

Autos Across Mackinac: George Lloyd Is New Acting Superintendent

The St. Ignace News is celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Mackinac Bridge this year by serializing Les Bagley's unpublished history of Michigan State Ferries, "Autos Across Mackinac." In last week's installment, a contract was awarded to build a new icebreaker ferry, and Ferry Superintendent John Kelsner announced his resignation to take a post with a shipyard in Cleveland.

Part 41: Another Superintendent

By Les Bagley

It had been more than two months since Capt. John Kelsner had left for Cleveland, and with the new "Great White Fleet" season about to begin on March 12, Commissioner Charles Ziegler announced the appointment of a new "Acting Superintendent" to steer the fleet's course into the 1950s. The man he chose was recently-hired Captain George W. Lloyd, late of *The Straits of Mackinac and City of Cheboygan*. While Lloyd had only been with the ferries for nine months, he'd been on the Great Lakes since 1923 when he'd shipped out as a deck hand for Nicholson Universal Steamship of Detroit. He became a licensed officer in 1930 and was appointed captain in 1940. Despite his unlimited Master's License for all of the Great Lakes, Lloyd's appointment again fueled speculation his promotion was payback for unmasking the fare collection scam the summer before.

In addition to mapping out needs for maintenance and crewing before the ferries started in the spring, Lloyd spent much of his free time in the next two months looking for a house somewhere in St. Ignace. He marveled at the miniature cabin, complete with scale furnishings and lawn, which Roy McElroy built in his spare time, and brought into the office one day. And he promised to take time off for a plane ride, once Eddy

Shoemaker got his pilot's license.

By April, political season was well underway. Governor G. Mennen Williams faced a new Republican challenger, a man who had Michigan gubernatorial experience. Former Governor Harry F. Kelley announced he would seek to unseat Williams in November. But when it came to re-establishing a Mackinac Bridge Authority, both candidates were in accord. W. S. Woodfill wrote that with the support of both candidates, he was convinced the legislature would act favorably on the issue. Meanwhile, with the spring schedule underway, Capt. Lloyd sent *The Straits* to River Rouge for maintenance in drydock.

On Monday, May 1, Commissioner Ziegler joined several other Highway Department officials at River Rouge for a brief ceremony. That morning the keel for Great Lakes Engineering Works' Hull 296 was laid on the ways, the official start of construction on the Highway Department's long-awaited new icebreaker, though steel fabrication had actually been underway for several months. Since Ziegler had the rest of the Highway Department to run, he entrusted day-to-day supervision of the project to George W. Foster, a department bridge engineer who had served with him in the pre-Van Wagoner days, had left, and been rehired in 1945. Foster would be the main point of contact between the Highway Department, naval architect L. A. Baier, and shipyard president George Haskell.

With construction of the new boat finally underway and projected for completion by March, 1951, it became imperative that docks to handle the new ship be constructed. Despite Mayor Phillips predictions that the state would seek bids for a dock at the furnace site in February, weather delays held up the project until early May, when legal notices appeared in area papers. Commissioner Ziegler estimated the St. Ignace project would cost



Appointed in 1950 as acting superintendent, Capt. George W. Lloyd replaced Capt. John Kelsner when the latter left the ferries for a job at a Cleveland shipyard. No one at the time realized it, but when Lloyd gained the job permanently, he would be the last superintendent of the Michigan State Ferries. (Hy-Lighter Magazine, Michigan State Highway Department)

about \$360,000. It would consist of two end-loading docks on the east side of Graham's Point, at the foot of Pero Street. These would be sandwiched between two side-loading slips for the smaller boats. To make the site deep enough for the new ferry, at least 194,500 cubic yards of material needed to be removed to a depth of 20 to 22 feet below water level.

The project was to include a holding area for up to 500 cars. Bids on the St. Ignace project's dredged basin were due by May 18, and the job was subsequently awarded to Lyons Construction Company of Whitehall. Bids for land-side construction and for new facilities in Mackinaw City weren't advertised until later.

But bad weather through the early spring held up more than dock construction plans. Traffic had fallen off on the ferries by as much as 12.4% in April. That put the annual count at -2.9% compared to 1949 levels. Officials still

predicted a good tourist season once the weather improved, and the Jaycees began plans to open a summer-long tourist information booth, but May ferry travel was also down by 7.8%.

Even Memorial Day travel was down by some 600 cars below the year before. The ferries experienced some waits on the docks, but for the most part, northbound traffic was handled nicely throughout the period. The southbound rush brought the Chief Wawatam briefly into play, however, to avoid congestion in St. Ignace.

Governor Williams was experiencing congestion in Lansing during his special legislative session. While he'd asked for a \$112 million statewide spending program, the lawmakers instead cut state spending by \$15 million. In an address before the CIO convention in Grand Rapids, the governor charged the Republican Party was dominated by "special interests." He also made a dramatic eleventh-hour appearance before the legislature on the eve of its May 20 recess, appealing to the lawmakers not to reduce government grants for schools, hospitals, and other worthy causes. But the Republican reaction was "pure politics."

