

# THE LIGHTSHIP



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Vol. XIX, No. 3

May / June, 1998

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Membership Fee (annual) - \$10.00 (U.S. funds)  
Send to: L.H.L. Port Huron Museum, 1115 6th St.,  
Port Huron, MI 48060 - 5346. Phone (810) 982-0891

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#### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President - Fred Miller  
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Terry Doyon  
Gareth McNabb  
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Andy Rosales  
Jean Tabor

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our first joint dinner meeting with our sister organization, the Marine Historical Society of Detroit, was held on Saturday, March 14th at the Pt. Huron Museum. Over 70 members & their guests attended. Following the dinner, member Bob Campbell gave a slide presentation entitled "Ruth Stevens - Secretary with a Camera" which also included several slides from his own collection. Our raffle prizes, donated by L.H.L. President Fred Miller, were two framed ship photos taken by the late Harold Fricke of Port Huron, and were won by Jennifer Lowe & Jim Gallant.

**Mark your calendar** - Our next dinner meeting will be held on Saturday, May 9th at 6:00 p.m. in the Port Huron Museum. The evening's entertainment, provided by fellow member Dick Wicklund, will be a slide show entitled: "Duluth - Superior, My Old Home Port". The cost is \$10:00 (U.S. funds) per person with checks or money orders made payable to "Museum Guild" and mailed to "Dinner Meeting" (Museum address). Invitations were sent in early April to all L.H.L. members. Please note, due to the Museum's scheduled showing of the Smithsonian Exhibition in the South Gallery (our usual room), beginning on May 2nd, it will be necessary for us to hold our dinner meeting in the lower level area of the museum. It would be advisable to use the door at the rear parking lot, and **not** the main entrance. Also, a brief meeting will be held that evening to elect three board members for a three year term of office beginning June, 1998. The present incumbents whose terms expire this June, Terry Doyon, Karen Gorski and Cy Hudson, are all seeking re-election. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

**New Members** : L.H.L. wishes to welcome on board Andy Sykora of Rocky River, OH, Jim Sprunt of St. Catharines, ON, Jim Gallant of Hespeler, ON, Robert Lowe of Marine City, MI, Dale Lewis of Pt. Huron, MI,

David Figgs of Marine City, MI, Ken & Sandy Barrant of St. Clair, MI, Carl & Diane Breidenich of Pt. Huron, MI, Robert Strauss of West Allis, WI, and Al Hart of Bay Village, OH.

**B.Y.O.S.** - In response to numerous member's requests after the enjoyable "Bring Your Own Slides" meeting, held last January 31st, there will be another meeting of this kind on Saturday, Oct. 17th at 7:00 p.m. at the Port Huron Museum. More details will be announced closer to the October date.

**Marine Artifacts** - At the present time, the **Lee M. Cooper** Marine Gallery in the Port Huron Museum is undergoing a major inventory program by Michelle Measel, Curator of Collections with the assistance of Robert Fraser-Lee. The Lake Huron Lore Board of Directors invites anyone who, in the past, has donated any marine artifact, to come to the Museum or contact Michelle so their donation and name maybe recognized in the appropriate manner. Michelle can be reached at the Museum (810) 982-0891 during business hours, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

