Ports and Portholes

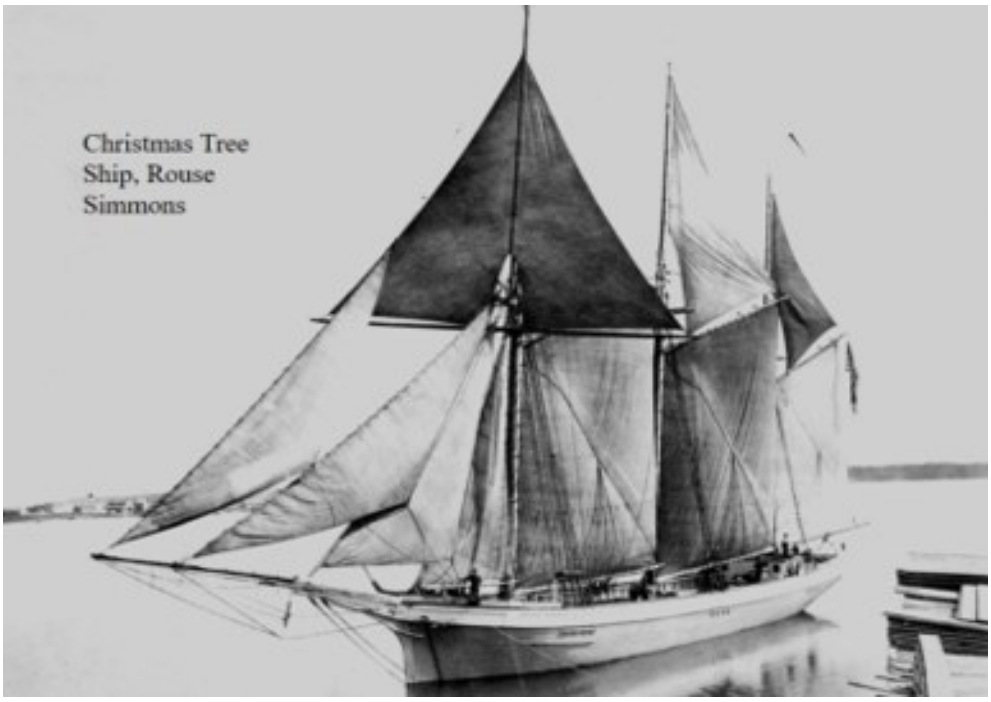
Volume 1, Issue 4

December 2022

Holiday Wishes

Happy and Blessed days
Christmas and more,
Peace and love aboard ship
and on shore!

Rouse Simmons, The Christmas Tree Ship



Christmas Tree Ship

Second guessers say the greedy, neglectful Captain overloaded his ship,

Greedy, because the captain and his crew stuffed over 1,000 Christmas trees into the Rouse Simmons for this late November 1913 voyage.

Neglectful because some say the Captain did not tend his ship.

rman Schunemann (center) and two crew members.

I, Captain Herman Schuenemann, bought Christmas trees for the children and their families.

I, Captain Herman Schuenemann, gave away Christmas trees,

Took splinters out of the paw of the ship's cat,

Scrubbed the wooden deck with the deck hands,

The worn out and weak deck plank fastenings I planned to repair with the profits from this final trip,

This last trip from Thompson, Michigan to Chicago.

Winds and waves enjoyed romping room from one end

Of that cucumber-shaped Lake Michigan to the other.

And romp they repeated, one end through the other of the Rouse Simmons.

I decided to anchor and ride out the wind.

We piled anchor, chain, windless, and tools at the bow,

My decision did not work We rode the waves to the bottom.

Many Christmas trees rode the waves to the shore.

Many people took them, fresh and eager for Christmas.

Twelve years from November 1912, a fisherman netted my oilskin wallet.

Nearly sixty years after that a Milwaukee scuba diver found my ship.

Since 2,000 Chicago's Christmas Ship, a group of local

mariners,

The Coast Guard since 1790,

Collect over 1,000 Christmas trees every year,

Bring them to the United States Coast Guard icebreaker Mackinac,

Distribute the trees to needy families,

I, overseeing them, balance the numbers.

Pinney Dock Enters a New Chapter of Its Long, Eventful Life

Photo by Bill Oakes

A story in the March 15, 2001, Ashtabula Star Beacon introduced the next chapter in the Pinney Dock story. Staff writer Frank Obernyer reported that Kinder Morgan Energy Partners had purchased Pinney Dock & Transport Company lakeport terminal for about $41.5 million dollars in cash.

The largest pipeline master limited partnership in the United States,

Kinder Morgan operated more than 30,000 miles of natural gas and product pipelines. It featured a significant retail distribution and electric generation and terminal assets.

At the time of the sale, Pinney Dock had six docks with 15,000 feet of berthing space for vessels, 300 acres of outside storage space, 350,000 square feet of warehouse space and two 45-ton gantry cranes.

Morgan boasted an enterprise value of approximately six billion dollars. At the time, it operated one of the largest product pipeline systems in the country, with more than 10,000 miles of pipeline.