Despite the sting of his budget defeat, Williams pressed ahead with plans to revive the Mackinac Straits Bridge Authority, and with constant lobbying by Stewart Woodfill, the legislature passed the measure. On Monday, June 5, the governor appointed seven members to the board, prior to signing the bill to officially recreate the agency the next day. Though he'd asked Woodfill, a Republican, to chair the group, the hotelier declined, saying that, since he'd been so publicly involved in the project, people might think he had a vested interest other than just improving Michigan. He also didn't mention that he might not have been a registered voter in Michigan.

(In his book, "Bridging the Straits," Lawrence A. Rubin notes

the chairman of the "Mackinac Bridge Citizen's Committee" may not have been registered in Michigan, as his residence on Mackinac Island was just his summer home. But Woodfill's longtime legal counsel, Thomas R. Winquist, says the Island was his full-time legal address. Whatever the case, Woodfill often avoided the limelight, letting others claim credit.)

Instead, Woodfill put forth a carefully considered slate of candidates for the governor's consideration, half of them Republicans, half Democrats. Williams considered the list and gave it his approval. The men he appointed were: George A. Osborn, editor and publisher of the *Sault Ste. Marie Evening News*, to a two-year term; former Governor Murray D. Van Wagoner to a six-year term; Charles T. Fisher, Jr., president of the National Bank of Detroit, to a four-year term; Fred M. Zeder, vice-president of Chrysler Corp., to a two-year term, and William Cochran, Jr. of Iron Mountain, the U.P. distributor for General Motors trucks, to a four-year term. By law, he also made Highway Commissioner Charles Ziegler a de facto member of the committee. Acting as temporary chairman of the committee, pending his confirmation by the legislature, would be former U. S. Senator Prentiss M. Brown, appointed by Williams to a six-year term.

"We have started to build a bridge across the Straits," Williams declared. "It may be some time before piers begin to rise or steel cables are actually hung, but we are on our way."

An informal organizational meeting was held, followed by a brief ceremony in which Williams signed the bill and handed the members their official appointments. Senator Brown said he was sure all the new authority members wanted a bridge, but emphasized the importance of making sure the project was feasible. The Authority was given \$100,000 in Highway Department money for preliminary investigations, including, but not limited to, surveys, soundings, bor-

ings, and estimates. Dean Crawford of the University of Michigan College of Engineering was to recommend a panel of three consulting engineers to the authority, "who shall determine whether a bridge can safely and feasibly be constructed." The committee was to have its first formal meeting June 24 on Mackinac Island.

In Mackinaw City and St. Ignace, folks were glad something might someday be done, but they'd heard it all before. Meanwhile, the Highway Department applied to the Army Corps of Engineers for permission to dredge and construct a dock for the new icebreaker on the north side of the existing ferry dock in Mackinaw City. The dredged material, approximately 33,900 cubic yards, would leave a clear depth of not less than 50 feet and be deposited in the Straits of Mackinac.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Ziegler was gathering glowing reviews all across Michigan. In June he was presented with an Indian headdress and named Chief Mi-Kana-Ken-Nimi, "Man Who Builds Roads," by the Ottawa Tribe in Harbor Springs, also receiving a birch bark plaque from Chief Pipi-Qwa for the honor. And the *Plymouth Mail* cited Ziegler for having his department judged the outstanding Highway Department in the nation for the third consecutive year by the International Institute of Traffic Engineers. Ziegler's attitude toward improving traffic engineering and design was also part of the criteria for the award.

At last, good weather prevailed

*Please turn to page 11

William B. Derby Preserve Is Established in Cedarville

The new sign marking the William B. Derby Jr. Nature Preserve appeared in August on property transferred December 2006 from the nonprofit Les Cheneaux Foundation to Little Traverse Conservancy. The 140-acre parcel includes one-half mile of shoreline along Lake Huron at the west entrance to the Les Cheneaux Channel, and extends north from the water up to M-134, where 36 acres at the corner of the highway and Four-Mile Block Road will become a permanent green space.



The newly established William B. Derby Preserve in Cedarville received a sign in August announcing its status as a preserve. Little Traverse Conservancy is the new custodian of the land formerly owned and maintained by the nonprofit Les Cheneaux Foundation.

home association across Les Cheneaux Channel on Marquette Island. Three club members, George Covington, Bill McMillan, and Tad

Carr, bought the property from Mr. Derby for \$3,000. They established the nonprofit Les Cheneaux Foundation to hold the land and preserve it from development, and thus created Clark Township's first land conservancy. The Les Cheneaux Foundation went on to protect other parcels of land, including about 1,300 acres. Much of that has been turned over to Little Traverse Conservancy and comprises the Aldo Leopold Preserve on Marquette Island.

