FREIGHTERS

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MARK W. BARKER
CHRISTENED IN CLEVELAND

- VERPLANK OPENS NEW PORT FACILITY, AMERICAN INTEGRITY VISITS MUSKEGON
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EDITOR'S PICK

SHORT ARTICLES ON HAPPENINGS AROUND THE LAKES

VERPLANK OPENS NEW PORT FACILITY, AMERICAN INTEGRITY VISITS MUSKEGON

AUGUST 22, 2022

Verplank Family Holding Co. celebrated the official opening of its new Port Terminal at Muskegon on Michigan's west coast on August 20, 2022. The new Port Facility is at the site of the former Consumers Energy B.C. Cobb power plant, which was shut down in early 2016 after nearly 70 years of operation. The plant was torn down over the years following, and the property was acquired by Verplank's in 2020. Following site cleanup, Verplank's received their first cargo at the Port Terminal earlier this season. The Port Facility has the capacity to handle over 1 million tons of aggregate products per year, and is the only such with the ability to handle shipments from 1,000-footers. Verplanks also celebrated the opening of their relocated asphalt plant as well.

One day before the grand opening of the Port Facility, the 1,000-footer American Integrity took on a load of limestone at Holcim's Meldrum Bay, ON, quarry, becoming the first 1,000-footer and largest vessel to load there. She arrived at Muskegon, MI, to deliver her cargo of aggregate on August 22, 2022, also becoming the first 1,000-footer to visit the port since November 2015 when the James R. Barker unloaded the last load of coal at the B.C. Cobb plant. This event marked the beginning of a new era in marine shipping for Muskegon, a likely sign of more to come in the future. ◘

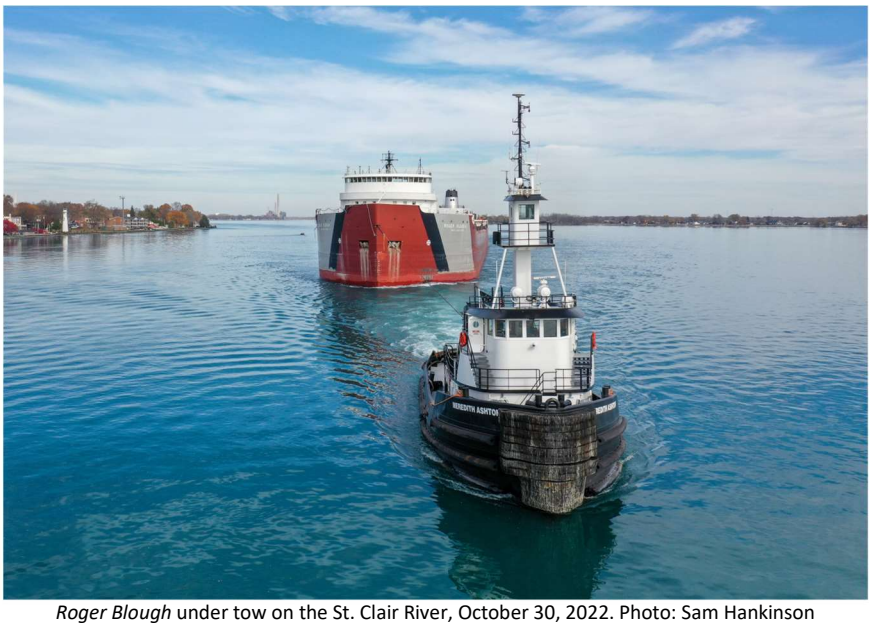
GREAT LAKES CRUISING REPORT 2022

OCTOBER 20, 2022

Written by Brock Johnson

With 2022 coming to an end, we get a chance to look back at the year. With COVID in the rear-view mirror, 2022 has brought with it many changes to the Great Lakes Cruising industry. In April, we were introduced to the new cruise ship built for the Great Lakes, the *Viking Octantis*. The *Octantis* is the crown ➲ jewel of Viking Cruises, with the capacity to accommodate up to 378 guests in 189 staterooms. At 665 feet, the *Octantis* is the largest cruise ship to sail the Great Lakes since the *Aquarama*. The *Octantis* will be joined next year by her sister ship, the *Viking Polaris*.