The company featured twenty-nine bulk terminals in its portfolio, but

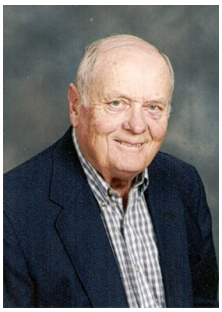
Pinney Dock was its second acquisition in the Great Lakes region, behind its bulk terminal in the Milwaukee area.

The list of Kinder Morgan assets included 10,000 miles of natural gas transportation pipelines, natural gas gathering and storage facilities and natural gas gathering and storage facilities. The company's twenty eight bulk terminal facilities annually transloaded more than forty million tons of coal, petroleum cake and other products.

Tom Stanley, Kinder Morgan President of Bulk Terminals, said "This is a nice acquisition for us, and our intent is to search out new and additional products for the terminal." He confirmed that the 38 company employees were an essential part of the deal and their jobs were secure if they wanted to stay.

The USS Kleinsmith is moored at Pinney Dock during the opening celebration of the Saint Lawrence Seaway occurring between June 24-29, 1959. From the Ashtabula County District Library Archival Collection. .

Pinney Dock People Past and Present



Joseph Delpriore

From St. John School Hall of Fame, 2011

Pinney Dock person and Hall of Fame St. John School, 2011, Joseph DelPriore is an Ashtabula resident and retired as president of Pinney Dock Co. after 30 years of service. He is a graduate of Capital University, served as an Ashtabula County commissioner from 1989 to 1992, and was president of Ashtabula City Council in the early 1970s. He and his wife, Mary Kay, have two children and three grandchildren. He was bornJoseph DelPriore was born in Old Forge, Pa, the only child of Laura and Joseph DelPriore. He moved to Ashtabula with his mother in 1948.

Attending public elementary schools, Joe enrolled at St. John High School and graduated in 1960. Mary Kay Welch, also a 1960 graduate of Saints John was born in Ashtabula and married her high school sweetheart, Joe. Joe and Mary Kay are the proud parents of two St. John alumni, Amy Shaughnessy ‘84 and James ‘89, and grandparents of Katie, Alex and Zach.

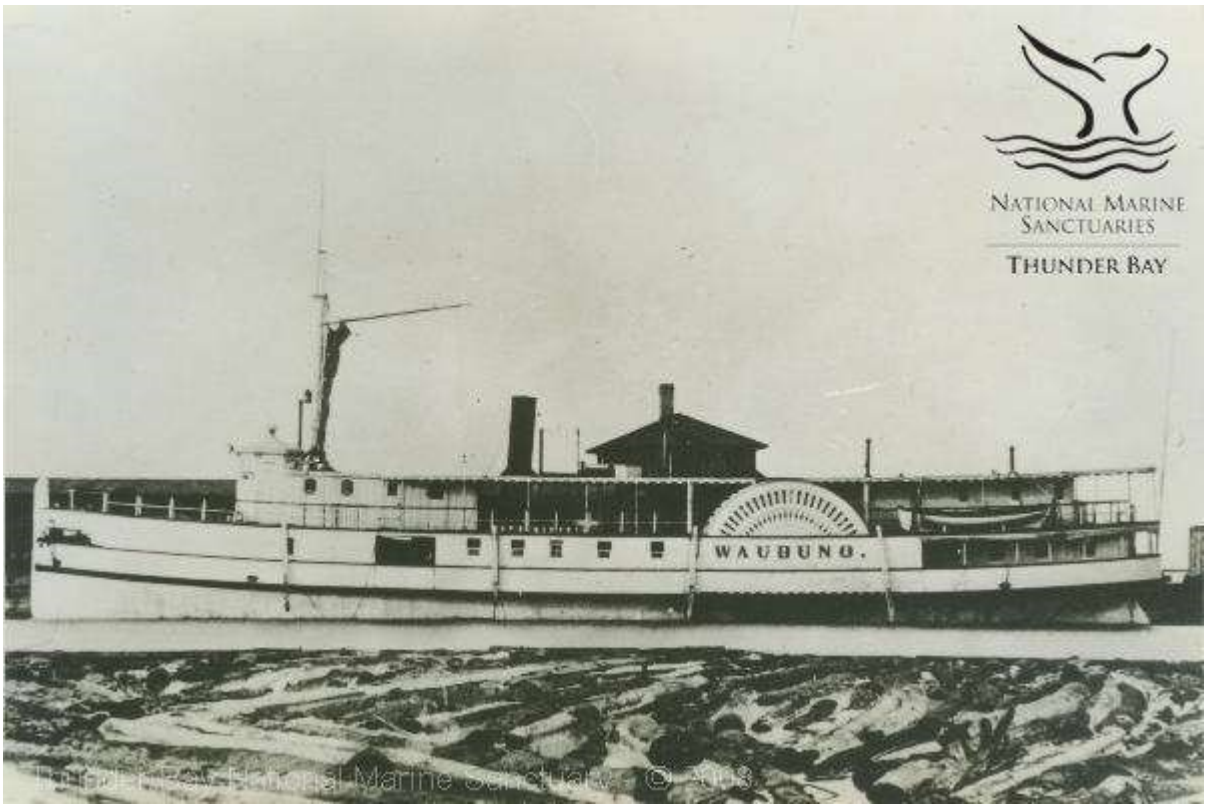
Joe and Mary Kay were active at St. John during their high school years—Joe in sports and Mary Kay in Drama and cheerleading. Mary Kay is a graduate of Ursuline College and Joe earned his BA from Capital University and has also earned post graduate credits from American University in Washington DC, and Ohio State University.

