FREIGHTERS

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THE CRUISE SHIPS ARE BACK!

EDITOR'S PICK

SHORT ARTICLES ON VARIOUS HAPPENINGS AROUND THE LAKES

ALGOMA ANNOUNCES NAME OF UPCOMING SHIP

MAY 3, 2022

Algoma Central Corporation recently announced the name of their next Equinox Class 740' self-unloader. The new ship will be named *Algoma Bear*, and is expected to enter service in 2024. Algoma signed a contract with Yangzijiang Shipyard in China in June 2021 to construct the new vessel, which is the first of the "Equinox 2.0" class. She will feature new hull updates similar to those on the recent *Captain Henry Jackman*, such as a dual-rudder stern and lighter weight hatch covers, in addition to an updated cargo hold shape to improve the flow of cargo to her unloading belts. *Algoma Bear* will replace the *Algoma Transport* of 1979 when she enters service in 2024. ◘

SS BADGER BEGINS 69TH SEASON

MAY 12, 2022

The SS *Badger* made her first trip of the 2022 season on May 12, 2022, marking the beginning of her 69th season of operation. She sailed from Ludington, MI, to Manitowoc, WI, and back on the first trip.

Over this past winter, the *Badger* was completely sandblasted and repainted with a new coat of her signature black and white with the red and grey stripes, amounting to over 800 gallons of paint. Her crew quarters were renovated over the winter as well.

The *Badger* will be making two round trips daily between Ludington and Manitowoc beginning on June 10 and running through September 7.

LEE A. TREGURTHA AND ALPENA CELEBRATE 80 SEASONS

JUNE 9, 2022

Lee A. Tregurtha emerged from her long winter's nap on June 9, 2022. She departed her lay-up berth at Fraser Shipyards in Superior, WI, bound for Marquette, MI, to load iron ore. After returning to Superior for repairs, she ➲was back on her way at the beginning of her 80th season.

SS *Badger* at Manitowoc, WI, May 12, 2022. Photo: Brock Johnson

Lee A. Tregurtha and *Alpena* both are celebrating their 80th season this year. Both photos: Isaac Pennock

Lee A. Tregurtha was originally built in 1942 as the T3-S-A1 tanker USS *Chiwawa*, serving time in World War II as an oiler in the U.S. Navy. In 1947 she was sold into civilian service as a tanker, operating until 1961, when she was purchased by Cleveland-Cliffs to be converted into a Great Lakes bulk carrier. Her bow and stern sections were saved and mated with a new midbody, and she was rechristened *Walter A. Sterling*. She was lengthened in 1976, and converted to a self-unloader two years later. She was acquired by Interlake Steamship Co. in 1989 where she received her current name.

Lee A. Tregurtha is not the only ➲ship on the Great Lakes celebrating an 80th birthday this season, either. The SS *Alpena* was built in 1942 by Great Lakes Engineering Works as the *Leon Fraser* for U.S. Steel. She was one of the five AA Class "Supers" built at the beginning of World War II for U.S. Steel. She operated in the ore trades until she was laid up at Lorain, OH, in 1981. In 1989 she was towed to Superior, WI, where she was shortened by 120' and converted into a self-unloading cement carrier by Fraser Shipyards. She was delivered to Inland Lakes Management in June 1991 under the name *Alpena*. In December 2015 *Alpena* suffered a catastrophic fire in her stern, but was repaired and returned to service.

