

Volume X No. 4  
November 1988  
Lake Huron Lore  
Newsletter

# THE LIGHTSHIP



Museum of Arts & History  
Marine Gallery  
1115 Sixth St.  
Port Huron, MI 48060

Frank & Jean Tabor - Co-editors, 1413 N. River Rd., St. Clair, MI 48079

## THE MUSEUM NEEDS LAKE HURON LORE MEMBERS' HELP

....by PAUL SCHMITT



Recently the Port Huron Museum of Arts and History undertook a major building project. The 2500 square foot addition to the northwest corner of the Museum building is well along in construction. When completed it will provide:

- \* 5 stop elevator with access to all Museum areas
- \* Barrier-free restroom
- \* Grade level entrance and reception area
- \* Paved and enlarged parking area

Cont. on pg. 4 see "Barrier-Free"

## PROGRAM MEETING

Saturday, Nov 19, 1988

at 7:30 PM

in Museum of Arts & History

1115 Sixth Street

Port Huron, MI

by Wayne Brusate

of Marysville, MI

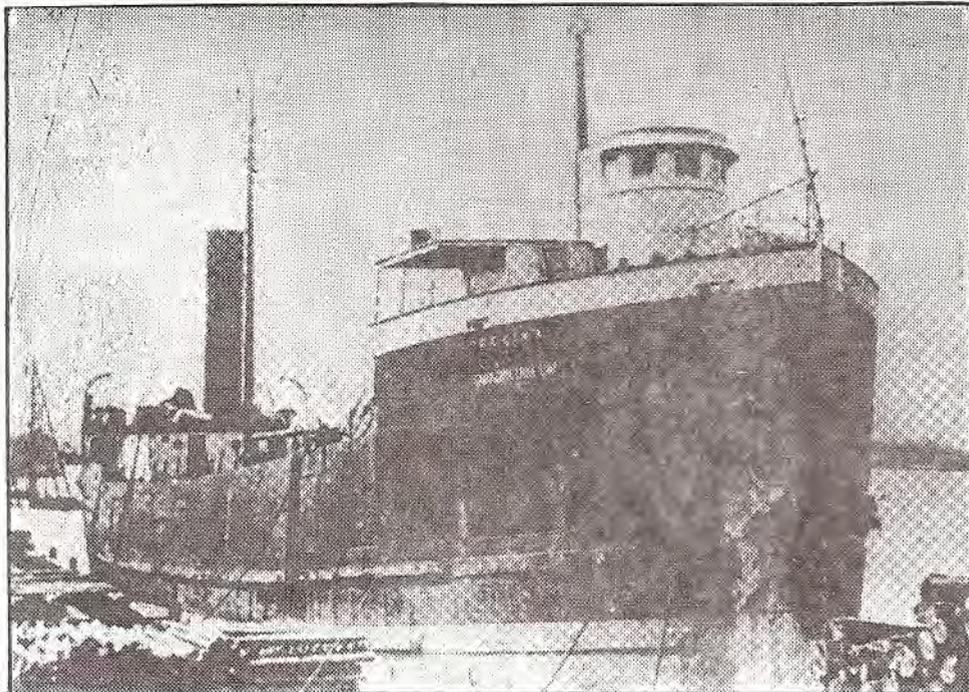
featuring:

1. The discovery of the Regina in 1986 and the salvaging of her artifacts.
2. The Storm of 1913
3. The Tug, "SPORT"

\* \* \*

To benefit the Museum fund-raising efforts, Bob McGreevy, marine artist, has made 10 colored prints of the "REGINA" available for sale. The prints are 19" X 28", at \$80.00 each, with a percentage of each purchase going to the Museum's Barrier-Free Fund.

These prints will be available at the Program meeting, Sat., Nov. 19, 1988 at the Museum.



SANILAC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### S.S. REGINA

The steamship Regina was built in 1907 by Arch McMillan and Sons, shipbuilder, Dumbarton, Scotland. She came directly to service in Canada as a package freighter carrying general cargo between Montreal, Quebec and Fort William, Ontario on the north shore of Lake Superior. She was specifically designed for what was then the maximum size a ship could be in the Welland Canal at 249.9 feet long, 42.6 feet wide, and 20.5 feet draft. Because of this she was one of several ships known as Canallers.