Mary Kay taught for a number of years including 2 years at St. Joseph’s. Mary Kay spent many years in supervisory and managerial roles in social service agencies including The Alzheimer Respite Program, the Ashtabula Home Health Services and the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disability. Joe retired from Pinney Dock & Transport after 30 years of service. Joe has also been active in civic and local groups serving as President of Ashtabula City Council and as Ashtabula County Commissioner.

Joe and Mary Kay have been instrumental in the plans for the Beatitude House which will be housed at St. Joseph Parish with construction beginning in the next few weeks and completion scheduled for the Fall 2011. Beatitude House is a Mahoning Valley based organization which aids disadvantaged women and children.

Great Lakes Winter—Wicked and Wild

Lake Huron: The Newly-Weds, a Winter Storm, and the Waubuno



Kate Doupe dreamed that the Waubuno had capsized and she and her husband, Dr. William Doupe, and the rest of the passengers were struggling in the waters of Georgian Bay, a northeastern arm of Lake Huron. She begged her husband to take the overland route to the tiny village of McKeller where they planned to sit up housekeeping.

Kate and Dr. William Doupe had just been married for a week and both were anxiously waiting for the *Waubuno* to pull away from its Collingwood, Ontario dock on the stormy Saturday morning of November 22, 1879. A side-wheel paddle steamer, the *Waubuno* got its name from an Algonquin Indian word that means “Black Magician” or sorcerer. During the 1860s and 1870s, it carried passengers and freight from the Northern Railway’s railhead at Collingwood to northern destinations including Parry Sound and Thunder Bay.

Dr. Doupe wanted to quickly set up his office in McKeller. His bride Kate didn't want to travel on the *Waubuno*, especially since the weather had taken a turn for the worse. A few nights before, Kate had dreamed that she and William and the other passengers were struggling for their lives in the icy water of Georgian Bay with a tremendous weight pressing them down. Kate begged William to travel overland to McKellar. William pointed out that all of their possessions were already aboard the *Waubuno*. He tried to calm his wife's fears.

The *Waubuno's* next scheduled departure fell on Saturday morning, November 22, 1879. Captain Burkitt was more anxious to leave than Dr. Doupe. The Georgian Bay Transportation Company of Collingwood owned the *Waubuno* and the navigation season shrank daily. The Saturday sailing would have to make up for the two abandoned trips and any more delays would mean a loss in passengers and revenue before Collingwood's harbor closed on December 7th.

At 1:35 a.m.Captain Burkitt decided to take a chance that the stormy weather would improve, and the *Waubuno* departed her dock at 4 a.m., in a brisk wind. Kate and Dr. Doupe and about eight other passengers, fourteen crew members and a full load of cargo that included barrels of flour and apples, chests of tea, a team of horses, one or two cows and a few dogs sailed with the *Waubuno.*

Past the sheltered waters of Christian, Hope, and Beckwith Islands, she had to cross the open waters of Georgian Bay to reach the islands of the bays eastern shore on the final approach to Parry Sound.

When the *Waubuno* didn't arrive in Parry Sound, the tug *Millie Grew* went to look for her and returned to port with the word that it had found part of the wreck, including Dr. Doupe's medical bag, a life preserver with the *Waubuno's* name on it, the ship's ledger, and a life boat. Barrels of apples, flour, and other freight washed up along the shore, but no bodies were ever recovered.

In 1959, SCUBA divers discovered the location of the wreck of the *Waubuno* at Black Rock near the Haystack Island and found the machinery that had spilled from the *Waubuno*. Mariners theorized that Captain Burkitt hit an uncharted shoal northward of Lone Rock in a blinding snowstorm. A rudder from the *Waubuno* is displayed at the Huronia Museum in Midland, Ontario, and the *Waubuno's* anchor can be seen at Waubuno Park in the town of Parry Sound. Kate Doupe's glove, the only trace of her found from the Waubuno, was given to her mother.

Lake Ontario

FDR’s Guests at Fort Ontario, Lake Ontario

FDR’s Guests at Fort Ontario, Lake Ontario

In 1944, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt "invited" 1,000 refugees to come to Fort Ontario on Lake Ontario, near Oswego, New York to be his "guests" for the duration of the war. As a condition of circumventing the stringent immigration laws, the refugees had to sign a pledge promising to return to Europe at the end of the war, since they had no legal right to be in the United States.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt began the Oswego refugee story in January 1944, when he signed Executive Order 9417, creating the War Refugee Board. The War Refugee Board had several purposes. Including paving the way for the “Refugee Camp” at Fort Ontario, the only one in the United States during World War II.

