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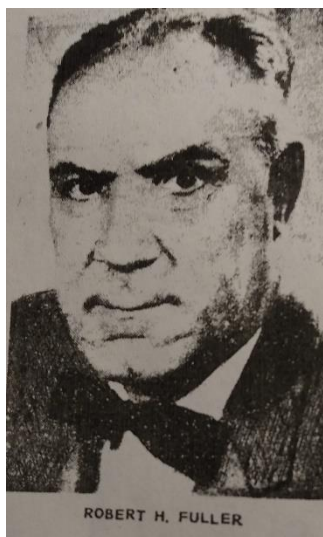
Ports and Portholes



Dock Tales: Pinney and Pittsburgh & Conneaut Docks: 1796-1969

Docks have their own life stories and Ashtabula's Pinney Dock, and Conneaut's Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock tell their stories with the variety and verve of the Lake Erie waves that buffet them. These chapters tell stories of the two docks ranging from the first sightings of their harbors from 1796-1969

Portraits of Pinney Dock and Its Ancestors and Associates



In his history of Ashtabula Harbor historian Robert Fuller described the Ashtabula Harbor as “formed eons ago by the great ice age and the sands of time.” The Ashtabula Harbor is located on Lake Erie at the mouth of the Ashtabula River, a winding stream that historian Fuller says would be more appropriately called a “creek.”¹

Moses Cleaveland and his surveying party are believed to be the first white men to enter the Ashtabula River in 1796. In 1801, Thomas Hamilton arrived in Ashtabula and built a cabin at the west end of the Ashtabula River near its mouth. Tradition has it that two men from Conneaut and a party of other settlers who arrived at the harbor by boat helped him erect his cabin. Historical records suggest that the party of settlers could have been Judge Eliphalet Austin and his companions because they sailed into the Ashtabula Harbor in 1801.

Historian Fuller identifies George Beckwith who arrived in 1803, and built his home near the harbor mouth, as Ashtabula's first permanent resident. The following winter, George Beckwith froze to death in Saybrook while returning from Austinburg. His wife and family managed to eke out a living by helping travelers and other settlers navigate the river and harbor.

¹ A history of the Port of Ashtabula, Robert H. Fuller. Supplement to the Harbor Journal. With the help of Paul Petros, Gordon Amsbary, and the family of the late Robert H. Fuller. The Harbor Journal Charles Altonen, 1985.



Ashtabula Harbor, 1800s

Robert Fuller mentioned Peleg Sweet who arrived in 1805, locating his residence on the east side of the Harbor and Colonel William Hubbard who arrived the next year and settled on lands south of the Beckwith property. He highlighted the life of Colonel William Hubbard who used his home as a refuge for fugitive slaves and helped establish the Lake Shore & Michigan Southern Railroad as a Harbor mainstay.

According to Robert Fuller, immigrants including Italian, Finnish, and Irish immigrants, developed Ashtabula Harbor. Using their sharp minds, iron wills, and muscular frames, they shoveled iron ore and coal into wheelbarrows and then dumped it into wooden wagons for horses to haul away. Finns, Italians, and Irishmen built the first docks. As the years rolled on like storm swells on the lake, they added landfill extending far out into the lake to expand the docks to meet increased demand for coal, iron ore, and other items shipping on the Great Lakes.

Judge Austin brought a load of goods into the Ashtabula Harbor in 1801, possibly his own household goods. Most of the early settlers were from the east, moving west to Ashtabula to buy land and establish new homes. They would travel overland as far as Buffalo, New York, and then acquire small sailing craft that hugged the Lake Erie shoreline to finish their journey.

In 1802, Reverend Joseph Badger brought the first load of merchandise into the Ashtabula Harbor, and he encountered a problem. He had to excavate the sandbar that the Ashtabula River had built up at the entrance to the harbor so that he could push his boat from Lake Erie into the River. Reverend Badger and the first settlers had to improvise improvements with what crude tools they possessed, like axes and crowbars. Their major task was keeping the channel open through the sandbar into the river. Each time the settlers opened a channel, storms would sift the sand back into it. Even when they tried to keep the channel open by building dirt jetties

into the lake, storms refilled the channel. Finally, these early settlers made the first improvement to the Ashtabula River by straightening its channel near its mouth.

As more people arrived at the harbor, they formulated more plans to improve it. Gideon Granger, Postmaster General during the administration of President Thomas Jefferson in the early 1800s, had one of the most ambitious ideas. He proposed that the federal government build a harbor at Ashtabula. Gideon owned a large tract of land near Jefferson, and he visualized an inland city built on his land with a direct connection to the Port of Ashtabula. He planned to construct a port extending into Lake Erie without utilizing the natural channel of the Ashtabula River. Finally in 1824, the Ohio Legislature chartered the Ashtabula Harbor Company, the first organized effort to improve the harbor. There is no record that the company accomplished its purpose or even attempted to do so.

In the meantime, settlers continued to arrive and establish homesteads and farms, increasing commerce on the lake and intensifying the need for a good harbor. By 1826, harbor commerce made it imperative to convince Congress to appropriate 12,000 dollars to improve Ashtabula Harbor.

The United States Engineers dammed the old mouth of the river and built parallel piers into the lake from the mouth of the river to beyond the sandbar that blocked the entrance. The Engineers reasoned that this improvement would narrow the channel and confine the water enough so it would scour a channel through the sandbar and preserve the beach configuration at the river's mouth. The piers made of timber cribs filled with locally gathered stone, extended an average length of 642 feet. After this initial improvement, Congress made almost yearly appropriations to maintain and improve the harbor.

