

The wheels are grinding very slowly in the efforts to find an operator prepared and suitable to run a fast ferry service across Lake Ontario between Toronto and Rochester. The Rochester press reported on February 8 that only one of the four companies which had expressed interest in operating such a service had submitted a proposal acceptable to the three municipal partners in the project - the City of Rochester, Monroe County and the City of Toronto. That proposal came from Canadian American Transportation Systems, headed by Rochester businessman Dominick DeLucia. Up to that time, proposals had not been forthcoming from NFL Holdings Limited, Sea Containers Ltd., or Lake Ontario Fast Ferry Inc. The latter firm had once been considered the front-runner in trying to get the service afloat, but had not been able to do so in three years of effort. Canadian American is said to be dealing with the same firm as had been Lake Ontario Fast Ferry in connection with the building of the necessary ferries - Austal Ltd., of Australia. The ferry project continues to make the press regularly in Rochester, yet almost never in Toronto, which is not surprising in view of Toronto's frenzy to obtain the 2008 summer Olympics and do away with any semblance of shipping in the harbour area.

Meanwhile, efforts to get a fast ferry service running across Lake Michigan between Milwaukee and Muskegon have been no more productive. Due to a lack of progress by Hydrolink LLC., the Port of Milwaukee terminated its relationship with that firm and gave to a new investor group "a short-term exclusive development agreement". Press reports in early February indicated that the situation was becoming rancorous, with no prospect of any early ferry service. Of course, the Milwaukee-Muskegon service was, for many years, run by the famous and venerable MILWAUKEE CLIPPER, (a) JUNIATA, which now is undergoing restoration at Muskegon.

Although we gave a full report in previous issues regarding the closure of the various canals at the end of the 2000 navigation season, it would appear that we did not report fully on the last passages in the Welland Canal. We did note that the last saltie in the canal was LADY HAMILTON on December 22-23, but we should complete the record by mentioning that FRONTENAC was the last upbound ship before December 24th closure, while RT. HON. PAUL J. MARTIN made the last downbound transit.

It was reported in late January that the passenger and auto ferry UPPER CANADA (C. 190421), (a) ROMEO AND ANNETTE (66), owned by Pelee Island Transportation Services, had been sold at auction for \$125,000 by canadagosales.com possibly to Ohio interests. Built in 1949 by Russel Brothers Ltd. at Owen Sound, she ran for Restigouche Ferries Ltd. until 1965, on the Wolfe Island service from Kingston from 1966 to 1977, and on the Pelee Island route 1977-1992. She later ran for the Beausoleil First Nation on the Christian Island ferry route in Georgian Bay, but presently is once again laid up at Leamington.

Although CANADIAN TRANSFER spent almost her entire 2000 season running ore from Marquette to the Algoma Steel plant at the Soo, things seem about to change. The TRANSFER made 114 of the short ore-shuttle runs in 2000, but Algoma has announced that as much as half of its ore requirements will be delivered by rail in the future, the Central Wisconsin Railroad making the trip from Marquette to the Soo by way of Escanaba.

International Marine Salvage began work during January on the scrapping of the former C.S.L. self-unloader TARANTAU at its yard on the east side of Port Colborne's outer harbour. By the beginning of February, the after cabins of the 1965-built steamer had been almost completely removed, and cutting had begun on the stern section of the hull. Meanwhile, there has been no official word on the future of C.S.L.'s 1966-built motorship self-unloader MANITOULIN, which uncharacteristically is laid up this winter at Sorel, as if in anticipation of a scrap sale.