Manya Hartmeyer Breuer, Walter Greenberg and their fellow refugees made their way to the American Army Transport *Henry Gibbins*, anchored in the harbor on the Bay of Naples. The *Gibbins* would transport the refugees and hundreds of men wounded at Anzio and other European battles across the Atlantic Ocean to New York. During the voyage the refugees talked excitedly about the friends and relatives they anticipated seeing in America. They mulled over plans for the new lives that they intended to begin when they disembarked.

Before they left Italy, all of them had to sign a statement, which read in part:

. . .I declare that I have fully understood the following conditions of the offer of the United States Government and that I have accepted them: I shall be brought to a reception center in Fort Ontario in the State of New York, where I shall remain as a guest of the United States until the end of the war. Then I must return to my homeland. . .

The refugees signed the agreement because they knew that immigration was a chance for a new life for them and their families. Some of them felt that surely they would be permitted to stay in America if they proved themselves to be solid, productive citizens.

Some did not understand the full terms of the agreement because of language and cultural barriers. Some believed the sales pitches of officials anxious for them to immigrate. Some fully intended to be and were repatriated to their homelands after the war.

And some hoped for the best in the worst of situations. Peter Ouroussoff, a white Russian, said, "We have signed a paper saying we would return to our homeland. But where is it? We have none. For us to go back is suicide. Carl Selan voiced their hope. "If we could stay here, America would find many of us would be assets . . .We want only to obey the law, to have peace, liberty. . “

After two cramped, seasick, hot, and dangerous weeks, the *Henry Gibbins* glided

into New York Harbor. The refugees thrilled at the sight of the Statue of Liberty, the symbol of freedom they had never hoped to witness for themselves.

Refugee Ivo Lederer said, "If you're coming from war-time, war-damaged Europe to see this enormous sight, lower Manhattan and the Statue of Liberty, I don't think there was a dry eye on deck."

The refugees soon encountered symbols that tore the scabs off painful memories. They had to wear tags that said, "Army Surplus Baggage." Trains, reminding them cattle cars and death camps, carried them north to Oswego and Fort Ontario. Uniformed military police and security soldiers from the Army, Navy and Coast Guard helped transport the refugees.

Uniforms and their connotations terrified the refugees. Armed guards and a six-foot, chain-linked, barbed wire fence welcomed them to their new home at Oswego. Townspeople and area residents lined up along the fence to stare at the refugees. From behind the fence, the refugees stared back. The armed soldiers kept watchful eyes on the people on both sides of the fence. Soon the refugees and townspeople made friends and climbed the fence to be with each other.

After the initial relief of reaching America and seeing their children enrolled in American schools, the shock of the chain link and barbed wire fence and restricted movement remained. When the harsh Oswego winter came, the refugees realized that they might be facing a confinement as long and harsh as the winter. They had come from sunny Italy and their ages averaged out to forty plus at least ten. Most did not have the stamina or the experience for winter weather in Oswego. and water pipes burst, everyone became obsessed with keeping warm and dry.

Many suffered fractures from falling on the snow and ice and Shelter Director Joseph Smart reported that many had to rely on others to bring meals to them. Even robust people had trouble moving from building to building. When Lake Ontario winds whipped through the wooden barracks, they shivered and struggled to survive, both physically and emotionally. For over a year, the refugees braved uncertainly, person trauma, and the fierce Lake Ontario winters.

Finally the War ended and on Saturday evening, December 22, 1945, President Harry Truman made a major statement on immigration and refugees from the White House. In his speech that evening, President Truman said that to the extent that existing immigration laws permitted, everything possible should be done at once to facilitate the entrance of displaced persons and refugees from Europe into the United States. He said that 3,900 refugees could enter the United States each month under the law and the quotas would not change. In the middle of his speech came the words that Ruth Gruber and her friends were hoping to hear. President Truman reiterated the story of President Roosevelt's decision to bring one thousand refugees to America and his promise that they would be returned to their homelands after the war. He continued:

However, surveys have revealed that most of these people would be admissible under the immigration laws. In the circumstances, it would be inhumane and wasteful to require these people to go all the way back to Europe merely for the purpose of applying there for immigration visas and returning to the United States. Many of them have close relatives, including sons and daughters, who are citizens of the United States and who have served and are serving honorably in the armed forces of our country. I am therefore directing the Secretary of State and the Attorney General to adjust the immigration status of those members of this group who may wish to stay here, in strict accordance with existing laws and regulations."

Most of the refugees wished to stay and became model American citizens, strengthened by their experiences and the Lake Ontario winters.

Lake Michigan

Captain William Callaway Sailed a Milwaukee Schooner to Hamburg

Captain William Callaway sailed the first Milwaukee built schooner across the Atlantic Ocean and returned to make his maritime career on the Great Lakes. Captain William Callaway began his career in his native England, and sailed the oceans and the Great Lakes. He earned the distinction of having commanded the first schooner ever built in Milwaukee that crossed the Atlantic Ocean. One of his more famous rescues took place on November 5, 1869, when he and his crew rescued the crew of the bark *Naomi.*

Captain William Callaway was born on May 13, 1831 at Portishead near Bristol, England. He went to sea early in his life and made several voyages from Bristol, some of them to North America.

In 1856, he settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and by 1862, he had found a partner and bought a ship.

