

Please Note that space is limited and this will be a popular programme. We must confirm to the restaurant the number of persons attending AND their dinner choices, so reservations, accompanied by payment, must be received by Tuesday, May 6. We regret that there can be no refunds after that date. Please plan to attend and reserve early for you and your party. The dinner meeting always is a high point of our season and an evening enjoyed by all who attend. Won't you please join us? Please remember that the ticket price INCLUDES taxes and gratuities, so you will definitely receive good value for the price.

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MARINE NEWS

After a long, cold and snowy winter, the 2008 navigation season at last is under way! As usual, some of the cement-carrying ships were the first out of lay-up, but Canadian and U.S. Coast Guard icebreakers were much in demand all over the lakes, but particularly in the St. Mary's River, the Straits of Mackinac, lower Lake Huron above the Huron Cut, and in the upper St. Lawrence River. It was only at the beginning of March that the last of the salt boats had given up an gone to and abbreviated winter lay-up, C.S.L. ASSINIBOINE and CANADIAN OLYMPIC at Sarnia, and ALGOMARINE at Owen Sound. But salt cargoes soon were in demand again all around the lakes as winter refused to give up its snowy grasp on so many of the cities. So "spring" fit-out soon began.

The various lake-area canals were able to open on schedule despite some ice problems. The only unhindered canal was the Welland, which opened officially on March 20 with the upbound passage of CANADIAN PROGRESS. The first downbound passage was made later the same day by CSL TADOUSSAC. The St. Lawrence canals, much beset by ice, opened on March 22 with the upbound passage of CANADIAN MINER, which had wintered at Montreal and was bound for Toronto with a cargo of sugar. She was followed closely by PINEGLEN. The St. Mary's Falls Canal at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, opened at 12:01 a.m. on March 25, and the first commercial transit was made by CASON J. CALLAWAY, which had been on the wall below the Poe Lock awaiting the opening after a difficult passage upriver. She was followed up by her fleetmate PRESQUE ISLE. A third Great Lakes Fleet Inc. ship, EDWIN H. GOTT, later made the first downbound transit.

The CALLAWAY may have made an early departure from lay-up at Erie, Pennsylvania, and opened the Soo Locks for 2008, but her first downbound voyage was not a happy one. Bound for Gary, Indiana, the loaded CALLAWAY met the upbound AMERICAN REPUBLIC, which was beset in ice, some ten miles west of the Mackinac Bridge. The CALLAWAY tried to break out the REPUBLIC but, in doing so, the ice pulled the two ships together and they met starboard bow to starboard bow. The accident happened during the afternoon of March 28, and both ships received fairly substantial damage. AMERICAN REPUBLIC was turned when ice permitted and, taking water in her number one ballast tank, she headed for the BayShip yard at Sturgeon Bay for repairs. Despite some severe above-waterline bow damage, the CALLAWAY was able to proceed to Gary where she was unloaded, and then she, too, went to Sturgeon Bay for repairs.

There have been a number of significant renamings in the Lower Lakes Towing fleet to begin the 2008 navigation season. Recently purchased from the Wisconsin & Michigan Steamship Company, from which they previously been chartered, the river-class DAVID Z. and EARL W. have been renamed, respectively, (c) CALUMET and (c) MANITOWOC by Grand River Navigation Company, and are now pretty well in Lower Lakes colours. We are happy to see the name CALUMET revived, this name previously having been carried by the 1929-built vessel that Grand River retired just before the close of the 2007 season and which now awaits scrapping at Port Colborne. The third of the company's river-class vessels, WOLVERINE, is now under Canadian registry for Lower Lakes Towing Ltd., and on March 22, at Sarnia, she was renamed (b) ROBERT S. PIERSON (ii), in honour of Robert Scott Pierson who passed away last December. She is the first vessel in the Lower Lakes fleet to be given the name of a person. Meanwhile, Lower Lakes Towing, which earlier acquired them, has renamed VOYAGEUR INDEPENDENT to (e) OJIBWAY, while VOYAGEUR PIONEER is now (d) KAMINISTIQUIA. The latter two straight-deckers will be repainted in their new owner's colours as the year progresses, and KAMINISTIQUIA's first trip of the year took her to the Sturgeon Bay shipyard with her old name painted out and the new one not yet applied. The Lower Lakes group also has contracted for the use of Voyageur Maritime Trading Inc.'s MARITIME TRADER, but it is believed that she will continue in her old blue and white livery and carrying her current name. We suspect that eventually MARITIME TRADER also will be brought into the full Lower Lakes fold and repainted and renamed.