In 2022 alone, cruise ships docked in Detroit over 50 times, more than twice that in the 2019 season. While it is no Fort Lauderdale, it is a sign of recovery, especially for the Great Lakes cruise industry. In preparation for the 2022 season, Cruise the Great Lakes announced that it was predicted cruise passengers would make nearly 150,000 visits to Great Lakes ports, up over 25% from 2019. That's all well and good, but how are cities doing as a result of the cruise ships? With these visits comes a great economic impact. In 2022 cruises were expected to bring $120 million in economic impact into the region. That sure sounds promising for what's to come in the future. While it is hard ➲to tell what next year will look like, we can take pride in knowing that the region is ready for the next chapter in Great Lakes cruising.



Roger Blough under tow on the St. Clair River, October 30, 2022. Photo: Sam Hankinson

ROGER BLOUGH TOWED TO CONNEAUT, OH

NOVEMBER 1, 2022

On Thursday October 27, 2022, the Roger Blough was towed away from Sturgeon Bay, WI, by the Ashton Marine tugs Candace Elise and Meredith Ashton. The tow arrived at Conneaut, OH, on November 1, where the Blough was tied up at the old coal dock for continued layup. Several pieces of equipment, such as radar, navigation equipment, and her whistles, were removed prior to the tow. The Blough suffered a major fire in her aft end on February 1, 2021, while in winter layup, and she has remained in layup since. It is unclear whether she will be repaired and return to service or eventually scrapped. ◘

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NEWS IN PHOTOS

SOME OF THE LATEST NEWS CAPTURED IN PHOTOS

S.T. Crapo being pulled down the Detroit River by the *Molly M I* on her way to the scrapyard, September 27, 2022. Photo: Sam Hankinson

FAREWELL TO THE S.T. CRAPO

On September 23, 2022, the veteran cement carrier S.T. Crapo was pulled from her home of 25 years on Fox River waterfront in Green Bay, WI, bound for the scrapyard in Port Colborne, ON. The 95-year-old laker was built in 1927 as the second ever purpose-built self-unloading cement carrier for the Huron Portland Cement Co. She remained with the same fleet, though under different parent ownership, for her entire career, sailing until she was laid up on September 4, 1996, in Cleveland, OH. A year later she was moved to Green Bay, WI, where she would remain an almost permanent fixture of the waterfront with the exception of a few days in October 2005 when she was used as a barge. The Crapo arrived at her final destination on September 29, 2022, awaiting her turn to be cut up alongside several other classic Great Lakes ships. ◘

S.T. Crapo in her service days, St. Marys River in 1992. Photo: Roger LeLievre

ARE FORWARD ACCOMMODATIONS RISING BACK TO THE TOP OF SHIP DESIGN TRENDS?

MODERN SHIP DESIGN PRACTICES EMBRACING CLASSIC STYLE CHARACTERISTICS

Written by Sam Hankinson

This summer, Wagenborg's *Maxima* turned heads when the forward-end saltwater vessel visited the Great Lakes for the first time. New salties, both new builds and new-to-us, make first calls to the lakes frequently. The *Maxima* is the former- it entered service in 2021 as the second ship in Wagenborg's new EasyMax class. Perhaps the other reason why the *Maxima's* presence prompted so many photographs was its appearance, which is more similar to a classic lake freighter than a typical ocean liner.

The EasyMax class ships were designed to reduce fuel consumption while carrying maximum capacity. By positioning the superstructure of the ship at the bow, an area on the vessel that does not provide much use for any cargo handling, total tonnage of the ship is reduced by thirty tons while creating greater hold volume in the aft section and on deck. The bow creates an aerodynamic shape with lower resistance to the wind and lowers the center of gravity, providing increased stability and better fuel efficiency.

Another advantage is that there are no line-of-sight concerns,➲which is particularly interesting when the ship is handling oversized project cargo in "open-top" mode. All the hatch covering can be stacked at one end of the boat to provide for a larger opening in the holds, allowing EasyMax vessels to transport cargoes like wind tower components.

