

The saga of "The Breeze" (the Rochester-Toronto fast ferry SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1) continues. The City of Rochester has decided to pursue acquisition of the idle ferry at the court-ordered February 28 foreclosure auction, setting up a limited liability company to operate the vessel if the acquisition is successful. The Export Finance and Insurance Corp., a wing of the Australian government, has offered to provide a line of credit up to \$40 million to assist the city with the project. Meanwhile, Canadian American Transportation Systems has formally notified the city that it may sue, alleging that city officials have damaged its business and its reputation.

It looks as if McKeil Marine is now out of the brine hauling business. General Chemical Canada Ltd., which has filed for protection from bankruptcy under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, announced on January 18 that it would be closing its 86-year old plant at Amherstburg, to which brine was shipped, and at the same time, the U.S. parent firm, General Chemical Industrial Products Inc., said that it would be closing its plant at Manistee, Michigan, as well. Recently, McKeil has used tug/barge combinations to haul the brine from Manistee and Courtright, Ontario, to Amherstburg, but until this summer, the powered tanker CAPT. RALPH TUCKER also was used in the trade. The TUCKER was later sold for scrapping in Bangladesh, and it now seems likely that her sale may have had more to do with the pending loss of the brine trade than with the ship's rumoured worn-out condition.

Late in October, five amateur shipwreck hunters apparently located the wreck of the steel steamer BENJAMIN NOBLE in Lake Superior several miles out from Two Harbors, Minnesota. The canal-sized NOBLE, built in 1909 at Wyandotte, was owned by the Capitol Transportation Company. She sank in a gale on April 27, 1914, with the loss of all hands, whilst carrying a cargo of steel rails from Conneaut to Superior. It is said that she may have been unable to find the harbour entrance at Duluth because of one of the pierhead lights being extinguished in the storm, causing her to turn back. In the ninety years since her loss, the NOBLE has been one of the most sought-after wrecks on the Great Lakes.

In an effort to preserve what remains of the superstructure of the long-idle Bob-Lo steamer COLUMBIA, after an assessment of her restorability by the Detroit River Conservancy, the ship was, during December, covered in protective plastic sheeting placed over a specially constructed framework. The work was done by Shrink Wrap International of Flat Rock. The vessel still is owned by the Steamboat Columbia Foundation, but its agreement with the Conservancy calls for the latter to pay for COLUMBIA's maintenance. The fact that this winter wrap of the ship has been undertaken seems to indicate that the recent survey pronounced COLUMBIA fit for restoration.

During December, the engine from the now-scrapped excursion steamer CANADIANA was lifted out of the old Magee drydock in Ramey's Bend at Humberstone, preparatory to being moved to Buffalo for display purposes. Then, on January 17, the steamer's pilothouse, which had been languishing near a marina along the City Ship Canal at Buffalo, was hauled by truck to the BIDCO Marine premises on the former site of the Buffalo Drydock Company, where the ship was built in 1910. The various relics will eventually be displayed at an as-yet-unselected site.

In the December issue, we inadvertently gave the wrong name for the cable ferry recently built by Heddle Marine at Hamilton for the Howe Island service. The correct name of the vessel is FRONTENAC HOWE ISLANDER and she is 100.0 x 32.3 x 5.5, 130 Gross and 39 Net.

The big tank barge being built at Toledo for Hornbeck Offshore Services has been moved by Manitowoc Inc. to its Marinette yard for completion. In tow of the tug MARK HANNAH, the tow arrived at Marinette on December 29, with ice-breaking assistance being rendered by ERIKA KOBASIC on the Menominee River. Bay Shipbuilding, another Manitowoc subsidiary, has two other barges under construction for Hornbeck.