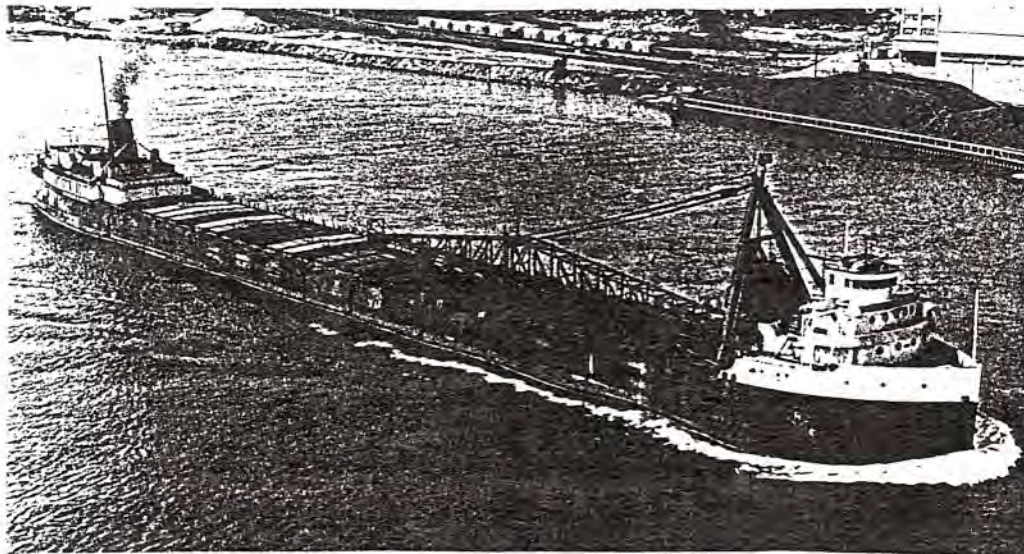
**Mariner's Memorial Service** - The U. S. Merchant Marine Veterans, World War II (Michigan Chapter) cordially extends an invitation to all of our members to attend the Mariner's Memorial Service at the Holy Cross Church, South Water Street, Marine City, MI, at 11:00 a.m., Saturday, May 16th, 1998. Following the Ceremonies, which include the laying of a wreath on the St. Clair River, everyone is invited to join together for fellowship and food, prepared by the Lady Mariners, in the church's Activity Center.

**Volunteers Required** - The Port Huron Lightship is an ever increasingly popular attraction on our scenic St. Clair River waterfront. Since it opened in August of 1990, over 86,800 visitors have taken the opportunity to walk the decks of Lightship 103, as she was once officially known as. However, this would not have been possible without the hours of service by all the dedicated Lightship volunteers, led by Capt. Ted Richardson of Marysville. With the summer season, and plenty of tourists, now upon us, volunteers of all types are greatly needed. Briefly, there are three groups:

- 1) A year-round maintenance working group with hours from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm, Tuesdays & Thursdays.
- 2) Guides for public visitors during the Lightship's opening hours: June, July and August - 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm., open 5 days each week (closed Mondays & Tuesdays).  
May & September - weekends only - 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm.
- 3) Guides to assist with groups of 15 school children who visit the Lightship on school days between 10:00 am and 1:00 pm, Monday to Friday during May, June, September and October.

Any hours you can volunteer to the Lightship would be greatly appreciated by Capt. Ted. For further details, please contact the Port Huron Museum at (810) 982-0891 between 9:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

NAME  
THIS  
SHIP



\* See Answer  
on Pg. 8 \*

## The untold story of Sarnia's role in A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

By Cathy Dobson of The Sarnia Observer

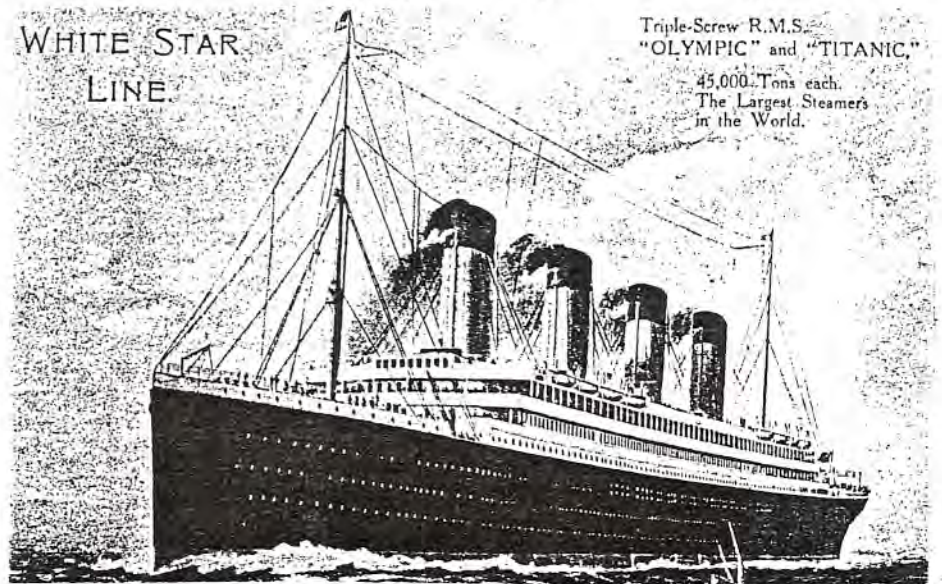
In the tragic days immediately after the RMS *Titanic* was lost, millions of people waited to see the survivor's list. Most of the Canadians onboard the luckless ship were from Winnipeg and Montreal. But one Sarnia family also waited anxiously to discover the fate of one of their own.