The *Maxima* unloaded cargo in Ashtabula and Chicago, then sailed for Duluth/Superior where she loaded a cargo of beet pulp pellets for delivery overseas, a typical Wagenborg run. As more EasyMax ships are built, it will be interesting to see how these ships will be utilized for Great Lakes trade. The lead ship of the class, *Egbert Wagenborg*, is due to make her Great Lakes debut later this season, while the third ship is currently under construction.

Last year, the *Symphony Sky* was also frequently photographed when she brought a cargo of wind energy components to Duluth. The ship was the first of six ships in Symphony's ECOBOX class, similar to the EasyMax with a single box-shaped hold that can be sailed open-top without hatches. The pilothouse was placed at the bow to protect cargo. ➲

(Upper): *Maxima* at Duluth harbor, August 2022.
(Lower): *Symphony Sky* arriving at Duluth, 2021.
Both Photos: David Schauer

Maxima on the Detroit River, July 19, 2022. Photo: Sam Hankinson

➲The shipping alliance between Jumbo Maritime and SAL employs a versatile fleet of heavy-lift vessels with forward accommodations. Jumbo's specialized carriers have been visiting the lakes since the 90s, but SAL's larger ships are much more common now.

Spliethoff is building two new DP2 multipurpose vessels in China. These forward-accommodation ships are outfitted with two large cranes making them well-suited for heavy lift cargo and offshore construction jobs.

It's not just handy-size ships, either. Global container shipping company Maersk is planning to build carbon-neutral container ships with forward accommodations to increase container capacity.

Although it's a bizarre twist to have saltwater ships remind us of the halcyon days of Great Lakes shipping, it is worth pondering if this design trend will make its way to domestic shipyards.

All ships used to be built with pilothouses forward, and some were built with an added deck for passengers. To cut costs, vessel owners and shipyards began building ships with accommodations aft to avoid running pipes and electricity throughout the ship. Control systems are now much easier to handle and can be located anywhere, but vessel owners are always trying to find new efficiencies in ship designs.

In 1967, Upper Lakes Towing built the *Canadian Century* at Port Weller Dry Docks with a square hold and unique forward pilothouse structure in order to maximize cargo capacity. The *Canadian Progress* followed from the same yard a year later with all accommodations aft. Despite their extreme cosmetic differences, these ships had the same hull shape.

A similar transition happened for Algoma Central newbuilds at the Collingwood Shipyard. The *Algosoo* was built as the last "Traditional-style" laker in 1974 and the *Algolake* followed three years later with all cabins aft. These two ships were also considered sister ships.➲

➲Today, the hot trend on the lakes is building ships capable of servicing any dock with deep enough water. These ships are being built with aft accommodations and a forward-mounted unloading system. The *Manitoulin* entered service as a modern chop-job in 2016, and the *Algoma Innovator* came a year later, followed by the *Algoma Intrepid*. The *Mark W. Barker* continued this trend on the US side in 2022. The forward-mounted boom with aft accommodations is not a trend specific to the Great Lakes. Algoma and Canada Steamship Lines have assets like this in their saltwater fleets.

We have to mention the Upper Lakes convert *Canadian Ranger*, which was the product of marrying the stern section of the package freighter *Chimo* with the midbody of the T2-tanker convert *Hilda Marjanne*. In 1988, it was outfitted with a bow-mounted self-unloading system that included an on-board unloading leg, deck belt, forward transfer belt, and a bucket type elevator that fed the boom. This system was specifically designed for handling grain or other light commodities, and the unique design of the ship served as a preview for the optimized lakers we see today.

The advantage of a pilothouse up forward will always be better visibility. However, the unloading boom apparatus is not a hinderance to navigation, as these ships have high resolution cameras that allow the master to see around the forward-mounted equipment.