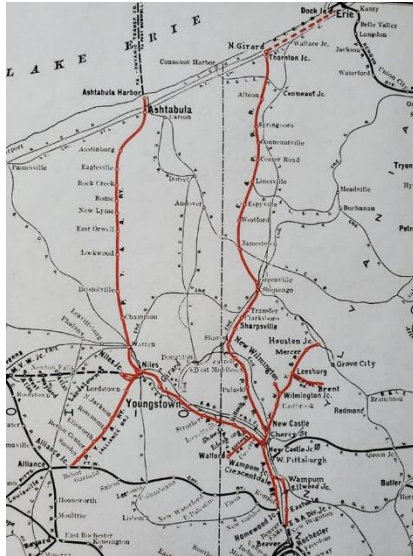
Shipbuilding occupied center construction stage in the early years of Ashtabula Harbor. In 1814, B.A. Napier built the first harbor vessel, a schooner christened *Tempest*. From then until 1856, 60 vessels of various types were built at Ashtabula Harbor.

By 1873, railroads had pushed their way into the harbor, introducing a new era of commerce, with docks playing a vital role. Before 1873, all docks were located north of the bridge over the Ashtabula River, at what is the modern West 5th Street. At this point, all improvements to the river ceased. The docks north of the bridge were used for various cargos, but they dwindled between the years 1853 and 1873. From 1873 to the 21st Century, ore unloading docks and coal terminals were built on both sides of the Ashtabula River south of the highway bridge. Congress aided this explosive growth by contributing increasingly large appropriations for improving and maintaining the harbor.

Up until 1873, Congress had appropriated about \$200,000 to improve and enlarge the harbor, but to accommodate the larger vessels with deeper drafts, the railroads and later the U.S. Engineers deepened and widened the river channel as far as the highway bridge. From 1873 to 1900, Congress appropriated 450,000 for the improvement and maintenance of Ashtabula Harbor.

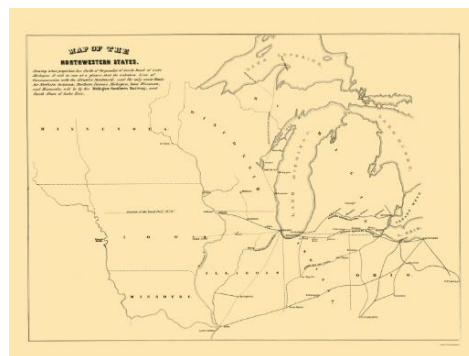
Railroads and Coal and Ore Cargos

The Pittsburgh, Youngstown, and Ashtabula Railroad extended tracks and built docks on the west side of the Ashtabula river while the Jamestown and Franklin Division of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad engaged in the same activities on the opposite side. On May 1, 1873, the Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Ashtabula Railroad, located on the west side of the Ashtabula River, opened to traffic.



The Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Ashtabula dock handled its first cargo on June 25, 1873, when workers loaded coal aboard the schooner *C.H. Walker* with wheelbarrows. The first cargo of ore to arrive was 730 tons on the schooner *Emma Mays* or *Maize* on the same dock on July 10 and 11, 1873.

Later in that year, the Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Ashtabula Dock Company began to expand and build new slips and facilities. A new Ashtabula River Channel was dredged, and slips built on both sides of it. The Pittsburgh, Youngstown and Ashtabula Railroad built on the west side and the Jamestown and Franklin Division of the Lakeshore, and Michigan Southern Railroad built on the east side. Business on both sides of the river boomed, and by 1880, 794 vessels entered and departed the port, and they carried a total of 476,942 tons of cargo. By 1890, the number had increased to 3,298 vessels carrying 3,286,757 tons of cargo.



Loading and Unloading Coal and Ore



Hulett Ore
Unloader

When the Emma Mays arrived at the Pittsburgh, Youngstown, & Ashtabula dock to unload its 730 tons of iron ore on July 10 and 11, 1873, no machines waited expectantly on the docks. One account said that the ore was unloaded by passing a rope through a snatch block fastened to the rigging of the ship. One end of the rope was attached to a tub made of a barrel sawed in half and the other end to a horse driven by a boy on the dock. Workers filled the tub by hand, and it was raised by the horse on the dock pulling the rope to a catwalk on the deck. Then the ore was dumped into wheelbarrows which were trundled ashore over a gangplank.

Another source said that the Lockports were used to unload the ore, and yet another account has it that a crew of men experienced in unloading were brought in from Erie. They rigged up an outfit with a boom and pulley arrangement to raise the ore from the hold of the vessel.

When the Pittsburgh, Youngstown, & Ashtabula Railroad built its slip south of the original docks, it moved much of its operations there. Some sources stated that the tub raised by horsepower was used from time to time at the original docks. Other cities had used horsepower on the docks, although as an improvement some of the docks had substituted donkey engines for the horses.

Beginning in 1955, Nelson Pinney and his crew began building a new dock area east of the New York Central Railroad docks on the site of the former Woodland Beach Park. The park was leveled and by 1959, two finger piers 2,000 feet long at right angles to the shore were completed. Congress appropriated about five million dollars to create a 25-foot deep and 600-foot-wide channel to service these docks.

Nelson Pinney and his crew installed gantry cranes with a fifteen-ton capacity and other equipment to handle general cargoes. Ships from all over the world brought

in diverse cargoes to unload at Pinney docks. The docks handled tons of sand, gravel, aggregates, and salt, as well as many kinds of general merchandise.