James McCrie appears to have been the only local man on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*. He was 35 at the time he sailed as a second-class passenger on the largest ship the world had ever seen. His wife Maude (nee Brown) and his three daughters were living in Sarnia. They hadn't seen McCrie for about 18 months since he had been hired by a foreign company to drill for oil in Egypt. He had taken several such trips over the years. Like hundreds of foreign drillers from Lambton, he returned home periodically before heading off for other adventures.

His niece, Pauline Bruton, now lives on Rokeby Line and wasn't born when the luxury liner went down on April 14, 1912. But she recalls her father, Jack McCrie, talking about his brother. "My dad said Jim was so interesting, that he would come back home from those trips and tell so many good stories." But McCrie never returned from Egypt. He was one of more than 1,500 who didn't make it into *Titanic's* lifeboats that fateful night. Just how he got passage on the infamous voyage is debatable. Bruton tells a story she remembers from her childhood. "I heard the company gave him a ticket on the *Titanic* as a bonus," she says.

Her brother, Bill McCrie, recalls a similar tale that suggests his uncle demanded a ticket on the boat as "one of the perks of the job". But the most likely story is documented at the Oil Museum of Canada where a photograph of James McCrie and his colleagues is on display. McCrie is identified as a Mandaumin driller in the photo. He sits near a Petrolia driller named Gus Slack who was supposedly with him in Southampton. The two men were on furlough and Slack had a ticket on the *Titanic*. "We think Gus Slack offered James McCrie his ticket because James wife was ill," says museum curator Donna McGuire. "At the time, all the tickets were sold out but Gus decided to go visit a friend somewhere in England and give up his ticket." Whatever the case, there's no doubt McCrie was enjoying the luxury of second class when the great ship struck an iceberg and started to sink in the North Atlantic.

On April 19, 1914, seven days after the disaster, The Sarnia Weekly Observer reported: "There is just a possibility that a Sarnia man in the person of James M. McCrie, oil operator from North Christina Street, may be one of the passengers on the ill-fated steamer *Titanic* which sank to doom early Monday morning." The newspaper reported that McCrie's contract had expired in Egypt and he was on his way home to Sarnia. "A letter recently received from him by Mrs. McCrie announced his arrival in England and also conveyed the information that he intended to remain over in England a week in order to make the passage across the ocean on the new steamer *Titanic*. "So far Mrs. McCrie has not received any information contrary to the above and grave fears are entertained that Mr. McCrie may have been one of the passengers on the ill-fated steamer," The Observer sadly reported.



No articles were printed when the McCrie family finally got word that James was not among the survivors. However, on May 13, 1912 a letter to the editor suggests that the community was rallying to help the widow and her girls. "I was glad to see in yesterday's issue that a subscription list has been opened for the family of the late James McCrie who lost his life in the *Titanic* disaster," the letter reads. "I would like to suggest that The Observer office receive subscriptions as well as the banks. Let us all do our duty and consider it a privilege to help. This is our way of showing our sympathy for the one bereaved family belonging to our town. Other places are doing their share and I feel Sarnia will feel glad to do her own.." The letter is signed only "A Sympathizer".

Bruton says she has fond memories of McCrie's widow, Maude, who often visited her home and attended family reunions after her husband's death. She raised her daughters, Irene, Frances and Elsie, on her own and never remarried. Eventually, all four moved to Michigan and contact was lost, according to Bruton. Several distant cousins, nieces and nephews remain in Sarnia / Lambton but none have any photos or memorabilia. A second Bill McCrie of Sarnia is a distant cousin and says no babies in the McCrie family were named James for several generations. "It was probably superstition," he said

The Editor wishes to thank Cathy Dobson who kindly gave L.H.L. permission to print her article, which appeared in the July 19, 1997 edition of The Observer.