Both of these classic ladies still continue to sail the Great Lakes.◘

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News in photos

Some of the latest news captured in photos

USS *Minneapolis-Saint Paul* dressed up for her commissioning in Duluth. Photo: David Schauer

USS *Minneapolis-Saint Paul* commissioned at *Duluth, MN*

The U.S. Navy's newest vessel, the USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul, was officially commissioned in Duluth, MN, at the Clure Public Marine Terminal on May 21, 2022. She is the 21st Littoral Combat Ship (LCS-21) delivered to the U.S. Navy, and will be stationed at Naval Station Mayport in Jacksonville, FL. The USS Minneapolis-Saint Paul was built by Fincantieri Marinette Marine in Marinette, WI, and is 387 feet long. As a Littoral Combat Ship, she is designed to operate at high speeds in a near-shore environment and act as a multi-mission platform with capabilities to launch smaller craft and carry helicopters.◘

Looking down the barrel of the deck gun. Photo: David Schauer

The crew walks out to the vessel. Photo: David Schauer

Morning sunrise on the USS *Minneapolis-Saint Paul*. Photo: David Schauer

THE CRUISE SHIPS ARE BACK!

CRUISE SHIPS RETURN TO THE GREAT LAKES FOR THE 2022 SEASON
JUNE 14, 2022

Ocean Navigator upbound on the St. Marys River, June 8, 2022. Photo: Brendan Falkowski

After a two-season interruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, the cruise ships are back on the Great Lakes, and there's quite a few of them! The first cruise ship to arrive on the lakes this season was the *Viking Octantis*, passing up through the St. Lawrence Seaway in late April. Several familiar ships will be sailing the system this year, including the *Pearl Mist, Hamburg,* and *Ocean Voyager* and *Ocean Navigator*. *Ocean Voyager* and *Ocean Navigator* are the former *Victory I* and *Victory II*, respectively after Victory Cruise Lines was rebranded as American Queen Voyages.

New ships this year include Hapag-Lloyd Cruises' *Hanseatic Inspiration*, which will come later this season, along with Ponant's *Le Bellot* and *Le Dumont d'Urville*, both sisters to the *Le Champlain* which visited in 2019. *Ocean Explorer*, owned by Vantage Cruises, is another newcomer along with Viking Cruises' new expedition ship *Viking Octantis*. The *Octantis* will be joined by her new sister ship *Viking Polaris* in the 2023 season. Both expedition ships are 672' long, making them the largest cruise ships to sail the Great Lakes, and carry a fleet of Military Pro Zodiac rigid hull inflatable boats and ocean kayaks, as well as two 6-person submarines.

For cruise enthusiasts or ship watchers, there are plenty of new cruise ships to watch out for on the Great Lakes this summer! ☐

Ocean Explorer on the St. Marys River, May 17, 2022. Photo: Roger LeLievre

Viking Octantis at anchor off Mackinac Island, May 19, 2022. Photo: Daniel Lindner