Captain Callaway Sails the Hanover From Milwaukee to Liverpool

The schooner *Hanover* was built near Reed Street in Milwaukee and its owners commissioned Captain Callaway to sail her across the Atlantic Ocean to Liverpool, England. On Wednesday, June 22, 1859, the *Detroit Free Press* reported that the schooner *Hanover* had passed down the river towed by the tug John Ely and sparks from the tug set the jib topsail and flying jib on fire. The wind was blowing fresh up stream, so she was headed up river as soon as possible and the flames put out. She was towed into the dock at Windsor.

Four years later in 1863, Captain Callaway set sail for Hamburg, Germany, in the *Hanover.* He believed that she was the second schooner to make the trip, after the *Dean Richmond,* which voyaged to Liverpool in the 1850s.

Captain Calloway and his crew had an exciting voyage. Twice between Milwaukee and Quebec, the crew had to lighten the cargo so that the *Hanover* could pass through the canals. One time the cargo was shipped by railroad and another time barges hauled the cargo. The *Hanover* arrived in Liverpool safely.

The *Hanover* Meets the Confederate Blockade Runner *Florida*

When Captain Callaway was getting ready to leave Liverpool in the *Hanover* on the last leg of his voyage to Hamburg, Germany, English officials told him that the Confederate gunboat *Florida* lay in wait for enemy ships at Queenstown. While the *Hanover* was off Hollyhead making for the Irish coast, Captain Callaway spotted a steamer. The steamer turned off course and came toward the Hanover until nearly even with her. Then suddenly the steamer turned around and went back. Being in English waters. the *Florida* could not attack the *Hanover* which flew the Stars and Stripes.

The wind changed that night, and the *Hanover* changed her course to go through the Irish Channel. Captain Callaway didn't see the *Florida* again.

A story in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* dated October 1, 1863, reported the next leg of the *Hanover's* voyage. The story said that the brig *Hanover,* Captain Callaway, which sailed from Milwaukee for Hamburg last spring, had recently been sold in Germany and the Captain and crew were on their way back to Milwaukee.

Captain Callaway Rescues the Crew of the Bark Naomi

Captain William Callaway and his crew arrived safely back in Milwaukee and he still experienced several maritime adventures. One of his adventures involved the rescue of the crew of the bark *Naomi* on November 5, 1869 off Manistee, Michigan.
The *Toledo Blade* of November 12, 1869, tells the story. The bark *Naomi* was bound from Erie, Pennsylvania to Detroit, Michigan carrying a load of hard coal. A violent Lake Michigan storm blew up on November 4, 1869, and the *Naomi* struck bottom. She stranded and totally wrecked on Big Sable Point, Lake Michigan, sixteen miles south of Manistee, Michigan.
The water rushed into the *Naomi* so quickly that everyone aboard had to escape to the roof cabin, where they were buffeted by the wind and waves. Captain Carpenter then lashed himself and his wife to the mast. The captain asked a sailor to swim to shore for help and the sailor started out, but the storm overpowered him and he drowned. The *Naomi's* lifeboat had washed away, so there was no escape for the stranded sailors on the *Naomi.*

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Captain Callaway and his Crew Reach The Naomi

The next day, November 5, 1869, Captain Callaway of the *Toledo* and his men set out for the *Naomi*. The wind and waves were still strong and they had to bail water from their boat. Captain Callaway told the story of the rescue. He and his crew took the bark Toledo to the stranded bark Naomi. He said that the first thing he saw as he rowed to the stranded bark was Captain Carpenter and his wife. Captain Carpenter was fastened to one end of the rope passed over the mizzen boom, and his wife, fastened to the other end, lay dead in his lap.

The men on the wreck came along the rail and to the end of the boom, and then dropped into the boat. Three of the men dropped in all right, but when the fourth was in the act of descending into the boat, the waves knocked the boat out from under him and he fell overboard.

The under tow brought Captain Callaway's boat back to the Naomi and the man in the water came up alongside Captain Calloway's boat. One of the crew grabbed him and got him into the boat. As soon as he could speak, the rescued man called on heaven and the saints to rain blessings on Captain Callaway and his crew for saving him. It took three trips to rescue the crew of the Naomi.

After two or three trips, Captain Callaway and his crew rescued the rest of the crew, seven men altogether, but Captain Carpenter died before they could take him off. The rescuers left the bodies of Captain Carpenter and his wife on the Naomi, which soon went to pieces. The seven rescued men were all nearly dead from exposure and cold but they were finally revived.