As the docks in the Port of Ashtabula grew and the centuries progressed, so did the loading and unloading machinery. The Lockport, a boom operated by a steam engine affixed to a railroad flat car and covered with a small shed, was one of the first mechanical unloaders. Operating on railroad tracks parallel to the ship, its boom could swing in a 180-degree arc while the rest of it remained stationary. The Grasshopper Rig or Ringaround was permanently fastened to the dock and its long boom was its only moving part. The boom could reach from all points of the ships to the railroad cars at the rear of the docks. McMyler Whirlies featured longer booms that could be raised and lowered and the Whirlies could turn in a complete circle.

In 1890, it took fifty men twelve hours- the normal workday – to unload 1,000 tons of iron ore. By 1896, workers were unloading 3,500 tons of iron ore in a working day. By the early 1900s, the docks had again expanded and featured new machinery inventions. As cargos increased and ship builders produced bigger and longer ships to accommodate the iron ore and steel businesses, creative entrepreneurs like Alexander Ephraim Brown and George Hulett invented unloaders that would reduce the time, effort, and shipping costs in ports across the Great Lakes and Canadian ports like Thunder Bay, Ontario.

Technology made faster and easier loading and unloading cargo on the docks possible and produced larger results in a smaller amount of time. When electric power became the common energy source, Ashtabula became the first Great Lakes Port to use electrically operated cranes, hoists, Huletts, and transfer bridges. Enhanced loading and unloading methods motivated shipbuilders to build longer and bigger ships far into the Twentieth Century.

Since 1801, when Thomas Hamilton arrived at the mouth of the Ashtabula River to the present time, Ashtabula Harbor has been shaped by people of different ethnic and social backgrounds working to forge individual and community lives. Or as historian Robert Fuller phrases it, originators of “Community Spirit.”²

^{2 2} A history of the Port of Ashtabula, Robert H. Fuller. Supplement to the Harbor Journal. With the help of Paul Petros, Gordon Amsbary, and the family of the late Robert H. Fuller. The Harbor Journal, Charles Altonen, 1985.

This table offers information about each of the docks at the port. This information is compiled from the 10th edition of *Greenwood's Guide to Great Lakes Shipping*. The year, 1969, is chosen to illustrate the height of use for much of the large materials handling equipment used on the Cleveland docks.

A tabular profile of the Port of Ashtabula, Ohio : The Cleveland Memory Project

HARBOR NAME	OWNER OR OPERATOR	CARGO	EQUIPMENT
"A. & B" (Outer Harbor)	Ashtabula & Buffalo Dock Company	Unloading: Iron Ore	Unloading: 4 Wellman Hulett-Type 17-ton Automatic Ore Unloaders
Carferry Slip	Acme Scrap Iron & Metal Company	Loading: Scrap Iron	Loading: 2 Crawler Cranes 1 Locomotive Crane
Penn Central Dock #10 (Ashtabula River)	Lower Lake Dock Company	Unloading: Iron Ore	Unloading: Conveyor Fed Traveling Ship Loader with Lowering Spout and Gates
Pinney Dock #2	Pinney Dock and Transportation Company	Unloading: Various Bulk Materials	Unloading: Self-unloaders only
Pinney Dock #3	Pinney Dock and Transportation Company	Unloading: Various Bulk Materials	Unloading: Self-unloaders only
Pinney Dock #4	Pinney Dock and Transportation Company	Loading & Unloading: General Cargos Various Bulk Materials	Loading & Unloading: 2 15-ton Gantry Cranes 1 60-ton heavy-lift portable crane
Sidley (Ashtabula River)	R. W. Sidley Company	Unloading: Stone & Sand	Unloading: Self-unloaders only
Union (Outer Harbor - East)	Union Dock Company	Unloading: Iron Ore	Unloading: 4 Wellman Hulett-Type 17-ton Automatic Ore Unloaders



The first Ashtabula lighthouse built in 1836.

Ashtabula Range Lights and fog whistle.



Range light, September 1893.

The third lighthouse was built in 1904-1905 and after being moved to a new location, is still in use today.

Working on the Docks

Captain Edward Whitney, Ashtabula & Buffalo Dock Company, Pinney Dock Affiliate

Stories of dock people including vessel captains, Hewlett operators and watchmen accompanied decades of growth. Captain Edward Orson Whitney, superintendent of the Ashtabula & Buffalo Docks contributed his maritime career to Ashtabula's dock history. The son of Myron J. and Florence J. White Whitney, he was born in Henderson, New York on December 27, 1872. His grandfather Edward White, also a native of Henderson, New York, was a pioneer sea captain. Edward's brother Lee married Matilda McHugh and they lived in Henderson and his sister Ethel D. married Captain Ralph Gleason who had sailed the lakes since his fourteenth year. At the time of his untimely death at age 41, Captain Gleason was master of the steamer *Georgetown*, engaged in the pulp wood trade between Pentecost and Niagara Falls, New York.

Edward Whitney received his education in the Henderson public schools and at Watertown, New York. In 1889, at age seventeen, he began his maritime career as a deckhand on the steamer *Missoula* and during his second season aboard was promoted to porter and watchman. By 1902, he had served on various vessels, and he worked his way up to master of the steamer *Bartlett* and after that became master of the steamers *Henry Cort*, *William H. Gilbert*, *John Erickson*, and the *F. B. Morse* from 1903-1908.

On January 21, 1896, Captain Whitney married Betha M. Howard Whitney and they had four children: Zelma H., Howard, Zaida E., and Henry.

In 1909, he came to the Ashtabula Dock Company as superintendent, succeeding Captain E.S. Henry and he moved with his family to a house on 95 Walnut Street in Ashtabula.