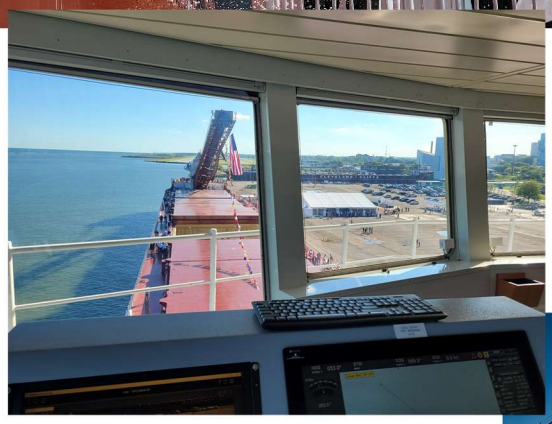
If this is the trend on the lakes, it's unlikely we will see a new laker with forward accommodations. The self-unloading system takes up that space on the bow that would otherwise be free for crew space on an oceangoing bulk carrier. But we can always dream and doodle that future lake freighters may resemble the classic freighters we grew up with.

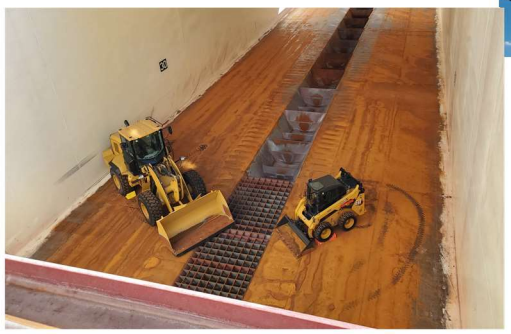
Special thanks to Sam Hankinson for preparing this article! Sam is the Port Development Coordinator at the Port of Monroe

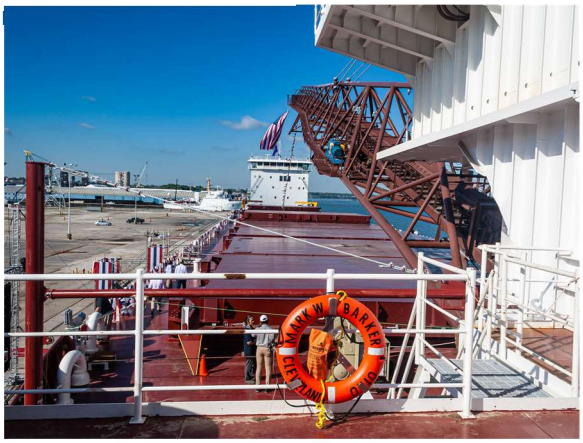
Officially part of the family

Mark W. Barker christened at Cleveland, OH
September 1, 2022

Above: (Left) Megan November christens the *Mark W. Barker*. (Right) November and Barker families pose before the ship. Photos: Interlake Steamship Co.







(Clockwise from top left): Looking out of the pilothouse on christening day; One of the Blue Angles flies by after the ceremony; American flag flies from the unloading boom; Stack proudly displays Interlake's historic markings; Looking aft over the spar deck; Front-end loaders in the cargo hold look like toys. Photos: Brendan Falkowski