Viking Octantis off of Alpena, MI, May 18, 2022.
Photo: Isaac Pennock

Pearl Mist at Muskegon, MI, July 2019. Photo: Brendan Falkowski

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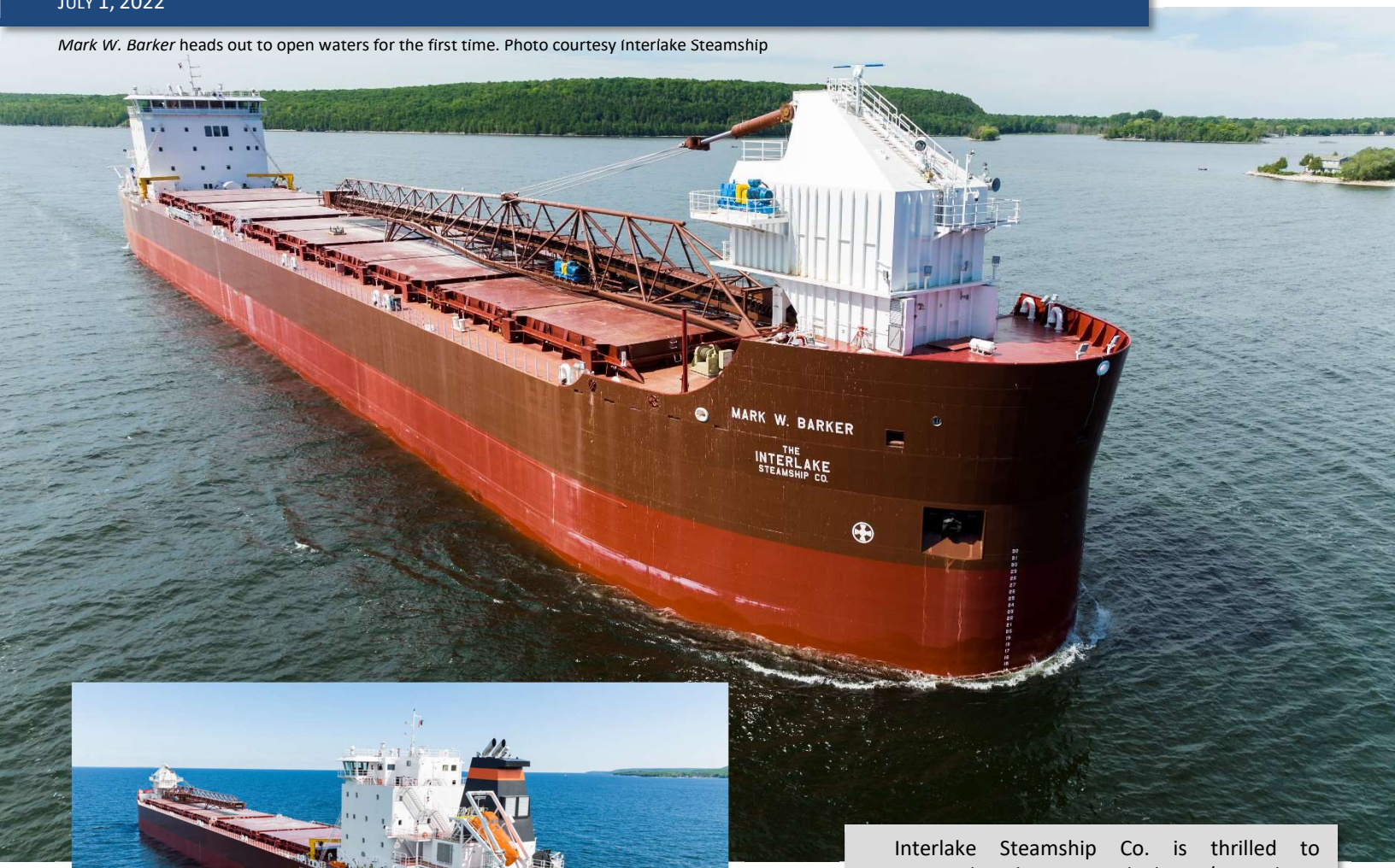
PUTTING ON THE FINISHING TOUCHES

MARK W. BARKER NEARS COMPLETION AS SEA TRIALS COMMENCE

JULY 1, 2022

Mark W. Barker heads out to open waters for the first time. Photo courtesy Interlake Steamship



Mark W. Barker heading onto Green Bay for Sea Trials, July 1, 2022.
Photo courtesy Interlake Steamship

Snapshots of the crew as they prepare to head out for sea trials. Photo courtesy of Interlake Steamship

Interlake Steamship Co. is thrilled to announce their latest vessel, the M/V Mark W. Barker, commenced builder's trials on the morning of July 1, 2022.

This Builder's Trial is the first time the 639' vessel sailed under her own power. She left the Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin shipyard just before 10 a.m. central time.

"This is the beginning of a process that has several stages. It's the pretest to the test so to speak," says Mark W. Barker, President of The Interlake Steamship Company and the vessel's namesake. "There are multiple stages where the vessel will depart and return to the shipyard so necessary adjustments can be made. This is a normal process to prepare for the US Coast Guard sea trials and to ensure that the vessel is truly ready to go operational on the Lakes."