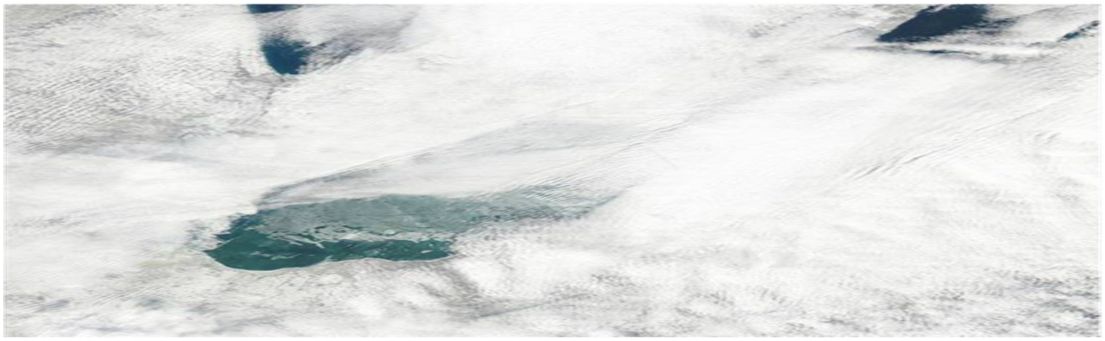
Peshtigo Fire, October 1871 On October 8, 1871, a forest fire raged in northeastern Wisconsin, including most of the southern half of the Door Peninsula, adjoining parts of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The largest community in the fire's path was Peshtigo, Wisconsin with a population of nearly 1,700 acres. The Peshtigo fire burned more than 1.2 million acres, and authorities estimated the death toll from the fire at between 1,500 and 2,500 people, making it the deadliest wildfire in documented history. The exact number of deaths in the Peshtigo fire is uncertain, but mass graves already exhumed and graves still being discovered in Peshtigo and the surrounding region indicate that the Peshtigo casualties are probably greater than the Johnstown Flood and the Chicago fire tolls. Captain Calloway and his ship carried supplies to the Peshtigo victims.

Captain Callaway continued sailing and one of his voyages involved carrying supplies to relieve the victims of the Peshtigo Fire and the other fierce forest fires that burned on the evening of October 8, 1871, the same night of the Chicago Fire.

When he retired from the Great Lakes, Captain Callaway founded the Callaway Fuel Company of Milwaukee. He died peacefully at his home at Hackett Avenue in Milwaukee in 1917, with his wife and children at his bedside.

Lake Erie

Ice Skater Benjamin Langford is Rescued from Lake Erie Ice



Benjamin Langford strapped on his skates to pick up a package from his friend Darby at the Presque Isle Lighthouse and ended up marooned on Lake Erie ice.

At sunset on an early December day in 1838, Benjamin Franklin Langford had a rendezvous with his friend, an Irish boy named Darby. Darby was to meet him at the Presque Isle Lighthouse near Erie, Pennsylvania, with an important package and a letter. Benjamin bundled himself up against the cold, slung his skates over his shoulder and set out for the lighthouse. When he reached the bay, he noticed several sailing vessels and two or three steamers frozen in the ice near the shore. Out in the middle of the bay, waves tossed and rolled.

As Benjamin sat on the beach and strapped on his skates, he felt the wind grow stronger. It snatched his scarf and waved it like a red banner. Pulling his woolen coat more closely around him, Benjamin skated slowly toward the lighthouse. He skated a straight line about a mile from shore, then turned and forged a course parallel to the shore. The wind gathered strength and punched him like a boxer. Pulling his scarf over his eyes, Benjamin skated blindly into the solid wind wall. Fighting for breath, he pulled the scarf from his eyes to see how far he had come. He had skated too wide of an arc. The lighthouse loomed farther away from him than it had been when he had started his skate.
The wind pushed Benjamin beyond the lighthouse and, bracing himself, he started toward it, fighting the wind. The entire surface of the ice quivered like an earthquake, and Benjamin landed flat on his face.

A loud roar echoed in his ears and rumbled like thunder until it was almost lost in the distance and wildness of the storm. He scrambled to his feet and then he saw his danger. The great body of ice had yielded to the immense pressure of the wind and split along the shore close to him

Thinking fast, Benjamin raced the wind for about sixty yards to get a head start. Gathering his strength, he leapt across the chasm between his ice floe and the sheet of solid ice. He cleared the patch of water by three feet, falling violently backward as he did so. He saw blurred images crowds of men, women, and children cheering him from the shore and from the lighthouse at the end of the pier. Getting to his feet with great difficulty, Benjamin heard another crack and a wider chasm opened between him and the shore.

Again, Benjamin struggled until he reached the edge of the second chasm, and he saw that this time the winds had opened up even a larger chasm. The entire body of ice had parted from the American shore and the storm rapidly whipped it toward Canada. Benjamin faced nothing but inky black night and mountainous waves.

