

MARINE NEWS

Work is progressing well on the preparations for the return to service of the Rochester-Toronto ferry SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1 now that her purchase by the city-owned Rochester Ferry Company and operation by Bay Ferries has been finalized. The boat will be given new colours and will be known as "The Cat" rather than "The Breeze". The operators now are aiming for a June 17 start-up of the service, exactly one year after she entered service last year for her previous owners. She is being transferred from Bahamas to U.S. registry to avoid pilot fees, and crew members currently are being hired. It is said that the ferry has a May 16th drydocking date at Port Weller for necessary inspection and work. The Toronto Port Authority says that its new terminal will be ready when the ferry begins operations, and will be far more commodious than the arrangement of trailers that was used last year. Customs facilities should also be far better at the new terminal. We look forward to seeing SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1 back in service, and hope that it will be successful under the new ownership.

We previously confirmed that the Lower Lakes / Grand River self-unloading motorship MAUMEE, (a) WILLIAM G. CLYDE (61), (b) CALCITE II (01), was to be returned to service (she was idle the whole 2004 season) after steelwork was done on her during the winter at Sarnia. Originally it was thought that she would be towed to the Bay Shipbuilding Company yard at Sturgeon Bay for further work, but instead she sailed there under her own power, arriving on April 15. The work to be done is extensive, and she may be at the shipyard until mid-July. This work should guarantee for a few more years the life of this 76-year old vessel.

Meanwhile, Bay Shipbuilding recently announced that, on Dec. 23, 2004, it had signed a contract to build a 460 x 70 foot cement barge for the Lafarge Corp., of Southfield, Michigan, to be similar to the 1996-built Lafarge barge INTEGRITY, which is operated for the corporation by Andrie Inc. with the tug G. L. OSTRANDER. The new barge is scheduled to be delivered in May of 2006. As yet, no tug has been selected to power the new barge, nor has any contract been let for its remodelling for its new duties. It seems likely that when the new barge enters service, more self-propelled Lafarge vessels will be retired.

At present, the future of McKeil Marine's KINSMAN INDEPENDENT remains under a cloud. The steamer was being prepared for service this year in the Canadian grain trade, but on April 11th, whilst lying at Hamilton, she suffered a fire in her after end which reportedly damaged both her engineroom and her aft accommodations. Local firemen were able to subdue the fire, but there has been no report as to how the event may have affected the work being done on the vessel. Another fire, apparently of a minor nature, occurred a few days later. Information about the work being done on the INDEPENDENT has been hard to come by, and we have not even had details as to whether a conversion from steam to diesel power actually was being done, but earlier reports had indicated that the ship would be ready for service by mid-summer.

Meanwhile, the future of Great Lakes Associates Inc., the former operator of KINSMAN INDEPENDENT, itself is in doubt. For the past two years, it has operated under charter from Oglebay Norton Marine Services the 1925-built self-unloader JOSEPH H. FRANTZ. The five-year charter has, however, been terminated, and on April 29, the FRANTZ arrived at Port Colborne from Buffalo in tow of the Nadro tugs ECOSSE and SEAHOUND. The details of her future have not been announced, but it has appeared likely that International Marine Salvage would break her up at Port Colborne. The 1925-built FRANTZ not only was due for her five-year survey and inspection, but it also has been said that she needed almost \$1,000,000 in work in order to see any further operation. Whether Great Lakes Associates, the last remnant of the famous Kinsman fleet, will obtain another vessel or simply go out of the shipping business remains to be seen. The demise of this longtime fleet would be regrettable, indeed.