

The St. Lawrence and Welland Canals opened to traffic on March 26th. The first vessel to transit the Welland was the upbound P. & H. Shipping steamer WILLOWGLEN, and ceremonies were held at Lock Three as she passed. Considering that WILLOWGLEN may be nearing the end of her career, it was pleasant to see her have the honour of opening the canal this year. The first commercial vessel to enter the Seaway upbound at St. Lambert was the RIMOUSKI.

Although the American Steamship Company, of Buffalo, had earlier indicated that it would refurbish and reactivate this year its idle self-unloading steamer JOHN J. BOLAND (III), it appears that the current recession may have caused the company to reconsider its position. In the March, 1991, issue of the company's house organ, "Soundings", A.S.C.'s president and C.E.O., Ned A. Smith, was quoted as saying that "the future of both the BOLAND and the NICOLET comes down to a question of economics. As much as we would like to operate all of our vessels regardless of the freight rate, the fact of the matter is that good business requires a return on investment in the first place. Currently, both the BOLAND and NICOLET require additional investment of capital if they are to operate again. Further, these vessels must also overcome operational disadvantages... Even though freight rates on the Great Lakes have rebounded in recent years, they still do not justify such additional investment at this time. That is not to say that these vessels will not sail again, only that they must be able to economically justify an investment before they will sail. We are currently working toward that end..." In the past several months, rumours have been rampant concerning the 86-year-old NICOLET, (a) WILLIAM G. MATHER (I)(25), (b) J. H. SHEADLE (II)(55), (c) H. L. GOBEILLE (65), which allegedly is in need of considerable renewal of the internals of her unloading equipment.

An article which appeared in the "London Free Press" on 18th February, 1991, indicated that a firm known as Von Bergen Ltd., of Pensacola, Florida, was hoping to begin operation of a freight and passenger ferry service across Lake Erie, from Cleveland to Port Stanley. The company's president, Ed Von Bergen, stated that the vessel (unidentified) to be used on the route would accommodate 400 passengers, 40 tractor-trailers, 150 automobiles, and considerable break-bulk freight per trip. The ship was described only as "a \$10-million 'super shuttle boat' built in Denmark". No alterations to existing facilities would be necessary at Port Stanley to accommodate the new ferry, and Von Bergen expressed hope that the service might begin this spring if all of the plans materialize. We think it wise that we not hold our breath...

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"MUSKIE" SURVIVOR CORRECTION

In last month's concluding episode of our special feature, Ship of the Month No. 188, BRUCE HUDSON, we mentioned that one of the survivors of the August 15, 1936, destruction by fire of the big, wooden-hulled tug MUSCALLONGE, a Mr. Eugene "Hartley", latterly of St. Catharines, had passed away on January 29, 1991. The information came to us in a verbal report.

Unfortunately, we misspelled the gentleman's name, and we now hasten to correct the error. The former MUSCALLONGE deckhand was Eugene C. (Charlie) Hartleib, a neighbour and acquaintance of T.M.H.S. executive committee member Capt. John Leonard. We extend to John Leonard our thanks for providing a copy of Mr. Hartleib's obituary from the St. Catharines newspaper to confirm the spelling, and we regret any inconvenience which our error may have caused.

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