Trials will continue over the coming weeks as final work on the vessel wraps up in preparation for her to enter service later this summer! ◘

Special thanks to Chrissy Kadleck from Interlake Steamship Co. for her help in preparing this article

IN THE DESIGN: THE PILOTHOUSE

LOOKING AT THE DESIGN OF THE CONTROL CENTER OF THE SHIP

Close up view of the classic laker styled forward pilothouse on the *Hon. James L. Oberstar*. Photo: Brendan Falkowski

PILOTHOUSE DESIGN & EVOLUTION

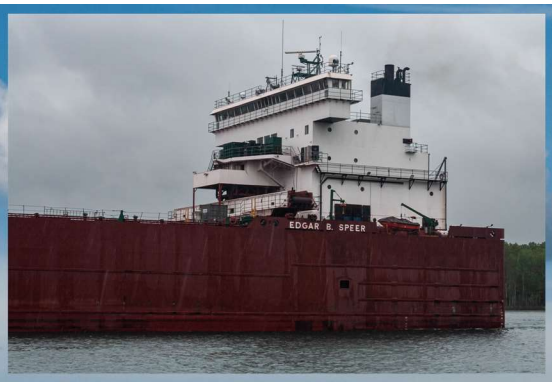
To the casual observer, the design of a Great Lakes freighter with respect to the pilothouse has changed drastically over the decades, but in reality, the principles of its design and location have stayed the same. The only major change besides location of the pilothouse has been the expanded use of technology inside. The control center of the sailing ships that once graced the waters of the Great lakes would have been at the stern of the vessel, close to the tiller that steered the ship. After the advent of the steel-hulled lake freighter and increased mechanization of equipment onboard, the steering controls were moved into a small deckhouse on the forward end of the ship called the pilothouse. Sailors were able to steer the vessel from inside the protected pilothouse and have clear visibility ahead of them to watch for obstructions to navigation and to aid in sailing through canals. Beginning in the 1960's, pilothouses on new vessels were shifted to the aft end of the ship, located above the engine rooms and accommodations block. Modern vessels are still built in this fashion. Blind spots around the vessel can be monitored by cameras that feed live video back to the sailors inside the pilothouse.

LINE OF SIGHT

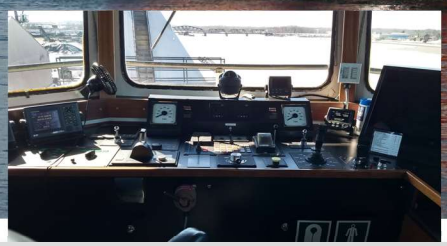
Line of sight is one of the most important factors taken into account for the location and design of the pilothouse. Both the U.S. Coast Guard and International Maritime Organization (IMO) have rules regulating the line of sight. The general rule of thumb is that the line of sight from the pilothouse must not be ➲obstructed to more than two boat lengths, meaning a 1,000' ship must be able to see within 2,000' ahead. This requirement determines the height of eye for the pilothouse onboard the vessel. Line of sight is the biggest difference between bow and stern pilothouses. Bow pilothouses have much less of an obstructed view, while stern pilothouses must be able to see within the two boat lengths ahead of the ship after looking over the length of the vessel. For operating in constrained waterways, vessels with stern pilothouses often are equipped with a forward lookout house to protect the forward watchman from the elements when the weather is poor. Tugboats that push large barges will have an elevated pilothouse to see over their consort. The upper pilothouse is typically very small. Weight and stability are major concerns when designing elevated pilothouses on tugboats as they add weight at a much higher elevation, raising the center of gravity, as well as adding to the vessel's wind profile.

