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2019 Season-Opening News

The 2019 season has gotten off to a good start this year so far, officially opening on March 25 with the opening of commercial traffic at the Soo Locks. The Welland Canal opened on March 22. The first upbound ship at the Soo was Interlake Steamship's *Stewart J. Cort*, and the first downbound



vessel was their *Kaye E. Barker*. The *Algoma Spirit* was the first downbound vessel through the Welland Canal with CSL's *Whitefish Bay* being the first upbound ship.

On another note, this season there will be a few new ships to watch out for. First is the *Algoma Conveyor*, Algoma Central's recently-completed Equinox

Class self-unloader. Next off are Algoma's two new tankers, *Algonorth* and *Algoterra*. McKeil Marine also purchased two tankers late last season. Port City Marine's cement barge, *Commander*, had her conversion completed near the end of last season with enough time to squeeze in a few trips before winter layup. In mid-2020, VanEnkevort Tug & Barge's new tug/barge unit, *Michigan Trader/Laura L. VanEnkevort* will enter service. The barge *Michigan Trader* is currently being constructed at Bay Shipbuilding.

In late January, while undergoing a 5-year inspection and paint job, Grand River Navigation's barge *James L. Kuber* was renamed *Maumee*. Their tugboat *Invincible* will soon undergo a major overhaul to make her suitable to push the barge *Menominee*, replacing the aging *Olive L. Moore*. She will be ready later this season.

Algoma Central Corporation's two oldest active vessels, the *John D. Leitch* and *Tim S. Dool*, both underwent their five-year hull inspections and were painted in Algoma's new hull paint scheme. They will see service for at least the next few seasons.

This year, two laid up vessels will be returning to service. American Steamship Company's *American Courage*, which has been laid up at Bay Shipbuilding since late 2015 will come back out this season. It was announced just this week that the *Arthur M. Anderson* will receive a hull inspection and a new paint job, and be ready to sail this summer.

So far, only two ships have been lost to the scrapyard. The *Algowood* and *Capt. Henry Jackman* have both been retired and await a tow to the Turkish scrapyard in Montreal. Later this season, it is expected that the tug *Olive L. Moore* will be sent to the scrapyard after being replaced by the *Invincible*.

M/V St. Clair Fire

On the night of Saturday, February 16, 2019, at about 9 pm, a severe fire broke out aboard the self-unloader *St. Clair* while she was laid up at Toledo. The *St. Clair* was docked at the TORCO Lakefront docks undergoing some winter maintenance, but not at the time the fire broke out. It is unknown what caused the fire. The fire burned for about two days. Several fire departments were on the scene fighting the flames. From what is currently known, the fire burned the vessel's self-unloading conveyor belt, which runs the length of the ship underneath the cargo hold and through the aft deckhouse.



Not only that, but it destroyed a good part of the accommodations block, as well as burning the fuel bunker. Most of the aft section of the vessel is a burnt out hulk, and steel warping is evident. It is currently unknown the total extent of the damage, and when or whether she will return to service. It is all dependent on economic demand, the extent of the damage, whether or not she is repairable, and the cost to repair her. It is truly an unfortunate incident for such a young ship. The *St. Clair* was built in 1976 for American Steamship Company, her current owner.

2018 Season in Review

Prior to the end of the 2017 season, Algoma Central welcomed their first Equinox self-unloader, *Algoma Niagara*. In 2018, they welcomed two more, first the *Algoma Innovator*, the first Equinox River Class self-unloader, and the *Algoma Sault*, sister to the *Algoma Niagara* and the second 740' Equinox self-unloader. With the new boats came the mass exodus of the Algoma fleet. The *Algolake*, *Algoma Olympic*, *Algorail*, *Algosteel*, *Algoway*, and *Victo (American Victory)* were all sold for scrap. Not part of the Algoma fleet, the Canadian cement carriers *English River* and *Stephen B. Roman* were also sold for scrap. Their trade routes were taken over by the newly-converted *McKeil Spirit*, *NACC Argonaut*, and *NACC Quebec*.

After the big sale of the *Adam E. Cornelius*, *American Valor*, *American Victory*, and *Buffalo* to Algoma Central Corp. at the end of 2017, the *Cornelius* and *Buffalo* were renamed while the *Victory* was scrapped. The *Adam E. Cornelius* was renamed *Algoma Compass* while the *Buffalo* was renamed *Algoma Buffalo*. It is unknown what Algoma has in store for the *American Valor*. She remains laid up at Toledo, Ohio.

Toledo Winter Lay-Up 2019 Photos



Edgar B. Speer



American Century and Sarah Spencer



Great Republic and St. Clair

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Stewart J. Cort photo by Gerald Heck

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