

Early in 2006, with a newly-elected mayor at the "helm", the City of Rochester cancelled its commitment to the Rochester-Toronto fast ferry and set about selling SPIRIT OF ONTARIO 1. A deal was worked out with Euroferries Ltd., which proposed to use the ship on a service between Dover, England, and Boulogne, France, but as of the end of August, the ferry still sits idle at Rochester, incurring mostly-unrecoverable expenses. Euroferries has not paid for the ship, allegedly as it is trying to put together the financing of the purchase of two more similar ships. The boondoggle deepens, which could have been avoided had this not become an election issue and had the city been truly committed to making the ferry succeed.

The Oglebay Norton Company finally has divested itself of all of its ships, with the exception of the small sand-sucker J. S. ST. JOHN, formerly owned by the Erie Sand & Gravel Company, whose name now has been changed to O-N Minerals (Erie) Co. Sold to Liberty Steamship Company, a subsidiary of the American Steamship Company, in June, were OGLEBAY NORTON (now AMERICAN INTEGRITY), MIDDLETOWN (now AMERICAN VICTORY), FRED R. WHITE JR. (now AMERICAN COURAGE), ARMCO (now AMERICAN VALOR), COURTNEY BURTON (now AMERICAN FORTITUDE) and COLUMBIA STAR (now AMERICAN CENTURY). These ships soon were given A.S.C. stack colours, and some began to receive white cabins, but full repainting will wait until later. Then, at the beginning of August, Oglebay Norton announced that it had sold DAVID Z. NORTON, EARL W. OGLEBAY and WOLVERINE, to the Wisconsin & Michigan Steamship Company, a venerable and historic company whose parent is the Sand Products Corp., and which has, in the past, owned such ships as MILWAUKEE CLIPPER, AQUARAMA and MCKEE SONS. These three ships will be operated under time charter to the Lower Lakes Transportation Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Rand Logistics. No renames have been announced for these ships.

Reactivations have been rare in these days with fleets stripped down about as far as they can go, but Upper Lakes Shipping reactivated its straight-decker CANADIAN PROVIDER this season and she has been running regularly throughout the summer. But most surprising is the fact that the U.S. lake fleet now again includes a straight-deck bulker for the first time in recent years. Idle since 1998, the Central Marine Logistics Inc. 1960-built steamer EDWARD L. RYERSON was moved from lay-up into drydock at Sturgeon Bay on June 3 and, after an extensive refit, she departed under her own power on July 22. She has made several trips to Indiana Harbor and even has had one trip with ore to Lorain. More Lake Erie trips are anticipated.

Two scrap tows have taken place this summer, both of them ending at the International Marine Salvage yard in the outer harbour at Port Colborne. First to go was the McKeil lighter and former bulk canaller D. C. EVEREST, the last of her ilk on the lakes and a ship which should have been preserved. and still officially named (b) CONDARRELL, passed up the Seaway on June 26 in tow of EVANS MCKEIL and POINT VIGOUR, and in due course arrived at the Port Colborne scrapyards. Then, early on July 7, the former Inland Steel bulker L. E. BLOCK departed her longtime berth at Escanaba in tow of the Gaelic tug SHANNON, commanded by T.M.H.S. member Capt. John Wellington. The tow arrived at Port Colborne on July 11. The BLOCK, latterly owned by Basic Towing Inc., Escanaba, had not operated since 1981.

Another vessel which recently was towed to the International Marine Salvage yard at Port Colborne was WINDOC (ii), which was taken there not for scrapping but for the removal of her old stern to make her into a tow-barge. As reported in our May issue, WINDOC currently is owned jointly by Upper Lakes Shipping Ltd. and the Algoma Central Corporation.

The fleet of Voyageur Marine Transport Ltd. / Voyageur Maritime Trading Inc., of Ridgville, Ontario, recently was increased with the reported purchase of LADY HAMILTON, the 1983-built ocean-laker (a) SASKATCHEWAN PIONEER (95), from Seven Seas Carriers AS, of Bergen, Norway, for a number of years a FedNav charter. She has not yet become part of the actual Voyageur fleet, but has been trading into the lakes. The vessel thus once again comes under the "influence" of the Richardson grain interests, for whom she was built. Meanwhile, on June 13, the 1952-built Voyageur straight-decker VOYAGEUR INDEPENDENT, whilst upbound behind the WINDOC tow, struck an abutment of the St. Louis de Gonzague Bridge in the Seaway. There was substantial damage to both ship and bridge, although both have since been repaired and returned to service.

Yet another lake shipbuilder has encountered financial difficulties, and this time it is Canadian Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd., the operator of Port Weller Dry Docks, which during July filed for bankruptcy protection pending a restructuring proposal to its creditors.