

The Interlake Steamship Company has decided to convert its straight-deck bulk carrier J. L. MAUTHE into a self-unloading barge. The 629-foot steamer, of 11,473 Gross Tons, was built in 1953 by the Great Lakes Engineering Works at River Rouge, Michigan. The MAUTHE was active for many years in the ore trade and latterly hauled a lot of grain. However, as a straight-decker, her days of usefulness to the Interlake fleet had come to an end, and she has lately been in lay-up at Superior, Wisconsin. She cleared the American Lakehead on December 31st in tow of the tug JOHN PURVES, and was downbound at the Soo on January 4th, arriving on the 7th at the yard of the Bay Shipbuilding Corporation at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. The existing superstructure will be cut off the MAUTHE and her machinery will be removed. Her stern will be cut off, and replaced with a new section providing the towing notch for the tug with which the barge will be matched. Self-unloading equipment will be added and, although we do not have complete details, we understand that it basically will be of the scraper type. The Bay Ship yard has an all-time record number of ships currently wintering there for various repairs and surveys, and so the work on the MAUTHE will not be in full swing immediately. We understand, however, that Interlake hopes to take delivery of the converted MAUTHE in the autumn of 1997.

The Interlake fleet may be bringing the MAUTHE back into service during 1997, but there will be one less vessel carrying the company's colours in the coming season. Interlake has had the management contract for the 1,000-foot self-unloader GEORGE A. STINSON, which was built in 1978 and is owned by Stinson, Inc. However, as of January 1st, the management of the STINSON was taken over by the American Steamship Company, and she will be sporting its livery when she enters service this spring. For many years, the Hanna interests operated the STINSON, and it was in 1992 that Interlake took over her management.

An interesting arrival at Owen Sound on January 3rd was the passenger and auto ferry UPPER CANADA, (a) ROMEO & ANNETTE (66), which presently is being operated by the Beausoleil First Nation on the ferry service to Christian Island in Georgian Bay. She was brought to Owen Sound for winter maintenance work. What is interesting about this is that this is the first time the 86-foot ferry has returned to Owen Sound since she was built there by the Russel Bros. shipyard in 1949. The ferry first served Capt. Romeo Allard and Restigouche Ferries Ltd. on the route between Bathurst, New Brunswick, at the Gaspé Peninsula, and she was renamed in 1966 when the Ontario Ministry of Transportation brought her to Kingston for island service there. From 1978 until 1992 she ran the Pelee Island service on Lake Erie.

Another Christian Island ferry, the 64-foot THE QUINTE, also built at Owen Sound but in 1939, arrived at Midland on December 15th for winter work. After many years on the Glenora - Adolphustown ferry route, she now is owned by Rodney Albert Monague, of the Christian Island reserve. Tricee Welding, which has the contract to work on THE QUINTE over the winter, attempted to lift the boat from the water at the old Midland coal docks at the foot of William Street on December 23rd, using two large cranes. However, the ferry began to take on water when she was being lifted and the bow end settled to the bottom, leaving the ferry in an almost perpendicular position as the crane cables held onto the stern. Additional equipment was used to hold THE QUINTE while the crane cables were repositioned, and THE QUINTE was righted on the afternoon of December 24th. There was no environmental damage, and no word as to damage to the ferry's machinery.

It is with sadness that we see some of the old lake ports relegated to the history books as navigation ceases. In mid-December, the marker buoy at the entrance to Port McNicoll harbour was removed. There is no shipping activity there any more. As well, the range lights at nearby Victoria Harbour were extinguished permanently.