

It is now December and the Rochester - Toronto fast ferry SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1 seems no closer to resuming service than on the day after Labour Day when the cross-Lake Ontario service was suspended. In fact, things are looking gloomier than ever for the ferry, as foreclosure proceedings are being threatened by the senior lenders, Australia's Export Finance and Insurance Corporation. The Mayor of Rochester is pushing for the city to acquire the ferry from Canadian American Transportation Systems and set up a public authority to run the service, hoping to acquire the boat before she is sold off-lakes. However, there is considerable wariness on the part of some Rochester city council members, and something less than overwhelming enthusiasm on the part of the State of New York which has been trying to crack down on the (mis)management of independent public authorities. Whether Mayor Johnson will succeed in trying to save the ferry is, at this point in time, anybody's guess. Meanwhile, however, the Toronto Port Authority is pressing ahead with the construction of a new and permanent passenger terminal on Pier 52. It may wind up being a terminal without a ferry.

Speaking of ferries, as we go to press it has been said that the second of the Marinette Marine double-ended ferries being built for New York City's Staten Island service, the SEN. JOHN J. MARCHI, will be leaving Marinette, Wisconsin, on December 1st so that she can clear the Seaway before its closure for the season. Of course, the ferry may not get away on time, as her sister, GUY V. MOLINARI, was considerably delayed in getting away from the shipyard earlier this year, and then experienced several other delays on the way to New York.

The Norwegian-owned salty MENOMINEE suffered considerable damage on the morning of November 9 when, bound for Toledo and Green Bay with lumber, she hit the approach wall at the Lower Beauharnois Lock in the Seaway. The ship punched a 30-foot by 3-foot gash in her port bow above the waterline, and the Groupe Ocean Inc. tug LA PRAIRIE escorted MENOMINEE back to Montreal for the necessary repairs, which took more than a week to complete. As yet, we have seen no explanation for the accident.

In mid-November, the closing dates for the various lake canals were announced. The St. Lawrence canals will close officially at 2359 hours on December 24 but, subject to prior written agreement, vessels will be allowed to transit the St. Lambert Lock until 2359 on December 29, weather and navigation conditions permitting.

The official closing of the Welland Canal will occur at 2359 hours on December 26th but, with prior written agreement, ships will be allowed to transit the canal until 2359 on December 29, conditions permitting.

As usual, the Poe Lock at Sault Ste. Marie will remain open to traffic until midnight on January 15th, but it is unclear whether any ships will be kept running that late in the season, and much will depend upon navigation conditions.

On July 24, 1915, while she was preparing to leave her dock in the Chicago River on an excursion charter, the 1903-built passenger steamer EASTLAND, of the Chicago-St. Joseph Steamship Company, rolled over onto her side. Of the more than 2,500 persons who were aboard, 812 perished in what remains to this day the single greatest disaster ever to occur on the Great Lakes. On November 6, 2004, Libby Hruby, age 99, died in hospital at Berwyn, Illinois. Mrs. Hruby was the last known living survivor of the EASTLAND disaster. She survived because she, her sister and her future brother-in-law were standing on the exposed upper deck, rather than inside the cabins, when EASTLAND capsized.

As we go to press, the saltwater vessel CHIOS PRIDE lay aground some 300 yards off the lighthouse at the entry to the Menominee River. She grounded on the morning of November 29 and was still stuck the following day despite the efforts of the tugs WILLIAM C. SELVICK, ERIKA KOBASIC and JIMMY L.