BOW VS. STERN PILOTHOUSE

Since the 1960's pilothouses on Great Lakes ships have gradually shifted from the bow to the stern, with stern pilothouses, or "sternwinders", taking a firm hold in the 1970's. Bow pilothouses have much better visibility on the forward end of the ship, primarily holding popularity for visibility in canals providing some separation from the noise and vibration of the engine spaces for those living in the forward end. On the other hand, stern pilothouses are much less expensive to construct as the engine room, accommodations, galley, and pilothouse are all in a single location. While stern pilothouses have a large blind ➲



Comparison of after end of *Edgar B. Speer* (inset) with her full breadth pilothouse to the ATB *Dirk S. VanEnkevort / Michigan Trader* with a much smaller pilothouse. Both photos: Brendan Falkowski



View forward inside the pilothouse of the tug *Dirk S. VanEnkevort*. A chair is in the foreground. The tug is steered by a joystick at the center of the picture. Photo: Brendan Falkowski

Interior of the pilothouse onboard *Kaye E. Barker*. Photo: Roger LeLievre

➲spot in front of the bow, there is a better feel for the swing of the stern when making turns and maneuvering in constrained waters. Stern pilothouses also allow for close proximity to lifesaving equipment. Lifeboats are typically located at the aft end of the vessel with life rafts located at different spots around the ship.

Equipment

Inside the pilothouse there is equipment for controlling or monitoring almost every aspect of the ship. Steering controls and autohelm are often in center, surrounded by navigation equipment such as radar, GPS, AIS, and depth sounding monitors. Other controls inside might include lighting controls for deck lights, running lights, search lights, whistle controls, and even emergency management controls such as access to the fire control system. There will be several other monitors for keeping an eye on the ship's conditions and systems, such as engine, ballast, and unloading monitors, as well as emergency engine and equipment alarms. A newer system found onboard tugboats is the Bridge Navigational Watch Alarm System – BNWAS – a type of dead man alarm to make sure the person standing watch on the bridge is still alert. Some forms of the BNWAS system are motion sensitive, while others consist of a button on a timer. These systems are required as part of the U.S. Coast Guard's Subchapter M regulations. Despite the increased use of technology in ships new and old, many vessels are still equipped with engine order telegraphs to keep a failsafe in case one of the modern systems malfunctions. Ships are still built today with a chart table and blackout curtain as well. Another important piece of equipment found in the pilothouse would be the coffee maker.➲

Controls & Automation

➲With the increased use of technology and automation onboard vessels, more controls and monitoring systems are able to be accessed from the pilothouse. Most vessels will have engine monitoring systems from inside the pilothouse, but will have engine controls located in the engine room itself. Engine order telegraphs are still used as a form of redundant communication between the pilothouse and engine room. Ballast and unloading systems are set up in a similar way, which can be monitored from inside the pilothouse but are controlled from an unloading control room on deck. Bow thrusters used to be controlled from the forward lookout house, but now can be set up for remote control from the pilothouse. Onboard tug-barge units, there are several controls that are required to be routed to the tug's pilothouse, such as barge controls for the bow thrusters and anchor windlasses, coupler systems, and more.

Pilothouses are like the brain of the ship, serving as the control center for navigation and monitoring onboard systems. ◻

Special thanks to the naval architects who provided their time and resources to help me write this article. Thank you to Travis Martin, Fred Koller from Bay Engineering, Nick Hunter from NETSCo., and Andrew MacDonald from Port City Mariner Services – Brendan Falkowski

JOSEPH H. THOMPSON / LAURA L. VANENKEVORT

Joseph H. Thompson / Laura L. VanEnkevort on the Detroit River, August 27, 2021. Photo: Sam Hankinson