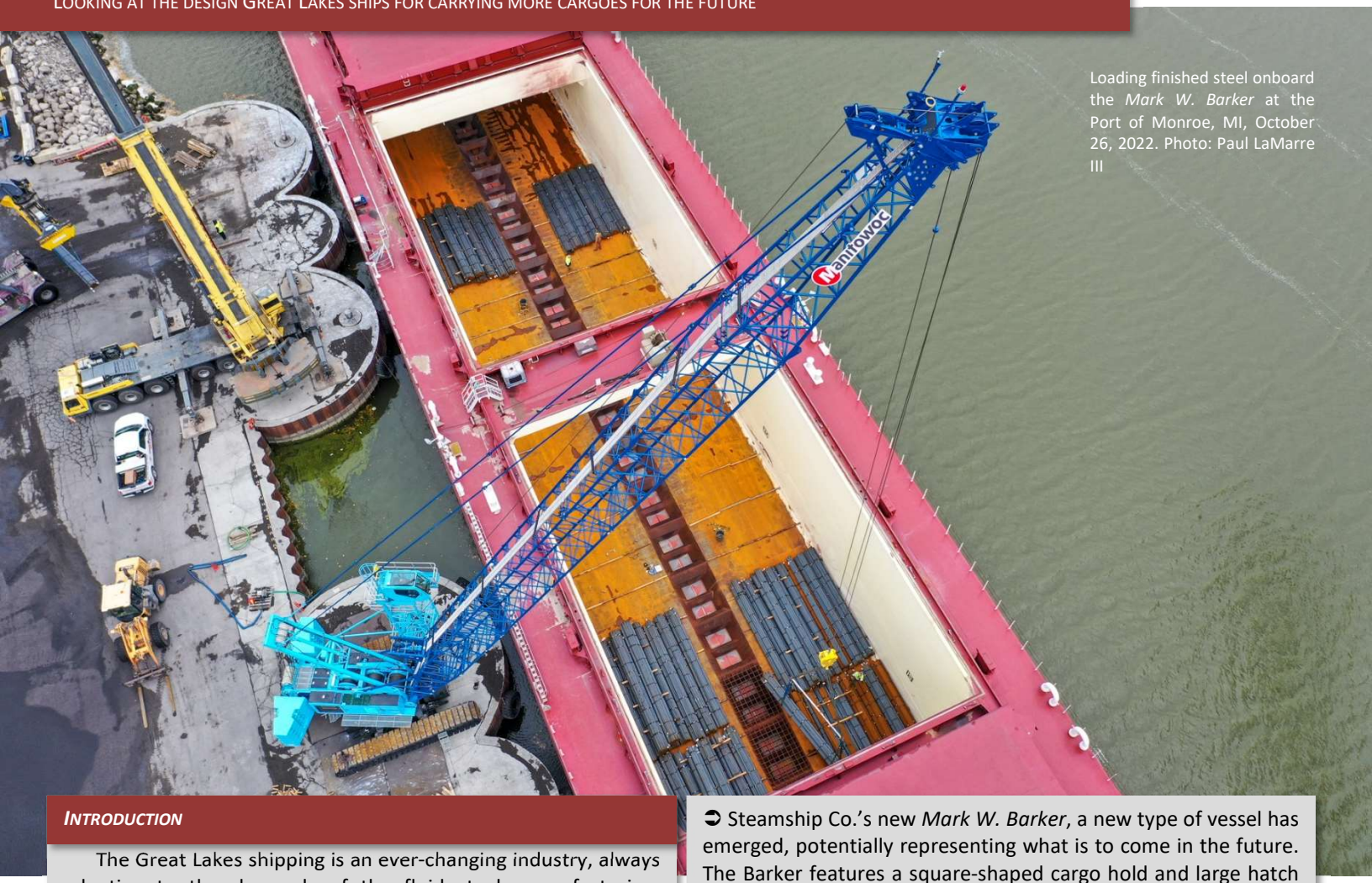
On a warm September morning under clear blue skies, the *Mark W. Barker*, nearly fresh from the shipyard, lay moored along the Cleveland waterfront awaiting her formal christening ceremony. September 1, 2022, marked a historic day in Great Lakes shipping history, not only because the brand-new ship was being christened, but also because this ship was the first powered freighter built for U.S. flag service in nearly 40 years. Following tours of the ship, guests congregated in the seating area in front of the stage at the bow of the ship. The ceremony was opened with speeches from several regional dignitaries, such as Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, Congresswoman Shontel Brown, and Representative Marcy Kaptur. Other speakers at the event included Brendan O'Connor, Vice President of Marketing and Marine Traffic at Interlake, James R. Barker, Chairman of the Board at Interlake, and Sonya Roberts, Group Leader of Cargill Salt. Following the blessing of the ship and her crew Megan November, sponsor of the vessel, smashed the traditional bottle of champaign across the bow to officially christen her in honor of Mark W. Barker. Following the ceremony, the U.S. Navy Blue Angels did a fly-by while practicing for their performance at the Cleveland National Air Show a few days later.