In November of 1913, Capt. Edward McConkey and his crew of about 20 to 25 men made a routine run North with a full load of cargo destined for Fort William and points West. The Regina left Sarnia and passed the mouth of the St. Clair River out into Lake Huron at about 5:30 AM on November 9. A storm was blowing and full gale warnings were up throughout the Great Lakes. The Regina had a heavy deck load of sewer pipe and hay, and her holds were loaded down with champagne, scotch, wine, whiskey and a large variety of other merchandise.

As the Regina got out into the Lake, the winds reached hurricane force at 70 miles per hour, and pushed the water

**Cont. on pg. 3 see "Regina"**

into 40 foot high mountains of frothing windblown seas. The Regina pushed on, struggling to ride out the storm. Later that day the winds suddenly came around and raced directly down the length of the trough of the sea. The combination of the enormous seas running NW to SE and the gale blowing from NNE to SSW proved too much for the Regina and seven other large freighters on Southern Lake Huron. The Great Storm of 1913 had claimed the lives of all crewmen on eight ships by November 10.

The Regina lay in the depths of Lake Huron until 1986. On July 1, professional diver, Wayne Brusate, was testing a new side scan sonar when he spotted a large sonar target. On the first dive, Brusate found the Regina. Over the next few years salvage permits were issued by the State of Michigan to Brusate, and financial backing was obtained from Freedom Marine Ltd., Vancouver, British Columbia. Salvage efforts in 1988 have just ended.

**MUSEUM of ARTS & HISTORY - BARRIER FREE FUND**

NAME : \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE : \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT OF DONATION : \_\_\_\_\_

Deductible for income tax purposes MICS # 3719

OR

PLEDGE OF GIFT OVER THREE

YEARS AT \$ \_\_\_\_\_

PER YEAR : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT PAID : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

BALANCE DUE : \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECKS  
PAYABLE TO :  
THE MUSEUM  
BARRIER-FREE FUND

WORKER'S NAME  
"LAKE HURON LORE"

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_

- \* Greater ease in moving exhibits and artifacts
- \* Freed space in existing building for new galleries
- \* Additional storage and administration space

The total cost of the Elevator Addition Project is \$410,000. \$310,000 has been raised through donations, and Out-State Equity Grant and Revenue Sharing Bloc Grants.

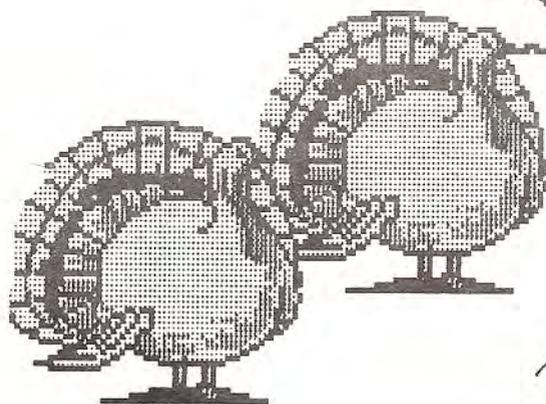
This leaves the project approximately \$100,000 short with construction nearly completed.

The elevator project will directly benefit Lake Huron Lore members by providing access to our own Lee Cooper Marine Gallery on the second floor. So, if you have not already done so, please send your tax deductible contribution to the: Port Huron Museum Barrier-Free Fund, 1115 Sixth Street, Port Huron, MI 48060.

Also check with your employer, as many firms will match donations of their employees.