As the USNS *Marine Robin*. LeLievre Collections

JOSEPH H. THOMPSON

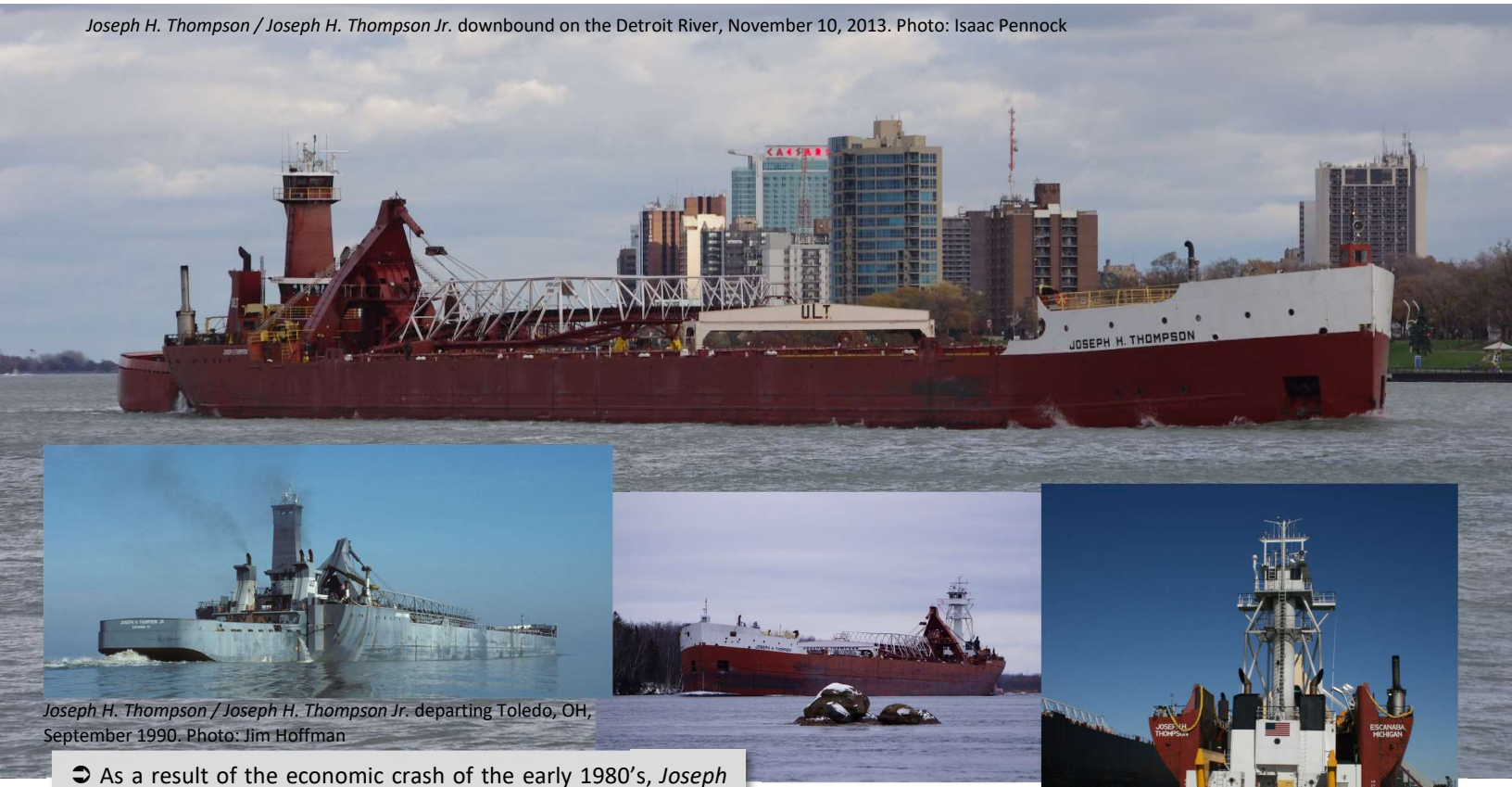
The *Joseph H. Thompson* was built in 1944 as a C4-S-B2 cargo and troop transport ship by the name of *Marine Robin*. She was constructed by Sun Shipbuilding & Dry Dock of Chester, PA, as their Hull #342, and measured 520' long, 71'06'' wide, and 43'06'' deep with a capacity of 11,757 gross tons. She was equipped with a pair of oil-fired Babcock & Wilcox water tube boilers that provided steam for a 9900 SHP General Electric cross-compound steam turbine. She was completed on April 29, 1944, and entered service for the U.S. Maritime Commission under charter to Grace Lines. USNS *Marine Robin* served on the U.S. Atlantic coast, and also participated in the Invasion of Southern France from August 25 to September 25, 1944, earning two battle stars for her service. She was laid up in the James River Reserve Fleet on March 10, 1947.