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## NAUTICAL NEWS

### WELLAND CANAL OPENING DAY

The 1998 Welland Canal Navigation Season was officially opened at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 24th when Upper Lakes Group Inc.'s *Canadian Leader* entered Lock # 3 as the first upbound vessel for the 1998 sailing season. Captain Mark Leaney was presented with the traditional top hat during a ceremony held on the lock's west wall. He, along with Claudin Tremblay, the *Leader's* Chief Engineer, received several gifts and mementos from local dignitaries to mark the occasion. The ceremony was followed by a lunch served in the restaurant located above the Lock # 3 Complex. The ship had left her winter berth in Toronto on the 23rd and was travelling through the Canal, en route, in ballast, to Duluth, Minnesota to load grain for the Cargill Elevator in Baie Comeau, Quebec. This is the second time that the *Canadian Leader* was honored as the first ship through the Welland Canal. The vessel opened the Canal on April 1st, 1976.

### OTHER OPENING DAYS

- 1) On March 25th, the *Walter J. McCarthy Jr.* opened the Soo Locks for the 1998 season when she entered the Poe Lock, downbound, at 12:01 a.m.
- 2) On March 26th, the St. Lawrence Seaway's 39th shipping season was opened when the M/V *Algobay* entered the Eisenhower Lock, downbound for Sept Iles, Quebec, where it is scheduled to load a cargo of iron ore to be delivered to Detroit, MI.

### INLAND STEEL SOLD

On March 17th, 1998, ISPAT International, a Rotterdam-based steel company with operations in Europe, Trinidad, Mexico and Canada, announced their purchase of Inland Steel. The purchase agreement includes Inland's steel mills, taconite range and their 3-vessel fleet, the *Joseph L. Block, Edward L. Ryerson & Wilfred Sykes*. ISPAT will probably have to sell the fleet or risk running afoul of The Jones Act, a U.S. law dating back to 1920. The Act requires that U.S. flagged ships be at least 75 percent American owned if they operate between U.S. ports. Inland's staff was uncertain at the time what would become of the company's three lakers.

### ANNUAL MARINE FLEA MARKET

The Lake Huron Lore Marine Flea Market will be held on Saturday, June 6th at the Port Huron Museum from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Dealers from Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin & Ontario will have a wide selection of nautical memorabilia, books, photos, slides, artifacts, etc.

### **FIRE CAUSES ESTIMATED \$ 500,000 DAMAGE**

Algoma Central Marine's self-unloader, the M/V *Algosoo*, suffered an estimated \$500,000 damage when a fire broke out in the ship's hull, late Saturday, Feb. 28th. The vessel was tied up at her winter berth at Welland, Ontario and was undergoing maintenance when the fire broke out deep in the ship's hold. Several painters were inside one of the ship's cargo holds around 11:00 p.m. Saturday when a painter's lamp appeared to fall into some paint and exploded, setting fire to the ship's rubber conveyor belt and nearby electrical wiring. The painters escaped and no injuries were reported. The *Algosoo* was damaged by fire once before, when, on March 7th, 1986, welding sparks ignited a conveyor belt in the stern area and caused extensive damage that required several months to repair. This time, Algoma officials hope to have the damage repaired in time for the *Algosoo* to begin her 1998 season in early April as scheduled.

### **FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF**

This new book, **Forgotten Empress**, by author David Zeni, tells of the plight of the *Empress of Ireland*, a Canadian Pacific owned passenger steamer, which sank 14 minutes after colliding with the Norwegian collier, *Storstad* on May 29, 1914. The tragedy occurred when the two ships met in heavy fog off the port of Rimouski, Quebec, located on the south shore of the lower St. Lawrence River, resulting in the deaths of 1012 people. This book also reveals the fact that there was a greater loss of passengers, 840, on the Empress, than the 807 passengers that perished when the famous Titanic went down in the North Atlantic two years earlier. The remaining casualties on both ships, of course, were the crews. This book has 224 pages with 100 photos and an 8-page color section. The cost is \$40.00 (U.S.) and can be obtained by sending to: "Forgotten Empress", P.O. Box 1153, Provincetown, MA 02657. \* For orders outside U.S. include \$8.00 postage \*