The *Mark W. Barker* was constructed following a major contract between Cargill Salt and Interlake Steamship, and was designed to be able to carry project and finished cargo as well as traditional bulk cargoes. Proudly built by Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding from Indiana steel made from Minnesota ore, and coated in Cleveland-based Sherwin Williams' paint, *the Barker* is 639' long, 78' wide, and has a capacity of 28,000 tons. Since entering service on July 27, 2022, the *Barker* has been hard at work displaying her versatility, transporting cargoes of stone, sand, salt, taconite, and gypsum to ports across the Great Lakes region. ☐

ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

IN THE DESIGN: VERSATILE SHIPS, DIVERSE CARGOES

LOOKING AT THE DESIGN GREAT LAKES SHIPS FOR CARRYING MORE CARGOES FOR THE FUTURE



Loading finished steel onboard the *Mark W. Barker* at the Port of Monroe, MI, October 26, 2022. Photo: Paul LaMarre III

INTRODUCTION

The Great Lakes shipping is an ever-changing industry, always adapting to the demands of the fluid steel, manufacturing, construction, and grain markets. As these markets change, the shipping industry and its vessels adapt to carry new forms of cargo to meet the needs of customers. In recent years Great Lakes freighters have been used to haul more diverse cargoes, and modern ship designs incorporate new elements to increase versatility.

WHAT MAKES A SHIP VERSATILE?

The last revolution in Great Lakes shipping saw the arrival of much larger ships than before, specialized for hauling cargoes of taconite or coal. These vessels were and still remain the most efficient mode of transporting these cargoes, and some that are capable have expanded their menu to occasional cargoes of limestone as well. The primary trick to designing a versatile ship that can handle all sorts of cargoes is to design it to be capable of handling anything inefficiently rather than to haul a single cargo extremely efficiently. Versatility vs. efficiency is a major tradeoff to be considered in this situation. Traditional Great Lakes self-unloaders are equipped with slopes inside the cargo hold to allow flow towards the unloading conveyor and are usually only capable of handling flowing cargo, and conventional hatch covers prevent these ships from transporting cargoes on deck. These factors really limit what the majority of the current fleet of ships is capable of handling, but with the introduction of Interlake ➲ Steamship Co.'s new *Mark W. Barker*, a new type of vessel has emerged, potentially representing what is to come in the future. The Barker features a square-shaped cargo hold and large hatch covers on deck with the capability of handling cargoes on top. Interlake's new vessel has already displayed she is capable of handling more than just bulk cargo, carrying a load of finished steel quite recently. Not only does her hold and deck configuration allow for such versatility, but so does her size. The 1,000-Footers were primarily designed to handle one or two cargoes to a few specific ports, but smaller ships have a major advantage when it comes to versatility. Small ships are able to haul the niche cargoes to hard-to-reach docks across the region, places the big boats would never be able to access. Another often overlooked type of vessel with unique versatility are product tankers. Subdivision of cargo tanks allow tankers and liquid bulk carriers to handle several different types of cargo on a single trip.

WHAT IS DRIVING THIS TREND?

While this trend towards more versatile vessels continues, bulk cargoes such as taconite, limestone, cement, salt, grain, and liquid cargoes are still here to stay and will likely continue to be the mainstay of shipping on the Great Lakes. The trend towards these versatile vessels is more to allow fleets to diversify rather than to replace cargoes. When clients come to shipping operators with a cargo to be moved, operators want to be able to say yes and serve their needs as best as possible. Some of the new ships today have been designed to be "futureproofed",➲

(Main) *Mark W. Barker* loading finished steel at Port of Monroe, October 26, 2022. Photo: Paul LaMarre III. (Inset) The finished steel loaded in the hold of the *Barker*. Photo: Sam Hankinson

➲intended not only for what they are carrying now, but for what will be demanded over the lifetime of the vessel. While we are not seeing vessels designed for loading and unloading at specific ports as the old "two docks and a lock" saying suggests, ships are still being designed for intended routes and to be able to access certain docks. The *Barker*, for example, was designed to be as large as possible to access the Cargill dock on Cleveland's Cuyahoga River, while also being to access certain unloading docks as well. Her unique box-shaped cargo hold was actually intended to maximize the cubic dimensions in the cargo hold to maximize her cargo capacity, with the added bonus of being able to handle more diverse cargoes. During the design process, factors have to be recognized as trade-offs, such as unloading time and efficiency with a certain cargo vs. versatility and capability of handling many cargoes.