The Whitneys had lived on Walnut Street for about two years when Captain Whitney and his daughter Zelma participated in a Great Lakes Engineering event. On October 30, 1911, the Great Lakes Engineering Works of Ashtabula laid the hull of the *Louis R. Davidson* and seven months later, after the Davidson made its big splash in the Ashtabula River, a newspaper article declared that "a mighty proud and graceful craft she is. Nothing has been spared to make her complete, and both her owners, builders, officers and crew appear to be eminently satisfied."

Lola Remick, with Zelma Whitney and Virginia Cheney serving as her maids of honor christened the *Louis R. Davidson*. Capt. E. O. Whitney, who was

superintendent of the Ashtabula and Buffalo docks, and three others were aboard the vessel when she launched. Another important event in Captain Whitney's life occurred in 1912, when the name of the Ashtabula Dock Company was changed to the Ashtabula & Buffalo Dry Docks.

Tragedy also entered Captain Whitney's life. An August 29, 1928, story in the Watertown Daily News of Watertown, New York chronicled what happened. The Whitney's son Howard E. Whitney, 27, and his companion Raymond P. Johnson, 34, of Buffalo, New York, were killed when Howard's roadster overturned on an "S" curve on North Ridge Road near Saybrook early on Thursday, August 23.

Howard Whitney was well known in Henderson, where he was born and lived until he was about ten years old when his parents decided to move to Ashtabula. His body was brought to Henderson for burial and during the interim, rested in the receiving vault at Chestnut Grove Cemetery in Ashtabula. Funeral services for Howard were held at the Ducro Funeral Chapel on Saturday at 2 p.m. in Ashtabula, with Reverend Creetus A. Dowell of St. Peter's Episcopal Church officiating. Howard's mother had been ill for a year and her condition had worsened to critical. She died a little over a month after his death, on September 27, 1928.

Since moving to Ohio, the Whitneys visited Henderson often. Although Captain Whitney visited his mother, Mrs. F.J. Whitney, at Henderson during the summer, his wife could not accompany him because of her illness. The Watertown Daily News pointed out that Captain Whitney sailed the lakes when he lived in Henderson, but he moved to Ashtabula to become the Superintendent of the A & B Dock.³

Besides being a dock superintendent, Captain Whitney became an important member of the Ashtabula community. He and his family were members of St. Peter's Episcopal Church. He belonged to the Masonic Lodge; the Shrine of Cleveland; the Ashtabula County Health League and served as a chief of the American Protective league of Northeastern Ohio. In January 1924, he was elected a member of the city council.⁴

³ Watertown Daily News, Watertown, New York, Wednesday Afternoon, August 29, 1928, page 18.

⁴ HISTORY of ASHTABULA COUNTY, OHIO, By Mrs. Moina W. Large, IN TWO VOLUMES - ILLUSTRATED - VOLUME ONE - Published by Historical Publishing Company Topeka - Indianapolis 1924

Tragedy on the Docks

Tragedy again invaded Captain Whitney's life in June 1937. Captain Whitney had several good friends in Ashtabula, including Robert W. Dingee. A copy of his account of the death of his friend Robert Dingee can be found the Ashtabula Maritime Museum.

The Ashtabula & Buffalo Dock Company

Ashtabula Harbor, Ohio

The Shooting of my Old Friend Robert Dingee

E.O. . Whitney Supt.

On June 22, 1937, I had been over to the Marine Bank. It was raining slightly, and I had my raincoat on. I had stopped in Doxy's Creamery and called my son Harry to drive to my office for me as I had a slight attack of the flu and was quite weak. I was walking up the hill toward our office, and by the Gilbert Fish House I noticed a car backing down the hill. It was Joe DeMarco a plumber from the East side. His little girl was on the seat with him, and he suddenly seized her and threw her under the seat of his car.

I said, "What is the matter, Joe?"

He pointed up the street and said, "Look at that crazy man with the shotgun!"

I looked and the man was pointing his gun at the building and exclaiming, "I will get all the rest of you s—ons of bit--hes!"

He walked down the street swinging the gun and swearing.

I noticed some of the men at the main gate running up the hill and then ran back again. The man seated himself on the bumper of an automobile with his gun pointing toward the main gate and his finger on the trigger. I kept on until abreast of him and said, "What is the matter, Joe?"

He said, "Captain Whitney, my friend, you take care of your men."

He arose from the automobile and came across the street to shake my hand.

I took hold of the gun and said, "Give me this, Joe."

He said, "No, Cap. I want to get some more fellows."

Hutchinson at the gate rushed up and put the handcuffs on him.

Just then my son Harry came along with the machine, and I said, "Take him over to the jail and then come back for me."

We cut his finger a little when we took the gun away. He said, "Look out, Cap. The gun is loaded. Better unload it."

Which I did. I had not known at this time that anyone had been killed.

Evar Pearson rushed up and said, "My God, Cap, he just shot Bob!"



Evar Pearson

I said, "Bad?"

He said, "He is dead."

Just imagine how I felt after hearing this. I walked up toward the office with the gun in my hand and the loaded shells in my pocket. I noticed the discarded shell across the street, and I asked Joe DeMarco to get it for me. I sat on the steps leading to the office waiting for Joe to bring me the cartridge. Just then an Italian funeral procession came along, and it seemed hours to me sitting there with the shot gun in my lap. After it passed, Joe brought me the spent cartridge and I went inside.

After getting inside I noticed the burlap sack that Varchette had used to keep the gun out of sight when he entered the building. Just then, Lieutenant Axel Anderson of the city police came in and I said, "Here Axel is the gun, the loaded cells and the discharged one, and the gunny sack and I am going home."