### **F. Y. I.**

**Ten Years Ago....** On June 15, 1988, at 6:00 in the morning, the *Coudres-de-L'ile*, a 182' Canadian coastal vessel, sank in the St. Lawrence River near the port of Les Escoumins, Quebec. The vessel was upbound in dense fog, carrying a cargo of scrap steel, loaded in Sept Iles, Quebec, bound for Montreal, when she collided with Algoma Central Marine's 730 ft. *Algowest*. The coastal vessel, built at Waterhuizen, Netherlands in 1954, sank in a matter of minutes with nine of her ten member crew being rescued from the 40 degree water. The ship's 27 year old female cook, Francoise Villeneuve, was lost and was thought to have been trapped in the ship and unable to escape. The *Algowest* proceeded to Baie Comeau, unloaded her cargo of grain, then sailed to Port Weller, Ont. to have her minor bow damage repaired.

**Twenty Years Ago....** On June 6th, 1978, U.S. Steel's *Leon Fraser* "lost" her rudder in the St. Clair River while upbound near the Bluewater Bridge. Her Captain, Robert Petrovski, and his crew, were able to bring the ship under control by using the bow thruster and guide the ship up into Lake Huron where they dropped anchor outside the shipping channel. The following day, tugs arrived and took the *Fraser* in tow to Lorain, Ohio for repairs. Malcolm Marine was hired to locate the missing rudder. The following September, Malcolm Marine located and retrieved the rudder. When it was raised to the surface, it was found that a casting which held the rudder in place, had broken, allowing it to drop off.

**As of March 31st**, 516 people had visited the Huron Lightship since the New Year. This large number is credited to the mild winter that we experienced.

**On March 30th**, the *Lady Hamilton* (ex-Saskatchewan Pioneer), under Hong Kong registry, passed upbound under the Bluewater Bridge making her the first salt water vessel to sail through the Bluewater area since the start of 1998 sailing season. The vessel was bound for Thunder Bay to load flax seed. Once loaded, the *Lady Hamilton* proceeded down through the system, stopping at Sorel, Quebec to "top off" her cargo, bound for Germany. As of April 15th, a total of thirteen "salties" had passed upbound through our area. *Lake Huron Lore* would like to thank Bill Wager, Chief Dispatcher of the Port Huron Pilot Station, for this information.

The Editor would like to thank L.H.L. members Norm Eakins, Dorothy Wallin, Jim Hoffman, Cy Hudson & Skip Gillham for their contributions to the *Nautical News*.

## Visitors Attendance to the Huron Lightship Museum

By Cy Hudson

The Lightship was acquired by the City of Port Huron by mandate of area residents and was enshrined at Pine Grove Park in 1972. Later, in 1989, the *Huron* was designated a National Historic Landmark. In August of 1990, the *Huron Lightship* Museum was opened to the public for visitation. The following is a list of visitors for each year since the Lightship opened:

1990	4,193		1994	13,426
1991	10,882		1995	12,679
1992	10,355		1996	14,868
1993	7,729		1997	12,674

\* 1993 The lower attendance for this year was caused by a nearby road repair project which lasted for some time.

\* 1995 The lower attendance for this year was caused by a road closure during the construction of the new Bridge.

**\* Thanks to member Don Thurow for his contribution to the above article \***

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### Why Do We Say It ? (# 2 )

By Cy Hudson

#### "Hard Up"

No doubt, we've all been "hard up" at one time or another in our life. It was originally a nautical term. To put the helm "hard up" is to put it as far as possible to windward - in order to turn the ship's head away from the wind. So today, one who has very little money and cannot face a financial storm but must turn away, is said to be "hard up".

#### "Longshoreman"

What is the "long" doing in the word longshoreman ? In the past when ships were unloaded, the sailors passed the goods from the ships to men "along" the shore - and they were called "long - shore - men".