Alternative Cargoes

While Great Lakes ships will continue to handle the bulk cargoes they specialize in, there are plenty of other cargoes that could be potentially handled by these vessels. Ships with cargo hold and deck arrangements like the *Barker* and *Pere Marquette 41* can carry cargoes such as steel rods, round bars, shipping containers, wind turbine parts, steel slabs and coils. Traditional freighters have even handled finished automobiles in the past. The *Paul R. Tregurtha* has been used for several unique cargoes, first transporting the pilothouse of the *St. Marys Challenger* from Sturgeon Bay, WI, to Toledo, OH, for eventual display at the National Museum of the Great Lakes in early 2015. More recently, she handled a load of 400 tons of finished special bar quality steel from the Port of Monroe to Superior, WI. The steel was laid out lengthwise in the cargo hold, resting on the hogbacks over her unloading conveyor gates. Engineering analysis of the vessel's structure was conducted prior to handling the cargo to determine if the project was even possible. Options such as hauling the steel on deck were explored, but like many other Great Lakes freighters, the deck and cargo hold were designed to handle limited amounts of force per cubic foot. Transporting cargo on deck would also raise the ship's vertical center of gravity (VCG), limiting the amount of cargo carried in order to stay within the ship's VCG curve. The analysis showed➲the project was possible and it was best to handle the cargo inside the hold. The steel was carefully loaded through the *Tregurtha's* deck hatches via crane and placed at the bottom of the cargo hold. The cargo was successfully transported to Duluth, and a few weeks later the *Barker* handled the same cargo on a much larger scale.

Modifications of Current Ships

As the demands of industry changes, questions have been raised as to whether it would be possible to modify ships in the current fleet to handle different cargoes. Questions that may have once sounded crazy are now being brought up, such as whether it would be possible to reconfigure a self-unloader's cargo holds to have a box shape in resemblance to the *Barker* or maybe even retrofit a ship to have similar hatch covers. It is less likely to see modifications of current vessels in this manner, but rather exploring design elements that would make a vessel more versatile when planning new builds. Major modifications to most of the current fleet would not be as effective as designing a new ship in this manner, as the cost of modifications would be close to a new build while the vessel still would not be as efficient as a new ship.

What Does the Future Hold?

While the future is still beyond the horizon, it is likely there will remain a balance between both large and small ships in the future. Vessels intended to haul cargoes to major ports on intended runs will likely be much larger than those designed to transport the niche cargoes to smaller ports. Though the days of seeing large vessels built for specific cargoes – such as the *Roger Blough, Stewart J. Cort,* and *Edgar B. Speer*, are likely over. The Great Lakes shipping industry is a fluid industry, the ships and cargoes change as demands do, but as time has already proven the Great Lakes shipping industry will adapt and overcome the challenges presented to it. ◻

Special thanks to the naval architects who provided their time and resources to help me write this article. Thank you to Travis Martin and Fred Koller from Bay Engineering, Eric Helder from Interlake Steamship Co., and Nick Hunter from NETSCo. – Brendan Falkowski

JOHN G. MUNSON

John G. Munson on the Detroit River, May 13, 2022. Photo: Sam Hankinson

U.S. Steel's Pittsburgh Steamship Co. announced plans to construct three ships in the summer of 1950, these would be the AAA class vessels. Shortly after Irvin L. Clymer, president of the U.S. Steel Michigan Limestone Division's Bradley Transportation Line, announced a contract was awarded to construct a large self-unloader for the company at Manitowoc Shipbuilding Co. The self-unloader was designed to be 666'03'' long, 72' wide, 36' deep with a capacity of 20,900 tons, and would feature a self-unloading system consisting of a dual-hold belt configuration that fed a forward bucket elevator and 250' deck boom. Cargo would be held in the six holds accessed by 18 deck hatches, which were originally fitted with telescoping covers. Power would be supplied by a single General Electric 7700 SHP cross-compound steam turbine, steam provided by a pair of coal-fired Foster-Wheeler water tube boilers. In addition to her self-unloading equipment, the vessel would differ from her Pittsburgh counterparts with her triple-deck forward pilothouse with guest accommodations. The keel for Manitowoc's Hull #415 was laid on March 7, 1951. By late fall that year her hull was complete up to the spar deck and the new ship was christened *John G. Munson {2}* and launched into the rigid waters of the Manitowoc River on November 28, 1951. Over the winter her cabins and self-unloading systems were completed, and the *Munson* entered service on August 21, 1952.