Axel says, "No, come and we will look at him."

We went in and poor Bob was on his back in the corner with a towel over his breast where he had been shot. They left him there until the coroner came from Geneva and the sheriff from Jefferson. There was quite a little just criticism of this, as the police had all the evidence and the coroner seemed to want the sheriff there before he did anything. It is said he also tried to get the funeral.

My son came and I went home and was pretty badly broken up as Bob and I had been friends for years before I came here to live, and he was my assistant during our American Protective League activities. It seems that Joe Varchette felt he had a grievance against Bob and others working for the Coal Company, also one city policeman and the dock police.

He entered Bob's office with the gun under the sack and went to the door and saw Jack Callan of the R.R. office giving a coal report and he exclaimed, "I have a present for you, Bob!"

Bob said, "All right Joe," and stood up.

Varchette shot right by Callan and killed Bob. Then he turned and looked for Pearson and said, "I should get you too." But Pearson had disappeared under a desk. He then went out across the street and reloaded the discharged barrel and kept pointing the gun toward the building and swearing. Then he started down opposite the main gate.

Perhaps it was just as well that I did not know that he had shot Bob when I accosted him, and he was surely bound to get more of them from his perch on the automobile.

This is a true statement of the occurrence.

E.O.W. ⁵

Captain Whitney died in 1950 and he is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Henderson, New York.



The Ashtabula Car Ferry was a train ferry that traveled between Ashtabula, Ohio across Lake Erie to Port Burwell, Ontario on the north shore of Lake Erie. The Ashtabula Car Ferry was built in 1906 at the Great Lakes Engineering Works in St. Clair, Michigan, to carry ore and coal cars across the lake. On September 18, 1958, she sank at her dock in Ashtabula Harbor, after colliding with the steamer Ben Moreell.

⁵ Affidavit in the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum Library Archives.

Portraits of Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock



Raymond Hugh Welsh

History of Conneaut Harbor

November 6, 1957, marks the 65th anniversary of the 1892 arrival at Conneaut Harbor of *Steamer Kershaw* which brought to this port the first cargo of iron ore from the Mesabi range. The arrival of this vessel was announced by the blowing of whistles and ringing of bells, and a large crowd of local people rushed to the harbor to witness its entry into the port.

Many climbed on board the *Kershaw* and obtained chunks of the red ore to carry home as souvenirs of the occasion, a surprising fact since the first iron ore received at Conneaut Harbor arrived almost 60 years earlier.⁶

While much has been written about the progress of ore handling at our harbor since that day, this is an appropriate time to consider also the earlier days of navigation when Conneaut was young.

Moses Cleaveland and his party of surveyors were the first white men known to have entered this port, when they landed here on July 4, 1796, naming it [Port] Independence. Stow's Castle was quickly erected as headquarters for the band and was the first building erected in this vicinity by white men, with the exception of a rude hut near the state line south of Route 20, used by a hermit named Halstead.

As Conneaut grew into a small village, sailing vessels began to stop at this port. In 1828 the State of Ohio passed an act authorizing Orrin Wilder to construct a pier for public and private use at the lake. On March 3, 1829, an appropriation of \$7,500 was granted by Congress for the improvement of the harbor at Salem (Conneaut), the work being done by a corps of engineers supervised by Capt. T.W. Maurine. Piers measuring 360 ft. in length on the east of the harbor and 270 ft. on the west side were completed by the end of the season, and with their construction,

⁶ History of Conneaut Harbor, Raymond Hugh Welsh. Found in the vertical files of the Albion Public Library. A version appeared in the Conneaut News Herald of April 1946.

Conneaut Harbor became a regular stopping place for lake vessels. By 1833 further improvements had been made and the piers had been extended due north 330 ft. and then 800 ft. in a northwesterly direction, diverging at that point for another 120 ft., leaving a 176-foot opening at the mouth of the channel. The depth varied from 8 to 16 ft.

In the ten-year period, 1829 to 1839, Congress had appropriated \$43,305 for improvements of our harbor. As early as 1837 Conneaut Harbor had a light house of which W.W. Woodward was the keeper, and in 1846 the harbor was described as an important shipping port "with a pier with a light house on it, two forwarding houses and eleven dwellings."

In 1831 the schooner-scow *Olive Branch* brought to Conneaut the first cargo of iron ore received here. It was consigned to the Ohio Furnace located on Conneaut Creek near Furnace Road. This concern, owned by Mr. A. Dart and M.P. Ormsby and employing about 150 men, had depleted the supply of bog ore in this area and had to look elsewhere to meet its requirements. The *Olive Branch*, and later *Jack Downing*, brought cargoes of ore from Lairds, Doolittles and Culbertsons from the east, and finally from Massasauga Point at the extreme tip of Presque Isle. The *Olive Branch* was listed as having a gross tonnage of thirty-eight tons.

Also handled at this port were lumber, grain, fish, meat, salt, and merchandise needed by early settlers. As the lake commerce expanded, boat building along Conneaut Creek became a lively industry. The first boat constructed here was the *Salem Packett*, a schooner with capacity of twenty-seven great tons, built in 1818 by Elias Keyes and Capt. Samuel Ward. It was built along the creek at a site under the present viaduct and was launched accidentally by a spring freshet with no damage being done. Many other boats were built here, the last being the *All Talk* in 1892.