#### "Son of a Gun"

Where did we get the expression "son of a gun" ? From British sea slang. At one time the sailors in the British Royal Navy were allowed to take their wives with them on long sea voyages. A child born to a sailor's wife at sea was called a "son of a gun" - because it was literally born beneath the ship's guns. At a later date, the term was extended to include those conceived aboard the ship - and not always by a wife.

Bibliography - "Why Do We Say It" - Published by Castle Book Sales. Inc. Secaucus, NJ 1985

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# BLUEWATER AREA SHIPWRECKS

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## Wexford

By Skip Gillham

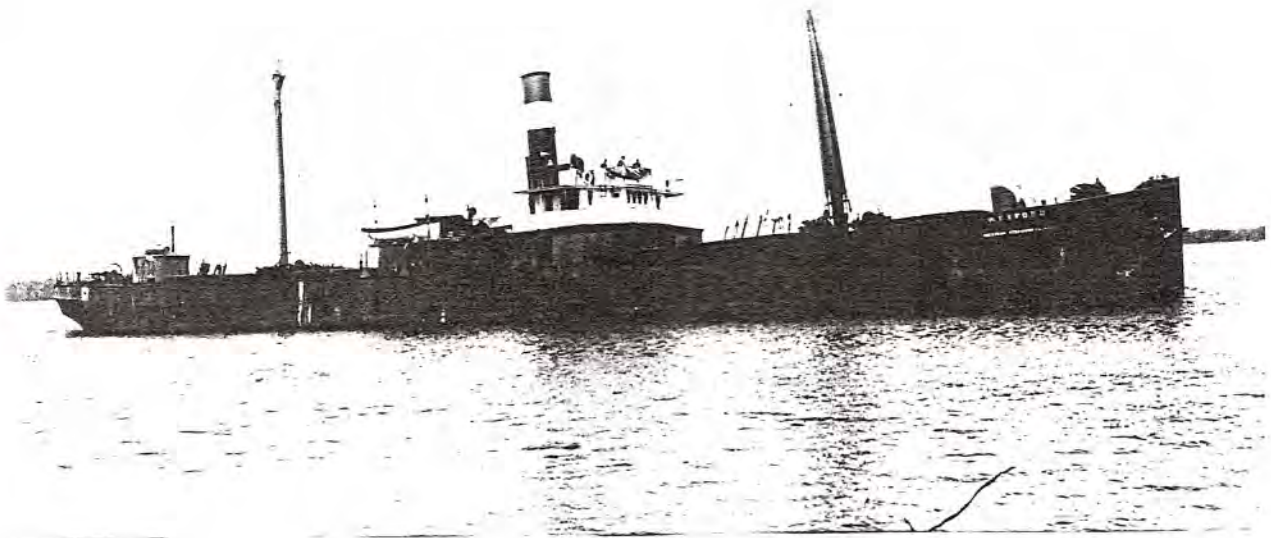
The famous storm of November, 1913 mounted a tremendous casualty list around the Great Lakes. The prolonged high winds, waves, and blinding snow made navigation treacherous. Nowhere was this more evident than on Lake Huron. Here, eight ships disappeared with all hands and among those lost was the *Wexford*.

This vessel was built at Sunderland, England, in 1883 for deep sea freight service. The 257 foot long, 2,104 gross ton vessel was renamed *Elise* in 1890 before regaining the original name of *Wexford* in 1894.

It appears that the ship was purchased by Bassett of Collingwood, Ontario and came to the Great Lakes in 1903. Six years later it was noted as part of the Western Steamship Company.

*Wexford* was carrying a load of steel rails when she disappeared. The freighter is believed to have gone down on November 8, 1913. Distress calls heard off Goderich, Ont. that night were attributed to the vessel but conditions prevented a safe approach to the shelter of the harbor. All on board (reports vary from 17 to 22) were lost and the ship was insured for \$107,300.

One crewman apparently missed the trip and was spared. Although several of the ships lost on Lake Huron in those frightening hours have since been located on the bottom, the final resting place of the *Wexford* remains a mystery. Discovery, however, with all the modern techniques available, is only a matter of time.