She quickly settled into the typical Bradley Line stone trade, loading at Calcite, MI, for ports across the Great Lakes region to support the steel and construction industries. She went on to set several limestone records in her earlier years, one in particular set on July 4, 1953, with a cargo of 21,011 tons loaded at Calcite would hold until 1966 when broken by a Canadian vessel.

In 1967, Bradley Transportation Line was merged with the ➲

John G. Munson, arriving Superior, WI, August 2019. Photo: Jack Hurt

➲Pittsburgh Steamship Division into United States Steel Great Lakes Fleet as part of an effort to consolidate the corporation's marine operations. Vessel operations and trade routes remained largely unchanged during that time. In the mid-1970's, the *Munson* was one of several vessels to participate in USS Great Lakes Fleet's Winter Navigation Experiment, testing the feasibility of year-round navigation on the Great lakes. The experiments were concluded in 1979 with the implementation of an annual closing and opening date of the Soo Locks.

At the end of the 1975 season, *John G. Munson* was sent to Fraser Shipyards in Superior, WI, to be lengthened. She was placed in drydock, cut in half at amidships, and her stern floated out of drydock. Then the new 102' midbody addition was floated in followed by the stern, and all three sections were lined up and the drydock drained so that she could be welded back together. Following her procedure, the *Munson* measured up to 768'03'' long with a larger capacity of 25,550 tons at her mid-summer draft of 27'04''. While in the shipyard, her boilers were automated and converted to oil-firing as well. ➲

John G. Munson loading ore at CN in Duluth, MN, July 25, 2022. Photo: David Schauer

John G. Munson, St. Marys River, 1970's. Photo: Roger LeLievre

John G. Munson in US Bicentennial colors, 1976. Photo: Roger LeLievre

John G. Munson, Detroit, October 21, 2021. Photo: Isaac Pennock

➲In 1981, U.S. Steel spun USS Great Lakes Fleet off as a company-owned subsidiary, now renamed as USX Great Lakes Fleet. While the fleet primarily handled cargoes for U.S. Steel, it also operated as a private carrier for other clients. *John G. Munson* encountered a few incidents in the mid-1980's, first she suffered a fire in her forward end while in winter layup on February 2, 1983, and later struck a breakwall at Lorain, OH, on March 21, 1984. She was quickly repaired and returned to service after both occasions. U.S. Steel sold its majority stake in USX Great Lakes Fleet to Blackstone Capital Partners in 1988. It was after this sale that the *Munson*, still sailing in her Bradley grey, was repainted in the new fleet colors of a red hull with a black and grey diagonal stripe at the bow.

The fleet was sold again in 2004, this time Blackstone sold majority stake to Canadian National Railway for $380 Million, operating the fleet under the ownership of Great Lakes Fleet Inc. of Duluth, MN. Vessel management is handled by Key Lakes Inc. On November 6, 2006, *John G. Munson* struck the ➲ Shell fuel dock in Corunna, ON, damaging about 200' of dock face.

Like her AAA class near-sisters, the *Munson* took her turn sitting out a season here in there during the 2010's, spending the 2013 season in layup at Superior, WI. She sat out another season in 2016 at Sturgeon Bay, WI, while being repowered by Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding. Over the year at the shipyard, her old General Electric steam turbine and other related components were removed and a new MaK 6M46C 7000 BHP diesel engine was installed. She returned to active service at the onset of the 2017 season. *John G. Munson* remains an active vessel of the U.S. fleet, serving the taconite, stone, and coal trades on 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 is attending University of Michigan's College of Engineering this fall to study Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering. Brendan is an avid musician, and is a member of the trumpet section in the Michigan Marching Band. He also is a competitive sailor, recently helping to found the Bath High School Sailing Team. He enjoys sailing and spending time with his friends and family.

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Cover Photo: Megan November christens the *Mark W. Barker* as Mark Barker and his son Luke Barker look on. Photo: Interlake Steamship Co.