

was upbound in the Welland Canal on her first trip of the season on May 5th. We are happy to see her back in service, as the Canadian lake fleet has rapidly been exhausting its supply of straight-deckers for the grain trade.

For those interested in riverboat excursions, and particularly in the venetable steam-powered sternwheeler DELTA QUEEN, we can report that she, the MISSISSIPPI QUEEN and AMERICAN QUEEN have once again changed hands. Apparently as a result of the financial repercussions of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Delaware North Companies have sold the Delta Queen Steamboat Co. to the Ambassadors Cruise Group, a division of Ambassadors International and parent of the American West Steamboat Co. The new owners will be operating DELTA QUEEN and MISSISSIPPI QUEEN in 2006, and returning the AMERICAN QUEEN to service in 2007. The latter vessel has been serving at Beaumont, Texas, as a bunkhouse for workers restoring the Gulf oil rigs following the hurricane damage they sustained during the 2005 hurricane season.

Legislation recently was introduced into the U.S. Congress to recommend that the U.S. Coast Guard replace the 1944-built and soon to be retired 180-foot tender ACACIA, which is stationed at Charlevoix, Michigan. It is recognized that there is a need to keep in the area a cutter with icebreaking capabilities. Meanwhile, the old U.S.C.G. MACKINAW has finished her farewell tour of the lakes and, in June, will officially be replaced by the newly-built icebreaking tender of the same name.

In early April, the tug JOYCE L. VAN ENKEVORT reported that, during a trip in the Saginaw River with the barge GREAT LAKES TRADER, she had lost two of her four rudders. There has been much local controversy over the need for dredging the Saginaw River but, to date, the rudders have not been found, despite extensive searches, leading to speculation that they may have been lost elsewhere.

Despite the hopes of many that somehow the service might be salvaged, the death knell has been sounded for the Rochester-Toronto fast ferry service. After the City of Rochester decided in January to terminate the service, a buyer has been sought for the ferry. On May 3, the Mayor of Rochester announced that a deal had been arranged for SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1 to be acquired for \$29.8 million U.S. by Euroferries Ltd. for service between Dover, England, and Boulogne, France. The ferry ran trials on Lake Ontario in late April to make sure that her machinery was fully operational. The deal will leave Rochester taxpayers with an obligation of some \$20 million in respect of the ferry, and still to be resolved is a 14-year deal arranged with the Toronto Port Authority, which built a new terminal building to service the ferry.

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#### LEECLIFFE HALL REVISITED

We thank all who responded so positively to our LEECLIFFE HALL feature in the April issue. First of all, we would like to clear up something that resulted from incorrect press reports. The tug that tried to aid the sinking Halco vessel was FOUNDATION VIBERT (not "Viper").

Further reports indicate that there were 41 persons aboard LEECLIFFE at the time of the accident. Atlantic Salvage Ltd. (Halifax) bid \$4 million to remove the wreck and were commissioned by the underwriters to do so. They had nine divers and 12 support team on site in August 1966. They broke and/or cut up the wreck, as well as using dynamite on it, and submerged the debris in 50-100 feet of water.

Other recollections are that LEECLIFFE HALL was a very special ship, in the minds of Hall employees as well as observers. Her maiden upbound voyage was much celebrated, but she was mechanically troubled throughout her life, and supposedly could not run more than eight knots at the time of the collision, which makes allegations of high speed (especially upbound) seem questionable. And when the ship was being launched at Fairfield's, the hull slewed alarmingly off-course, but then recovered sufficiently that a proper entry into the water was made. Some deemed this an inauspicious beginning to her life afloat, as did those who recalled the death of a seaman on the 1947 maiden voyage of LEECLIFFE HALL (i).

Our thanks to Mac Mackay and Robert Graham for their recollections of LEECLIFFE HALL (ii).

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