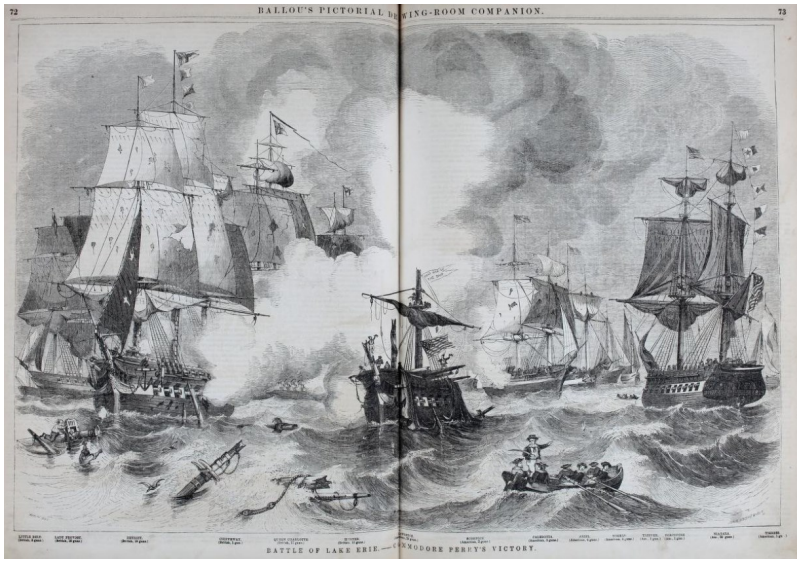
The people on the now distant pier attempted to rescue Benjamin. They lifted a six-oarer boat from the inner side of the pier and launched it with a goodly crew. Benjamin didn't see them launch the boat. Distance and the storm prevented him seeing what the people on shore were doing and so did his fear. He knew that he was lost, yet after a time, a pleasing glow stole through his body. He began to feel oblivious to the activities on land. He sank gently down and with stiffening fingers, undid the straps of his skates. He leaned back on his elbows, gazing languidly through the darkness and smiling with delight at the sensations creeping over him. He sank into a soft featherbed of sleep.
When Benjamin opened his eyes, the first person he saw was a boy named Lathrop. Lathrop had run away to sea and had been apprenticed to the captain of a ship that was renowned on the Great Lakes, the *Queen Charlotte*. The *Queen Charlotte* had been Commodore Barclay's "flag ship,"taken from the British in Commodore Perry's victory at the battle of Lake Erie in 1813. Now, in 1838, the *Queen Charlotte* carried staves in their rough state to Buffalo. Lathrop was older than Benjamin and Benjamin had always respected him.

At first, Lathrop didn't realize that Benjamin had awakened. Lathrop carved a small figurehead with a coarse jack knife out of a piece of pine, whistling to himself very softly. Benjamin heard Lathrop whistling, but he lay still, trying to remember what had happened the night before and how he had wound up aboard the *Queen Charlotte*. At first he couldn't remember, but then pictures came into his mind. He saw rescue boats and people lifting him onto the *Queen Charlotte*.

When he grew up, Benjamin became a sailor. He traveled the four quarters of the earth. He saw hickory and oak and pine trees slivered into matches with the lighting before his eyes. He saw the strong masts of a ship snapped off like pipe stems, and flung into the surf .He stood when an earthquake roared and scattered death and ruin above and around him, but never yet did he hear such a sound as the cracking of the ice sheet on the Presque Isle ice.

Benjamin Langford Stopped Ice Skating

Thirty five years later, recalling his adventure in the *Oconomowoc Times*, Benjamin said, "I have never had skates on my feet since that period and in all probability, never shall again. I have leaped over all ambition as regards the ice in that respect and have been quite satisfied with the sight of an iceberg in Newfoundland waters since, in the hot months of June, or of the smell of the cold mist which prevails when they are thick on a dark night in the Southern Ocean."



The Queen Charlotte

Lake Superior

Did Captain John McKay Float a Bottle Note as the Manistee Sank?

The Manistee

Captain John McKay was swift and sure, but did he have time to post a note in a bottle before the Manistee sank in a fierce November Lake Superior storm?

The Lake Superior waves had evened out into long comers and transformed from smashing to soothing by the time the tug *Maytham* arrived in Houghton, Michigan on Thursday, November 22, 1883.

A few days before, a storm had brewed on Lake Superior with the wind blowing fiercely from the northwest, the temperature plummeting far below zero, and the waves building mountains. Now in the calmer days after the storm, the tugs *Maytham* and *Bontin* searched the area for traces of the missing propeller *Manistee.* The *Maytham* crew discovered a water bucket and a piece of the pilot house from the propeller *Manistee* floating in Lake Superior about forty miles from Ontonagon.

The Manistee Founders In A Lake Superior Storm

According to a story about the ***Manistee*** in the *Janesville (Wisconsin) Gazette* dated November 22, 1883, the *Manistee* probably foundered in the Friday, November 16, 1883, west of the Keweenaw Peninsula off of Eagle Harbor, Michigan.

Nothing of the ***Manistee,*** built in Cleveland in 1850, and rebuilt in 1868 and 1881, remained except pieces of wreckage. Her latest owners, Leopold & Austrian, of Chicago who ran the Lake Michigan and Lake Superior Transportation Company valued her at $25,000.The 190 feet long, 28 feet beam, and 960 tons burthen *Manistee* had been operating on Lake Superior since 1872, carrying freight and passengers between Duluth, Minnesota, and Houghton, Michigan.

No trace of the *Manistee's* crew appeared. Some newspaper accounts estimated that there were at least 25 people aboard. The New York Times story said that the crew consisted of 18 men and one woman, and many of them were from Chicago. The crew included Captain John McKay, purser George Seaton, steward F.M. Killey, first mate Andy Mack or second mate Harry Smith. No trace appeared of the first and second engineers, the cook, waiters, sailors, chamber maids or deckhands.