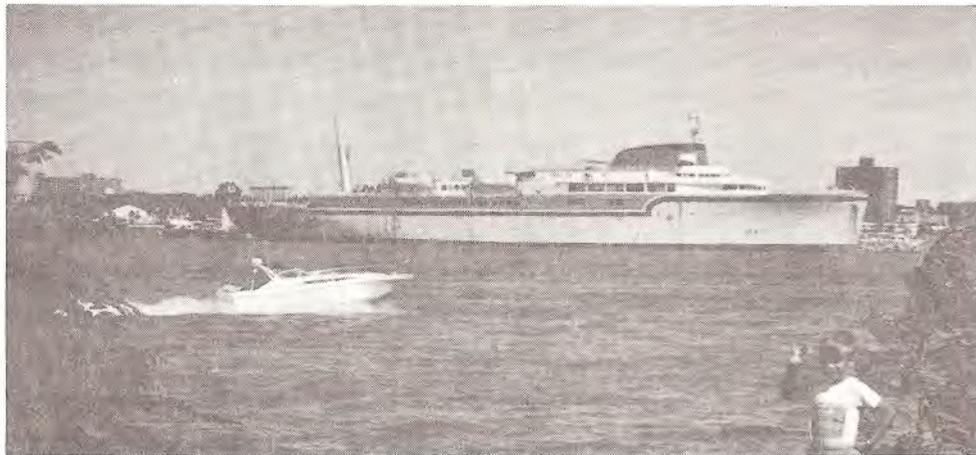
Complete the "employees" portion of the form and enclose it with your check.

**Happy  
Thanksgiving**



*Frank & Jean  
Tabor  
Your Co-editors of  
Lake Huron Lore Newsletter*

## AQUARAMA RETURNS TO BLUEWATER AREA



Built in 1945 at Chester, Pennsylvania (Hull #357) 495 X 71.7 X 20.9 as the MARINE STAR It was designed as a U. S. troop carrier and logged 180,000 ocean miles. Later it was acquired by the Sand Products Co., Detroit. Muskegon became the ship's home port Sept. 14, 1953 when it went there to undergo a re-fitting, the cost of which was reported as upwards of \$8 million. Refitting took two years. The work included installation of escalators which operated between the upper and club decks and elevators to serve all nine decks.

The AQUARAMA represented many firsts in marine history including:

- Automatic, push button controlled car entrance doors
- Closed circuit T.V. in the pilot house
- Pilot house controlled folding, sliding, magnetically-released fire doors
- an expanse of glare-free, heat resistant, panoramic picture windows
- Lighted flasher traffic signal control system on auto decks

The AQUARAMA'S present measurements are 520' long, 72' wide and seven stories high. It is single screw, turbine- propelled, oil-fired, 10,000 H.P. engine, with a cruising speed over 22 m.p.h. It's nine decks featured a 2,400 square foot dance floor, several bars, restaurants & lounges, two theaters for motion

Cont. on pg. 6, see "Aquarama"

## Aquarama, cont. from pg. 5

pictures and small stage productions, playroom for children, a sun deck and a carnival room. Strolling musicians serenaded the passengers.

On June 9-10, 1956 the AQUARAMA began a series of goodwill tours of Muskegon Lake which attracted 6000 passengers during the 2-day weekend. She then embarked on a summerlong tour of Great Lake ports that included docking in Milwaukee, Racine, Green Bay, Detroit and Cleveland. This "Lady of the Lakes" settled in Detroit to begin Lake Erie runs that were short-lived. Her enormous size made it difficult to maneuver and gave her a reputation of leaving port docks splintered & dented.

From 1958 to 1962 she carried passengers between Cleveland and Detroit.

