the 9th "1000 footer" to be built, departed Sturgeon Bay on August 28th, and sailed to Two Harbors, Minn. to load her first cargo, 67,288 tons of iron ore pellets, bound for her namesake port, Indiana Harbor.

90 years ago ... (1909)

Only three minutes ... that's all the time it took for the *John B. Cowle* (1) to sink after her collision with the *Issac M. Scott* on July 12th, 1909. The *John B. Cowle* (U.S. 77559) was launched Oct. 2, 1902 as Hull # 19 at the well known Port Huron Shipyard of Jenks on the Black River. Her steel hull was 420' long, with a 50' beam, a 24' draft and a cargo capacity of 7,000 tons. Her owner was Cowle Transit Co. of Cleveland, Ohio. The other vessel in the collision, the *Scott*, was featured on page 11 of our Nov/Dec 1998 issue by our regular contributing writer, Skip Gillham. The *Cowle* was downbound from Two Harbors to Cleveland with a load of iron ore, and was running in heavy fog when, about 1 mile north of Whitefish Point, she was struck by the upbound *Issac M.*

Scott on her maiden trip. The heavily laden *Cowle* sank quickly in 217 feet of water taking 14 of her crew with her to their death. The fortunate 10 who survived were picked up by the *Scott* and other ships close by. As a result of the following U.S. Steamboat Inspectors Inquiry meeting at Marquette, and further hearings, the *Cowle's* Captain, W.G. Rogers and her Pilot, Edward E. Carlton, were both suspended for 30 days for travelling too fast for the prevailing conditions. Pilot F.W. Wertheimer of the *Scott* was suspended for 1 year for excessive speed and failing to signal. The unlucky *Scott's* career ended when she went down with all hands in the famous storm that swept the Lakes in November, 1913.

F.Y.I.

As of midnight, June 30th, 123 salt water vessels (requiring pilots) have passed upbound through the Port Huron / Sarnia area since the opening of the 1999 shipping season. *This number includes salt water vessels, passenger ships as well as some Canadian registered tankers, eg. Algonova, Emerald Star, etc. Many are repeat visitors.*

As of midnight, June 29th, 6,808 people have visited the Lake Huron Lightship so far this year.

The Editor would like to thank L.H.L. members Jim Smulka, and Cy Hudson as well as Port Huron Pilot Boat Dispatcher Bill Wager and Lightship Volunteer Len Kuhn.

Preserving Our Marine Heritage

As a Marine Historical Society, we are always interested and supportive of other organizations and groups who take an active part in encouraging and promoting our Great Lakes Maritime History for future generations to enjoy. Michigan has a total of 123 lighthouses, out of the total of 438 on the Great Lakes Region itself with the Straits of Mackinac home to 12 of that total. A group of Great Lakes Lighthouse supporters are proposing plans for construction of a 50,000 sq. ft. museum at the former Straits of Mackinac Ferry Dock, at an estimated cost of \$25 million. It would include a state of the art library, repository of artifacts as well as a 126 ft. high modern tower topped by a beacon which would be visible throughout the Straits of Mackinac.

Over in Elberta, Mich. there is another group with a preservation project, who in fact have been working since 1982. This is the SPCM group, the Society for the Preservation of the *City of Milwaukee*. The carferry was built in 1931 by the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Co., which is now also on the National Register of Historic Landmarks. The vessel is moored in Betsy Lake between Frankfort and Elberta, and is the last of six identical sister ships built as Manitowoc Class carferries from design plans of 1924, and still has her original engines; two 2700 HP triple expansion, with four Scotch boilers, and she **has not** been altered. The *Milwaukee* carried 30 railcars on 4 tracks, and up to 50 passengers. The SPCM group hope to preserve the carferry as a museum to mark the importance it once played in Michigan's Marine and Transportation history.

Why Do We Say It ?

By Cy Hudson

"Get Cracking"

Why do we say *Let's get cracking* when we are in a hurry or rush to get some task started right away?

It is a nautical expression to set all sail and proceed at top speed, usually to the limits of safety for those particular conditions, a bold move especially in heavy weather. This was when the mail-ships or "Packets", as they were usually called, had a penalty clause written into their contracts for late delivery of the mails. These ships would *crack* on all possible sail to meet their contractual requirements; the expression comes from the fact that a mail ship in a hurry would set all sail such that the canvas & rigging were taut and (nearly) cracking under the strain. "We'll have to *get cracking* if we want to get there on time".

BLUEWATER AREA SHIPWRECKS

By Skip Gillham

HARVEY H. BROWN

Harvey H. Brown is remembered locally for a collision with the first *George F. Rand*. The accident occurred at 0317 hours on October 17, 1951, due to a combination of fog and current. Both American owned ships were damaged and the latter was beached on the U.S. side just below the Lake Huron Cut.

Harvey H. Brown had been built at Ecorse, MI and launched on March 21st, 1908. The 552 foot long bulk carrier first sailed as *Harry A. Berwind* and was noted for a previous collision that led to the sinking of the *Henry Steinbrenner* in the Mud Lake section of the St. Marys River on December 5th, 1909.

The *Harry A. Berwind* became *Harvey H. Brown* in 1916 and joined Hindman Transportation as *Parker Evans* in 1964. This is another well-known area name as she was in a collision just below the Bluewater Bridge June 5th, 1972, that left the *Sidney E. Smith Jr.* on her side on the bottom of the St. Clair River. The sunken ship was refloated in two pieces and is now used as a dock face at the end of the Government Dock.

On June 27th, 1972, just after a return to service, *Parker Evans* was in another collision when she hit the salt-water vessel *Anna Katrin Fritzen* in heavy fog on Lake Huron and again required repairs.

Parker Evans joined Q & O Transportation in 1978 and became *Marthill* a year later. She sank May 30th, 1981, after having been retired and stripped down for work as a storage barge at Tampico, Mexico. The former laker, well known for Bluewater area collisions, went down in the Atlantic Ocean, 140 miles E.S.E. of Cape Charles, Virginia.



Photo: Capt. Edward Rendrick, courtesy Robert Rendrick

SALTY SPOTLIGHT

By D. R. (Doug) Schilz

KAPITAN RUDNEV

Built in 1988 by R.O. Brodogradiliste "Uljanik", Pula, Yugoslavia as Hull # 373.
Length - 496' Breadth - 74' Depth - 30'
10,948 GRT M. Tanker.
Main Engine - 7,750 bhp B&W

The first salt-water vessel of the 1999 shipping season arrived in Sarnia on April 21, late in the afternoon, in ballast. She arrived at the Esso dock where she loaded a cargo of benzene. Her arrival marked an annual event that has happened in Sarnia since 1896. This is the traditional presentation of the top hat to the Captain. Presenting the hat was Rev. Albert Corradin of St. Peter's Church in Sarnia to Captain Anatoliy Achkasov.

This is not the first trip to Sarnia for this vessel. She made her first visit to the Lakes last year and again it was to Esso. This vessel is one of many that were built in the 1980's in Yugoslavia at three separate yards. The first ship built was the *Josip Broz Tito* which also made a first trip to Sarnia. Approximately 25 of these vessels were built for the former Soviet Union.

When built, this vessel was owned by Primorsk Shipping Company and registered in the U.S.S.R. She was reflagged in 1992 to Russia under the same owners. In 1994, she was again reflagged and this time to Cyprus. Her owners are listed as K.R.T. Navigation Ltd.

When travelling along the St. Clair River, watch for this vessel or other sister ships that frequent the docks along Sarnia's Chemical Valley. They have since become a familiar site to the Bluewater Area.



* Sept. 24, 1998 - Doug Schilz photo *