\* The *Wexford* underway in 1912 \*  
Milwaukee Public Library

# SALTY SPOTLIGHT

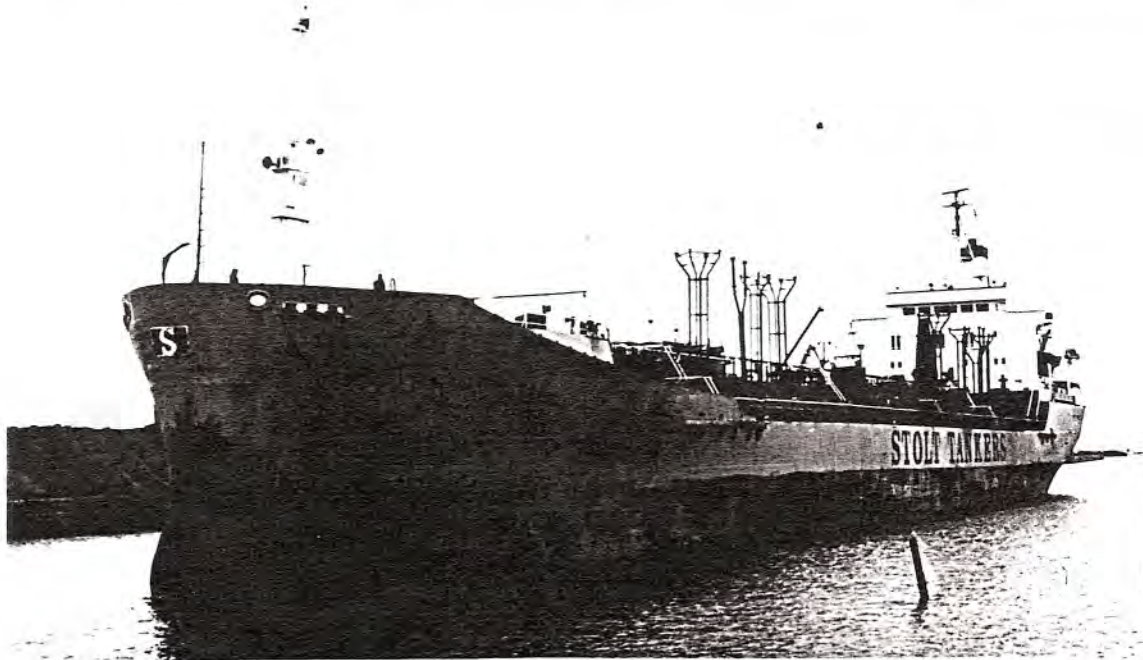
## M/T STOLT CASTLE

By D. R. (Doug) Schilz

- Built in 1970 by N.V. Boelwarf S.A. at Temse, Belgium as Hull # 1453.
- L.O.A. - 520'-0" Breadth - 72'-6" Depth - 40'-0"
- 11,240 GRT Motor Tanker ( Parcel Tanker )

Launched as *Stolt Castle*, a name she would carry for her entire sailing career, the vessel was owned by several different companies through the years, but was always managed by Stolt-Nielsen Inc. The *Stolt Castle* was referred to as Normess Class or B-18 because of her 18,000 DWT.

The vessel was a regular visitor to the Sarnia / Port Huron area, trading between Europe and North America. Her last Great Lakes voyage was in April, 1992. The *Stolt Castle* was sold for scrap and arrived at Alang, India, under her own power, on August 29, 1992. She was beached next to her sister ship, *Stolt Sydness*, and at 1645 hrs. local time, "finished with main engine for the very last time" was entered into her log by her Master.



\* Downbound at Port Colborne, Ont. on Oct. 19, 1991 \*  
( Terry Doyon photo )

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### Answer to Name This Ship (Pg. 2)

The steamer *Charles C. West* U.S. 225066 - built in 1925 by The Manitowoc Shipbuilding Co. at Manitowoc, Wisconsin, as Hull # 216. Dimensions were 592' x 60' x 31' 6644 GRT. Built for Rockport S/S Co. (Reiss S/S Co. Manager), this vessel was the first twin-screw, self-unloading bulk carrier built on the Great Lakes. The *West* was involved in numerous groundings as well as collisions with docks, lock walls & other ships throughout her career. She was acquired by Boland & Cornelius in 1969 and was eventually scrapped at Buffalo, N.Y. in 1979.