Activities at the harbor increased rapidly until the construction of the C. P. & A. R.R. (now the New York Central) in 1852 when freight began to be transported overland by trains more speedily than lake vessels could carry it. It is interesting to note the exports from Conneaut Harbor in 1851, the last year in which navigation was free from railroad competition. The following is a list of freight shipped from Conneaut Harbor by water that year:

Ashes	66 casks	Hops	2 barrels
Ale	1 barrel	Hardware	1 box

Beef	1,092 barrels	Iron	57 pigs
Bee's wax	2 barrels	Leather	177 rolls 4 boxes
Bacon and hams	1 box 30 barrels	Lumber (sawed pine, white wood, etc.)	5,697,614 feet
Brooms	13 dozen	Merchandise	4 boxes 5 packages
Butter	671 kegs 32 firkins 31 barrels 4 casks	Nuts	3 barrels
Cheese	18,648 boxes 207 casks	Oats	18,406 bushels
Cigars	42 cases	Piano	1 only
Corn	12,121 bushels	Peas and beans	68 barrels
Deer skins	26 packs	Pork	266 barrels
Eggs	170 barrels	Potatoes	503 bushels
Feathers	1 sack	Rags	8 sacks
Fruit (green)	63 barrels	Rye	2,500 bushels
Fruit (dried)	88 barrels 2 boxes	Sheep skins	101 bundles
Furniture	2 boxes	Seeds	12 barrels

Glue	14 barrels	Tallow	3 barrels
High wines	10 barrels	Tobacco	1 hogshead 39 boxes 1 barrel
Wool	74 bales		

It is interesting to note other items of freight shipped from various ports other than Conneaut, which were not shipped from this harbor. Among them were bark, broom corn, bristle, buffalo robes, candles, flax, ginseng, grindstones and saleratus.

Regular shipments of merchandise declined abruptly with the coming of the railroad and for the 28 years from 1852 to 1880, Congress appropriated only \$45,323 but the depth of the channel was increased to 16 feet by 1879.

During the eleven-month period from July 1, 1879, to May 31, 1880, the total amount of revenue collected at Conneaut Harbor was \$4,500. Imports were valued at \$7,200 and exports at \$5,075. Seven vessels with a tonnage of 345 tons had entered port and ten vessels with a tonnage of 854 tons had cleared during the season. A sand bar at one time blocked the mouth of Conneaut Creek to such an extent that even fishing vessels were unable to use the harbor. Conneaut at that time had a population of 1,500 inhabitants.

With the coming of the *Str. Kershaw*, Conneaut once more became an active port. The Pittsburg, Shenango, and Lake Erie R.R., "The Peasley," originally called Erie, Shenango and Pittsburg R.R., built a branch line from Conneaut to connect with the main line at Albion, PA to carry ore to the mills in the "Smoky City" area. The name of the railroad was changed to Pittsburg, Bessemer and Lake Erie R.R. and finally to its present name Bessemer and Lake Erie R.R. (at the time it was known as the P.B. & L. R.R. The wise crackers of that day said the initials stood for Poor Brakeman & Lazy Engineers.)

The P. & C. Dock Co. had been organized and six Brown hoists with one-ton buckets were installed on Dock. No. 1. Rather than wait for government appropriation of \$40,000 for the year, the expense of harbor improvements was paid entirely by the company. A 16 ft. channel was dredged along the west pier and two whirley-type unloaders were added. Capt. Erastus Day had charge of the construction work.

On Sept. 30, 1892, the schooner barge *Marine City* entered port to deliver a cargo, being the first in almost 35 years. Her cargo was a shipment of pine consigned to the Record Mfg. Co.

Five weeks later the *Kershaw*, arriving with the first iron ore to be received in nearly six decades, started the port on a new era of activity. Eighteen shovelers, working for ten cents an hour, were employed to unload the *Kershaw's* cargo (Ashtabula shovelers were receiving only 9 1/2 cents an hour). During the unloading of the ore, a fire broke out in a nearby dwelling and the shovelers quit their work to assist in saving the building. The *Kershaw* was unloaded in two nights and three days.

In 1893 three more Brown hoists, two King hoists and more whirlies were added; dredging the channel and work of constructing more docks was continued.

The spring flood of 1893 brought disaster to the harbor. The freshet on the morning of May 15th cause the dredge *Continental* to snap her mooring lines. She was carried out into the rough waters of Lake Erie and soon sank. Her crew of four men and one woman were all drowned.

June 3, 1893, saw the barge *Wayne* receiving a load of coal (34 carloads) for shipment to Duluth. This was the first coal to be shipped from the port of Conneaut. Four days later the iron ore season was opened when the *Str. Queen of the West* arrived from Minnesota with a cargo of 1,300 tons.

On July 30, 1893, several hundred people went to the harbor to view a fleet of six whalebacks and their barges which arrived that day. Because of their appearance, the whalebacks were dubbed "pigs" and since they were so frequently seen here, Conneaut Harbor was humorously referred to as "the pig pen port."

Excitement and suspense filled the city early in July 1894. Dock workers at Ashtabula Harbor went on strike and tried to get workers at other ports to join them. On July 12th they marched to Conneaut to try to influence strike. Capt. Day asked Mayor Parker for protection for his men. Parker called the sheriff who in turn appealed to Gov. McKinley for aid. To special trains brought the Geneva Rifles who were housed in the G.A.R. Hall.

A large number of deputies were sworn in who went to the harbor about 4 p.m., taking positions along the Shenango R.R. tracks. It was about 5:30 p.m. when the Ashtabula men, carrying flags and banners, marched into Conneaut, followed by a cornet band which also included some violins and accordions.