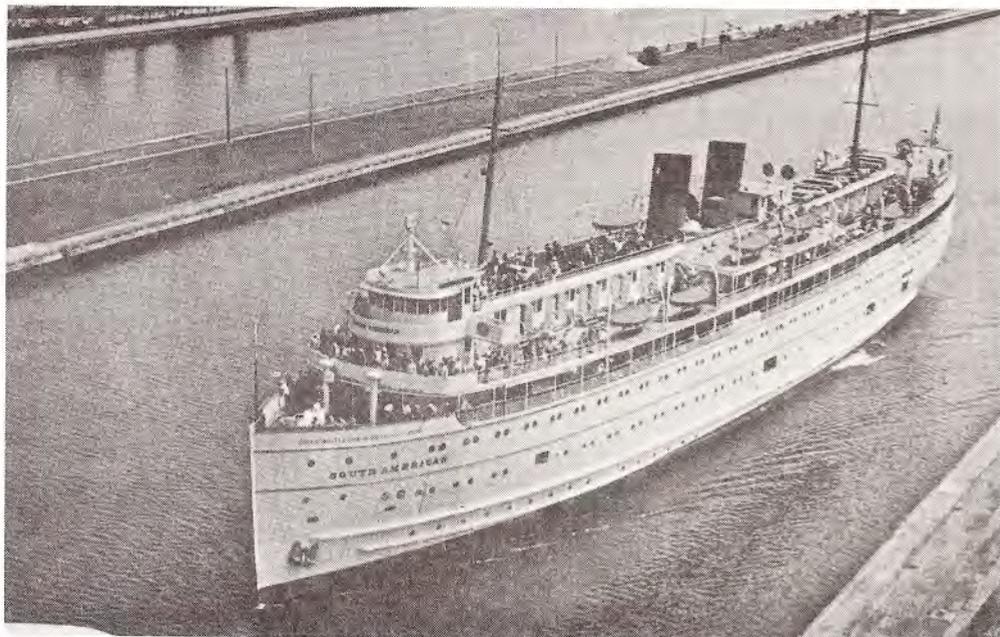
The AQUARAMA has a capacity for 2500 passengers and 200 automobiles. She presently sports a mid-50's Volkswagen microbus and a Ford baggage bus (which both appear to be in "mint" condition).

Muskegon welcomed the AQUARAMA back in Sept. 1963 for temporary storage that lasted 25 years.

In June, 1988 the AQUARAMA was moved, under tow of tugs, to the Sarnia waterfront to be moored alongside the sunken hull of the Sidney E. Smith (which sank June 5, 1972 in the St. Clair River and was later moved to form a portion of the Sarnia shoreline).

The plans of the present owners, a 23 member St. Thomas based consortium, are to convert the ship into a floating hotel and convention centre complete with 100 suites, ballroom, lounges and other amenities.

## GREAT LAKES QUEEN SAILS AGAIN



Update on the SS South American.

Excerpts from articles written by Ted K. Phelps-W8TP, Editor of "The Inland Seas Beacon".

SS South American - Hull No. 133 with U.S. Registry No. 212244, built 1914 at the Great Lakes Engineering Works, Ecorse, Michigan, 321' X 47.1' X 18.3' with gross tonnage - 2,662, net tonnage 1427. She had quadruple expansion engines and could carry 500 passengers.

Her officers and crew numbered 170. Her ship's photographer for many years was our dear friend, the late Harry Wolf. Ted Phelps, editor of the "Inland Seas Beacon", joined the South American crew, as Third Radio Officer, in 1939, when she was the flagship of the Chicago, Duluth and Georgian Bay Transit Co., of Detroit.

Her weekly ports of call were Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Midland Owen Sound, Ontario, Mackinac Island, Michigan & Chicago. She sailed this route until 1941, when she omitted Chicago and cruised from Buffalo to Duluth. 1967 was the South American's most successful season, carrying more than 10,000 passengers on 18 trips between Cleveland and Montreal's popular Expo '67, but she was decommissioned in

**Cont. on pg. 8 see SS South American**

**South American, cont. from pg. 7**

Oct '67 and sold to the Seafarer's Intl. Union. She was towed from Montreal to Piney Point, MD where plans to convert her to a dormitory were dashed by Coast Guard regulations against wooden superstructures.

The ship was taken to Newport News, VA where her engines were removed and she remained there for seven years. She was then sold to Ships Inc, of Camden, N.J. in 1974. The South Jersey Port Authority seized her and she laid virtually abandoned at its Broadway Terminal. Since June 1988, the "South American/WGCW" has been pumped out, ballasted and towed 120 miles on July 16, 1988 to a Baltimore shipyard. There she will undergo further repair to make her seaworthy again for towing back to the Great Lakes. A group of Michigan investors plans to convert her into a 100 room floating hotel on the Detroit River.

We will be following the developments of this "rescue" project as the ship is expected to be towed to Detroit in the spring of '89 where restoration is expected to take at least 18 months.



*Season's*

*Greetings!*

*Frank & Jean Tabor  
co-editors*