With the onset of the Korean War in the early 1950's, demand for iron ore skyrocketed. Great Lakes shipyards were booked to capacity, so operators looked to other means to expand fleet tonnage. In December 1950 Sand Products Corp. purchased three C4 ships through their subsidiary Wisconsin & Michigan Steamship Co., taking advantage of the Great Lakes Vessel Sales Act of 1950. The sale was completed on June 29, 1951, with the *Marine Robin* being held under the custody of the Maritime Administration for the time being. Later that year ownership of the vessel was transferred to Hansand Steamship, a 50/50 partnership between Sand Products Corp. and M.A. Hanna, with Hanna to act as operator of the ship. The *Robin* was towed to Maryland Dry Dock in Baltimore on October 22, 1951, to begin her transformation. She was placed in drydock and ➲

Joseph H. Thompson on the St. Marys River, 1970's. Photo: Roger LeLievre

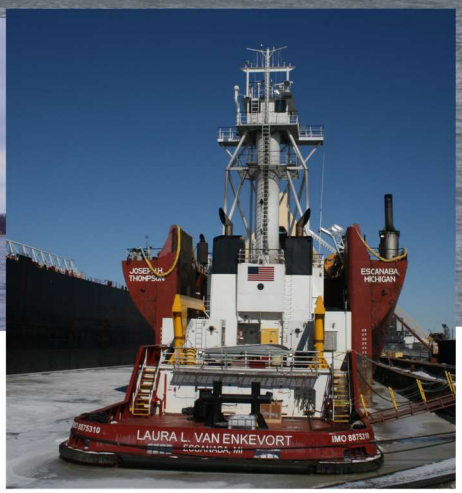
➲cut in half just aft of her midship pilothouse. Her old forebody was scrapped and her aft cargo section was reconfigured for carrying bulk cargo and complete with a rebuilt spar deck with Great Lakes style hatches. Her engine room and accommodations were refurbished as well. Meanwhile new forebody and midbody sections were built by Ingalls Shipbuilding of Pascagoula, MS. The midbody was towed to Baltimore and fitted to the aft section. Her new deckhouses and stack were placed on the spar deck, and the forebody and afterbody sections were individually towed up the Mississippi and Chicago Rivers to American Shipbuilding in South Chicago. There, the hull sections were mated and the deckhouses fitted and she was renamed *Joseph H. Thompson*. She sailed on her maiden voyage as a Great Lakes freighter on November 4, 1952, as the largest cargo vessel in the world at 714'03'' long. She sailed a rather uneventful early career, having a bow thruster fitted in 1975.➲

Joseph H. Thompson / Joseph H. Thompson Jr. downbound on the Detroit River, November 10, 2013. Photo: Isaac Pennock



Joseph H. Thompson / Joseph H. Thompson Jr. departing Toledo, OH, September 1990. Photo: Jim Hoffman

(Above) *Joseph H. Thompson / Laura L. VanEnkevort* on the St. Marys River, January 2020. Photo: Jack Hurt



Laura L. VanEnkevort and the *Thompson* in winter layup at Toledo, OH, February 2022. Photo: Brendan Falkowski