Anticipating trouble, Capt. Day had dismissed the local dock men and sent them home early. Several strikers boarded the *Str. Grecian* and demanded that the bucket be lifted from the hold of the vessel. When this was refused, the strikers left the boat with no violence having been done.

The large crowd of curious spectators who had gone to the harbor expecting to see some excitement left about 8 p.m. and the night was passed in quiet. This was due in part to the harbor saloons having closed at 3 o'clock and the uptown saloons closing at 7:30 p.m.

The following day the militia marched from the G.A.R. Hall to the harbor to disperse the Ashtabula strikers. About six hundred spectators were on hand to watch. The Conneaut dock workers stayed home. About 350 Ashtabula men invaded the docks. Some invaded the tug *Erastus Day* and were immediately arrested.

The only blood shed occurred when two policemen entered a residence of a Conneaut man in search of a suspect. During the fracas which followed, he was beaten somewhat before he could be taken to jail. No further disturbance occurred, and the Conneaut dock men resumed work on the *Grecian* again on Saturday, July 14th, thus ending the strike trouble of 1894.

It was also in 1894 that the United States and Ontario Navigation Co. was incorporated, and the following year two car ferries were built to run between Conneaut and Port Dover, Ontario.

The car ferry Shenango was frozen in the ice at Conneaut on Jan. 8, 1904, and on March 11 was destroyed by fire while still held fast in that place. One man lost his life at that time.

The Marquette and Bessemer No. 2. left Conneaut December 7, 1909, and was never seen again, one of Lake Erie's most baffling mysteries. Thirty-two lives were lost; none of the crew escaped.

It was in 1896 that Andrew Carnegie obtained the controlling interest in the Bessemer R.R. and the P. & C. Dock Co. A new dock was built, and the channel dredged southward 1,300 feet. Twelve McMyler "fast plants" were constructed on the west side of the slip.

Three years later (1899) the Hulett unloader was installed, an invention of George H. Hullett of the Wellman-Seaver-Morgan Co. By 1900 three of these steam-driven

hydraulic Hulets were in use and the following year a fourth was added. Each had a capacity of ten tons.

It was in 1899 that the first coal dumper was installed at Conneaut. Erected on the east side of the slip, it was capable of handling twenty-five cars an hours. In 1914 a new car dumper was built at the same location.

The electrically operated Hulets were installed from 1911 to 1934 and the ore stocking bridge, with a bucket capacity of twelve tons, was built in 1918.

In 1909 the old light house was replaced by a 75-foot wooden tower and a stone and wooden break wall was built into the lake a distance of a quarter of a mile.

The wooden tower at the entrance to the harbor was razed in 1920 and an \$85,000 lighthouse erected. In 1934 the present light house was constructed and at the same time the break wall was moved farther west. In 1936 the main channel was widened and the bend in the river was also widened to permit the turning of the 640-foot vessels.

Conneaut Harbor today had five electric Hulets, a McMyler coal dumper, two Brown hoists for handling structural steel, and on Dock No. 1 is located the Michigan Limestone Co. plant.

Storage of iron ore at Perry Bluff was begun June 2, 1955, when 4,059 tons (60 cars) were hauled over the newly laid Bessemer tracks to the storage site in Pennsylvania.

[Handwritten note by the author] During the men's strike of 1956, a helicopter was used to fly in men and supplies, landing them on board a vessel lying in Conneaut Harbor--August 13, 1956.

The year 1957 saw the old ore stocking bridge being replaced by a new one installed by the American Bridge Co.

Conneaut Harbor has made great progress in the 65 years since the exciting day when the *Kershaw* arrived here with the first cargo of ore. With the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway only a few years away we cannot help but wonder what the record of our port will be 65 years hence.

Highway H2O: The St. Lawrence Seaway

Conneaut historian Raymond Welsh died in 1959, but picture him voyaging from his heavenly harbor through 65 years to the present Conneaut Harbor through the winds and currents of change shouting “I wonder no more. Here is the record!”

On June 26, 1959, Queen Elizabeth II and President Dwight D. Eisenhower officially opened the St. Lawrence Seaway two months after the icebreaker D’Iberville completed the first transit through the seaway. After decades of dreaming, brainstorming, negotiating, setbacks, and finally agreements, the United States and Canada made the dream of an interlocking system of waterways connecting the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean a reality.⁷

Nearly sixty-five years later, the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway and region has a combined GDP of more than six trillion U.S. dollars and is the industrial and agricultural heartland of the United States and Canada. If the region were a country, these statistics would make it the third largest economy in the world. The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway brought ocean going ships to Conneaut and its harbor and enhancing the local economy. It created dock improvements and jobs as well as changing navigation routes and practices for the better. The Seaway made Conneaut a St. Lawrence Seaway Port.

The Seaway Port of Conneaut, Ohio

This information is compiled from the 10th edition of *Greenwood's Guide to Great Lakes Shipping*. The year, 1969, is chosen to illustrate the height of use for much of the large materials handling equipment used on the Cleveland docks. [See current information](#) about the port.