The *Port Huron Times* of Friday, November 23, 1883, reported that the propeller *Manistee* had left Duluth, Minnesota, on Saturday, November 10, 1883, and anchored in the harbor at Bayfield, Wisconsin, while the storm raged out on Lake Superior. On Thursday, November, 15, 1883, while the *Manistee* laid wind bound, the propeller *India* also ran into Bayfield for shelter. The *Manistee* transferred her passengers to the *City of Duluth* bound for Houghton and Captain John McKay, a venturesome navigator, immediately let his lines go and started out into the storm, clearing for Ontonagon at midnight.

According to the *Marine Record*, on Thursday, November 29, 1883, the captain of the steamer *Hackley* reported running through portions of the wreckage of the *Manistee* between Ontonagon and Portage Canal, fifteen miles off shore.

Trout Fishermen Find A Message In A Bottle

Sparse but definitive evidence revealed the fate of the *Manistee*, but the fate of her crew proved to be more elusive. A message in a bottle seemed to shed some light on the fate of the *Manistee's* crew. On May 26, 1885, a story from St. Paul, Minnesota, reported that a note from Captain McKay was found in a bottle in Fish Creek in Ashland, Wisconsin.

The Detroit Post of Wednesday, May 27, 1885, picked up the story. A party of trout fishermen angling up Fish Creek which runs into Lake Superior at Ashland, Wisconsin, found a sealed bottle. They pulled a piece of paper from inside the bottle with a written message that said: "On board the *Manistee*-Terrible storm tonight, may not live to see morning. Yours to the world. John McKay."

The people in Ashland who had done business with Captain McKay carefully compared the handwriting on the slip of paper with receipts and other documents that Captain McKay had signed and they declared that the handwriting on the message in the bottle was his without a doubt. They sent the message in the bottle to Captain McKay's widow Elisabeth and his son George in Cleveland, Ohio, for further identification.

The Captain John McKay that they knew certainly could have written the message while his ship sank under him and he contemplated a cold, Lake Superior end of his career and his life.

Captain John McKay, Pioneer Lake Superior Captain

Captain John McKay and his vessels fitted into the Lake Superior maritime timeline after the bateaux of the early explorers. He captained some of the first ships operating on Lake Superior, including the *Algonquin* and the *Mineral Rock*. These early ships carried supplies to trading posts along the Lake Superior Shore and returned carrying such commodities as furs, wild rice, maple sugar and salt fish. Some of the early vessels and their crews prospected for copper and iron ore.

In 1845, Captain McKay moved his family to Sault Ste. Marie so that he could be master of the Algonquin.The 1850 Federal Census of Chippewa County shows that at this point in his life Captain McKay was 40, and his wife Elisabeth only 31. They had three children: George 12, Elisabeth, 10, and John, 7.

Captain John McKay Meets Bishop Frederic Baraga Aboard The Mineral Rock

By 1850, Captain McKay had moved from being master of the Algonquin to master of the *Mineral Rock,* and in 1859, Father John Cehbul of La Pointe Mission and Bishop Frederic Baraga encountered Captain McKay during a trip from Sault Ste. Marie to Ontonagon on the *Mineral Rock.*

When Bishop Baraga visited Bayfield and LaPointe for the last time. His health had deteriorated to the point where his hands trembled constantly, and he was partially paralyzed. Father John Chebul accompanied Bishop Baraga on the return voyage to Marquette, and Captain McKay noticed that Bishop Baraga seemed very feeble. At dinner, Bishop Baraga tried to eat a little bit of soup, but his hand trembled so violently that he spilled most of the soup before he could bring the spoon to his mouth.

According to Father Chebul's account, Captain McKay noticed the Bishop's condition and he motioned for Father Chebul to take his place at the head of the table. Father Chebul reluctantly moved, because he didn't know what Captain McKay meant to do. Captain McKay went down to Bishop Baraga and seated himself beside the Bishop. Captain McKay fed the bishop with a spoon, holding the Bishop's head with his other hand.

The sight of the Captain's compassion for Bishop Baraga moved the passengers to tears, because Captain McKay usually appeared to be a brisk, rough spoken man. After dinner, the passengers followed Captain McKay out of the dining room, thanking him in the name of humanity and Christianity for his kind act to Bishop Baraga.

Did Captain John McKay Write The Note In The Bottle?

Captain John McKay's son George was born aboard the steamer *Commodore Perry* in Toledo, Ohio, on January 13, 1838, and began sailing on his father's ships while he was still a boy. In 1858, about a year after his father moved the family to Cleveland, George McKay married Mary Ann Swaffield and 1883, he came ashore to become general manager of the Cleveland Transportation Company's fleet.

After the 1885 *Detroit Post* story about the note in the bottle that Captain John McKay supposedly wrote, the note in the bottle story appeared in several other newspapers around the Great Lakes and beyond for at least a decade. In June 1897, the *Marine Review* reported that Captain George P. McKay of Cleveland, had investigated the note and he stated that it was false.

The *Marine Review* story said that Captain McKay investigated the note and decided that his “brother”, (probably his father) had not written the note. The Marine Review story alleged that the newspaper correspondent in Bayfield had been seduced by the “bottle message fiends”. The Marine Review said that the Bayfield correspondent was not fit to be a newspaper reporter and the correspondent should be prosecuted for inventing stories to make a few dollars from them.

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