➲ As a result of the economic crash of the early 1980's, *Joseph H. Thompson* was laid up at the Nicholson's Terminal in Detroit on October 9, 1982, never to operate as a powered vessel again. She was purchased by Upper Lakes Towing of Escanaba, MI, in late 1984 for conversion into an Articulated Tug-Barge (ATB). She was towed to Menominee, MI, in early 1985 to begin the conversion. On the outside, her old fore and aft cabins were removed, and the after 100' of her hull was cut down by one deck. An A-frame to support the unloading boom was erected at the stern. Inside the cargo hold, new slopes were installed feeding two cargo hold conveyor belts fitted to the tank top. The hold belts led to a bucket elevator in the stern that fed a 250' deck boom. The bucket elevator on the *Thompson* is made using the chain track from an old bulldozer with buckets welded to the links. Her unloading system is hydraulically operated, and new Hydraulic Power Units were installed with a used GM diesel locomotive engine to power the generators. The pusher tugboat was constructed using the stern of the *Thompson*. The tug's hull was built around the existing propeller and rudder and was cut out of the hull of the *Thompson* to make the notch in the barge's stern, shortening the *Thompson* to 610' long. The tug's hull was completed with a new superstructure and elevated pilothouse, being powered by three GE diesel locomotive engines. The conversion was finished off with the installation of a Hydraconn ATB coupler system. The project was finished in mid-1990, the barge retaining her name and the tug appropriately named *Joseph H. Thompson Jr.* The pair entered service in September 1990, marking the end of a 5-year-long conversion.

The *Thompson Jr.* was repowered with a pair of MaK diesel engines in 2007 and in 2015 the *Thompson* and *Jr.* were purchased by VanEnkevort Tug & Barge of Escanaba, MI. *Joseph H. Thompson Jr.* was switched out for another tug as the primary pusher for the *Joseph H. Thompson* in 2019, being replaced by the shorter and more maneuverable *Laura L. VanEnkevort*. The *Thompson Jr.* was rebuilt over the next year to push VanEnkevort's newest barge, the *Michigan Trader*. ➲

Laura L. VanEnkevort

Laura L. VanEnkevort was built in 1994 by Halter Marine of Lockport, LA, for Otto Candies as the tug *Sidney Candies*. She is 118'08'' long, 37' wide, and 18'04'' deep and powered by a pair of EMD diesel engines. In 1998 she was sold to Tampa Electric, being renamed *Naida Ramil*. She was primarily engaged in pushing coal barges from the mouth of the Mississippi River to Tampa area power plants. She was fitted with a Bludworth ATB coupler system in 2004. In 2007 she was sold to U.S. United Ocean Services and laid up at a Gulf Coast port. In 2018 she was purchased by VanEnkevort Tug & Barge and taken to Gulf Marine Repair in Tampa, FL, to be rebuilt for Great Lakes service. Her living quarters were completely refinished, control systems and machinery spaces were upgraded, and her elevated pilothouse was raised an additional 14'. She was renamed *Laura L. VanEnkevort* and arrived on the Great Lakes on September 9, 2019. She immediately entered service with the *Joseph H. Thompson*, which was modified to accommodate the Bludworth ATB coupler system over the winter. The pair continue to actively serve the river class trades across the Great Lakes. ◘

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BRENDAN FALKOWSKI is a Great Lakes ship enthusiast who shares his passion for the freighters through his newsletter and research. Brendan is a graduate of Bath High School, and will be attending University of Michigan's College of Engineering this fall to begin studies in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering. Brendan is an avid musician, and most recently served as the drum major for his high school band. He also is a competitive sailor, helping to found the Bath High School Sailing Team. He enjoys sailing and spending time with his friends and family.

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In Memory of William "Mike" Lewis

Mike gifted me my first *Know Your Ships* book way back in 2013. That gift inspired me to start writing *Shipwatcher News*, and without it the newsletter would not have brought me and so many others on this incredible journey. It is because of this that this issue of *Freighters* is dedicated in his memory. ~ Brendan Falkowski

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Cover Photo: Cruise ship *Viking Octantis* downbound on the St. Marys River, June 1, 2022. Photo by Roger LeLievre