A tabular profile of the Port of Conneaut, Ohio

HARBOR NAME	OWNER OR OPERATOR	CARGO	EQUIPMENT	RAIL
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⁷ The St. Lawrence Seaway actually has two sections. The Welland Canal Section consisting of eight locks was completed in 1932 and the Montreal-Lake Ontario Section consisting of seven locks was completed in 1959. Combined they form the St. Lawrence Seaway which allows ships to travel from sea level in Montreal to Lake Erie. Economic Impacts of Maritim Shipping in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Region. https://greatlakes-seaway.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/eco_impact_sum.pdf

Dock #1	United States Steel Corporation	Unloading: Limestone	Unloading: Self-Unloaders Only	Bess Erie
Dock #2	Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock Company	Loading & Unloading: Various Steel Products	Loading & Unloading: Handling by ship's equipment	Bess Erie
Dock #3 / "P. & C."	Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock Company	Loading: Coal	Loading: Conveyor Fed Ship Loader With Telescopic Chute	Bess Erie
Dock #4 / "P. & C."	Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock Company	Unloading: Iron Ore	Unloading: 5 Wellman Hulett-Type 17-ton Automatic Ore Unloaders	Bess Erie

Captain Erastus Day, Conneaut Dock Constructor

According to J.B. Mansfield in the History of the Great Lakes, Captain Erastus Day was “the genial founder and superintendent of all of the docks in Conneaut, Ohio.”⁸

Captain Day descended from old Vermont families from both branches of his family tree. Nathaniel Day, his paternal grandfather, dealt extensively in lumber shipments to Europe. His maternal grandfather Alvin Simons was a mariner. Both of their families moved to Ogdensburg, New York, and Samuel Day and Perseus Simons grew up together and married. Erastus Day, born in Ogdensburg in 1831, was one of their children.

Samuel Day, the father of Erastus, was an accomplished steamboat master, and sailed the *William IV*, which enjoyed the distinction of having four smokestacks, one more than traditional ships like the *North Land*. Continuing his tradition of “ships outside of the ways,” Samuel used another of his ships, the passenger steamer *Transit*, to tow vessels and logs when the passenger trade did not prosper. The sidewheeler *Traveler*, another of his ships, had two walking beams. When Captain Samuel Day retired, he moved to Michigan, locating thirty miles north of Detroit. When he died, his widow came to live with her son Erastus in Cleveland until her death in 1896.

Beginning at age fourteen, Erastus Day sailed in his grandfathers and father’s maritime wakes. In 1844, he shipped as a cook on the schooner *H.M. Kinney*, and

⁸ History of the Great Lakes, Vol.II, J.B. Mansfield,

during the mid-1800s he worked his way up the rungs of the nautical ladder from cook, deckhand and mate to skipper. By the spring of 1850, he was mate of the schooner *Lavina* and after three seasons as mate, he became her captain. The *Lavina* carried up to 9,000 bushels of wheat in the days when grain was transhipped from canal boats to vessels in buckets passing from hand to hand along a line of men to be weighed in a hopper aboard the ship.

In the spring of 1854 Captain Day commanded the three-masted schooner *W.F. Allen*, which had a capacity of 14,000 bushels of grain. He married Sarah Malinda Kenyon of Theresa, New York on August 15, 1854, in Cleveland, and after the ceremony they boarded the *W.F. Allen* for a nautical wedding trip.

The next two seasons he sailed the fore-and-aft schooner *Marquette* and from 1857 to 1859, he commanded the speedy and handsome schooner *Cascade*. In 1860 and 1861 he was master of the stanch bark *B.A. Standard*, one of the largest vessels on the lakes, capable of carrying 28,000 bushels of grain. In the spring of 1862 he returned to the *Cascade* as master and guided for three seasons.

By this point in his career, thrifty Captain Day had saved a neat little sum of money, and he purchased the *Mayflower*, with a carrying capacity of 10,000 bushels. He sold the *Mayflower* in the fall, and stepped ashore down the gangplank into the next phase of his life.

Entering into business affairs in Cleveland, Captain Day took immediate charge of the ore docks of A.B. Stockwell, remaining with him two years. He then leased some dock room and went into the dock and commission business, which he conducted successfully for fifteen consecutive years.

In 1872, in addition to operating his private business, Captain Day accepted the position of Superintendent of the New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio ore docks in Cleveland and managed both until 1892. In 1892, he left Cleveland to build a system of docks at Conneaut harbor, so successfully that the port was popular to all sailors and the harbor fathers named a street, Day Street, in his honor. The 1900 census record revealed that the Pittsburgh Steamship Company had commissioned Captain Day to construct docks and he still worked on them.

Captain Day had an active and inventive mind which he used to improve and add to his dock building. He created hoisting and conveying machinery for handling ore that regional and more distant docks purchased and used. He invented a hoist to handle railroad rails which streamlined the operations. Under the old system, only one rail could be raised at a time. The captain's hoist partnered the rail raising

number according to the power of the Whirley machine attached to it. The Whirley held the rails until they could be easily and speedily placed in the vessel's hold. At first Captain Day experimented with just seven rails, but soon discovered that the Whirley machine's power capacity could dramatically increase the number. He also created ore conveying systems and discovered the tug *Erastus Day* which was named for him.

In 1871, Captain Day bought a farmhouse on the southeast corner of Hillard and Atkins Avenues in Lakewood, Ohio which stood on land the size of three city lots.



He made substantial renovations to his new property, including Italianate and carpenter gothic detailing. The house still stands today as an example of an elaborate Victorian farmhouse.

Erastus and his wife, Sarah, had four children. Charles was a foreman on the

Conneaut docks; Edward was also a dock foreman in Conneaut; Lula married G.C. Shepard of Medina who worked as a mechanical engineer at Cramp's shipyard; and Lillian married T.R. Gillmore who was superintendent of docks at Huron, Ohio.

Captain Day was a thirty-second-degree Mason, which comprised Bigelow Lodge, Webb Chapter, Cleveland Council, Hollywood Commandery and Al-Koran Temple

Captain Day died in 1917 at age 83. He and his wife Sarah are buried in Scott Union Cemetery in Huron, Ohio.

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