

During the 2007 lake navigation season, much was said about low water levels and their effects on the amount of cargo that lake ships could carry on reduced draft. Also the subject of much concern to shippers was the apparent reluctance of U.S. federal authorities to make funds available for the dredging of channels that only were getting shallower but in which a number of potentially serious groundings occurred during the season. The feds still seem to be turning a blind eye to the situation and sending money elsewhere, but three recent announcements provide at least a little hope. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District, previously approved dredging at Rochester, where silting in the Genesee River has prevented STEPHEN B. ROMAN from getting to the Essroc terminal. Bids are to be opened on March 26 and a dredging contract awarded on April 1, with work to start by or on May 15. That means that if direct cement deliveries are to be made to Rochester (Charlotte), the Essroc barge METIS will have to be used again until the work is far enough along for the ROMAN to call there.

In addition, The Corps' Buffalo District has announced that dredging will be done in 2008 at Oswego, Ashtabula, Fairport, Conneaut and Huron. All this work would not have been possible without an increase in funding contained in a federal budget bill signed into law on December 26. Meanwhile, the Detroit District of the Corps of Engineers has awarded contracts for the much-needed dredging of the harbours at Grand Haven and Holland, Michigan, as well as for additional dredging in the Detroit River. All three of these contracts were awarded to The King Company, of Holland.

In the February issue, we mentioned the entry into service of the newest C.S.L. deep-sea ship, the Panamax self-unloading bulker CSL METIS, which cleared the Chinese shipyard where she was rebuilt on October 29, 2007. For those who keep such records, we now know more about her. The vessel originally was built as a 43022-tonner in 1981, and sailed as (a) BERGE HELEN (81), (b) LAGOVAN SINAMAICA (93), (c) SINAMAICA (00), (d) EKTORAS (07), (e) EKTORA (07). A new forebody was grafted onto the old stern by the Chengxi Shipyard and the Bahamas-registered ship made her first call to a Canadian port on January 26 when she was at Sydney, Nova Scotia, unloading coal. CSL METIS now has a deadweight cargo capacity of 69,360 tonnes and her unloading boom can reach out 209.6 feet.

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MORE ABOUT M. SICKEN

Our Ship of the Month No. 312 in the February issue was the little wooden "rabbit" M. SICKEN and we very much enjoyed bringing you her story. It almost always happens, however, that more is learned about a ship after we have gone to press with her history - and for that we can be very grateful to our readers.

The first additional item regarding the SICKEN comes via member Bill Schell, who provided us with a transcript of an 1898 publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Weather Bureau entitled "Wrecks and Casualties on the Great Lakes During 1895, 1896 and 1897". This item ties in with our December feature on the BRITON, wherein we mentioned the loss of her sistership NORMAN by collision on Lake Huron in 1895. It turns out that M. SICKEN was involved.

"May 30 - Steamer NORMAN collided with the Canadian steamer JACK, 7 miles northeast of Middle Island, during dense fog and sank in 300 feet of water; 3 lives were lost, the remainder of the crew took to the life rafts and were rescued by the steamer SICKEN; value of the steamer, \$163,000; no cargo; the steamer JACK was damaged to the extent of \$25,000; the JACK reached Alpena, where temporary repairs were made."

The next item, from Don Boone of Collingwood, comes from that town's paper of Thursday, May 30, 1929. "Big Dredging Plant is Here. Weddell's Outfit Arrives From Lake Ontario. During the night between Monday evening and Tuesday morning, a big dredging outfit arrived in the harbour. It belongs to the Weddell Co. and was brought here from Trenton on Lake Ontario to enter upon the big contract the company have secured from the Dominion Department of Public Works.

"The outfit includes the large powerful dredge I.X.L., the (steam) barge M. SICKEN, named after an old time shipbuilder (sic) at Marine City, the tugs FOREST, R. G. WEDDELL and DOROTHY MAY, also a couple of large scows. The Lake Ontario port was cleared on April 29th and since, nearly a month, the way has been threaded about the lakes, never far from shore

Continued on Page 9