Land owned by a conservancy and established as a preserve must be open to the public, however the conservancy may limit certain types of

use on those lands considered detrimental, such as campfires or timber harvesting. Hunting is allowed at the Aldo Leopold Preserve, but hunters must get written permission to do so.

Hunting is also allowed with written permission at the Birge Preserve in Hessel, Seiberling-Stewart and Sheppard-Hardy preserves on Marquette Island, St. Helena Island in Moran Township, and the Vosper Preserve on Bois Blanc Island.

In Chippewa County, the Bailey-Lagerstrom Preserve on Sugar Island and Round Island Point Preserve in Bay Mills Township are open for hunting with written permission.

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY
ATTORNEY
DAVID S. HANKUS
Specializing in Claims for Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits
No Fee Unless You Receive Benefits
1-888-SS CLAIM
Sault Ste. Marie • 906-635-0505

Indian Trails
NOW SERVING THE U.P.
INDIAN TRAILS OPERATES DAILY SCHEDULES THROUGHOUT UPPER AND LOWER MICHIGAN
Service includes all of the U.P. with direct connections through central Michigan to Gaylord, Grayling, Houghton Lake, Clare, Mt. Pleasant, Alma and Lansing making connections in Lansing for Detroit, Metro Airport, Grand Rapids, Chicago and Amtrak service.
Service to Green Bay and Milwaukee with connections to Minneapolis and points west and south at Milwaukee.
All motorcoaches are wheelchair accessible and feature live satellite TV broadcasts.
Extra wide body motorcoaches feature enhanced seat spacing for improved passenger comfort.
We offer priority seating for handicapped and elderly as well as baggage assistance.
FOR SCHEDULE, FARE AND PICK UP/DROP OFF LOCATION INFORMATION, CALL:
800-292-3831 OR 800-231-2222
WWW.INDIANTRAILS.COM

VOTE LaLONDE for CITY COUNCIL
For Honest, Fair and Dedicated Representation
"VOTE"
William "Willie" LaLonde
for St. Ignace City Council
★ Lifelong St. Ignace Resident ★ Mackinac Co. Sheriff Deputy
★ 22 Year Member St. Ignace Fire Department
★ Lions Club Member (President 2 years)
★ Area Youth Baseball & Soccer Coach ★ Married with 3 Daughters
★ If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at 643-9287
Please VOTE Nov. 6th, 2007 "Your Vote Counts"
Paid for by the Committee to Elect William LaLonde for St. Ignace City Council
VOTE LaLONDE for CITY COUNCIL

Before You Buy Price & Compare
INSTOCK LAMINATE
\$1.49 sq. ft. WITH FREE PAD
Congoleum & Armstrong Vinyl Sheet Goods
LOWEST VINYL PRICES YOU WILL EVER SEE
MSRP \$54⁰⁰ sq. yd.
★★★★★ Quality Exclusive **NOW \$16⁰⁰** sq. yd.
MSRP \$39⁰⁰ sq. yd.
★★★★★ Quality Ultima **NOW \$11⁰⁰** sq. yd.
MSRP \$24⁰⁰ sq. yd.
★★★ Quality Canyon Creek **NOW \$6⁰⁰** sq. yd.
WEIR CARPET MART
Located across from Weir Furniture Center
531 Gros Cap, Sault Ste. Marie, MI
906-635-1026
MON. 9:30-4:30 TUE.-FRI. 9:30-5:00 SAT 9:00-3:00

Bill's Lock Shop
Residential • Commercial
LOCKS • DEADBOLTS • KEYS
LOCKS INSTALLED • REKEYED • REPAIRED
• Exit Devices • Master Key Systems
• High Security Locks • Keyless Entry Systems
• Door Closers • No Automotive
ST. IGNACE, MI • (231) 590-1309

BENTLEY'S B-n-L CAFE
Downtown St. Ignace
OPEN Mon.-Sat. at 7 a.m. Sun. at 8 a.m.
Hand Dipped Ice Cream Malts & Shakes
Call for take-out orders **643-7910**
Gift Certificates Available
Now Taking Orders For Thanksgiving Pies!

THURS., OCT. 18	One Pound Ham Steak, Mashed Potatoes & Vegetable	\$7 ⁹⁵
FRI., OCT. 19	Prime Rib, Choice of Potato	\$7 ⁹⁵
MON., OCT. 22	Goulash, Garlic Toast & Vegetable	\$5 ⁹⁵
TUES., OCT. 23	Scalloped Potatoes with Ham, Vegetable	\$5 ⁹⁵
WED., OCT. 24	Cornish Hen, Mashed Potatoes, Dressing & Vegetable	\$6 ⁹⁵

CSB CENTRAL SAVINGS BANK
ASK WHAT THE CSB FAMILY CAN DO FOR YOU
Keep Warm This Winter... while... \$\$\$\$ SAVING MONEY!! \$\$\$\$
Installing a 95% fuel efficient furnace could entitle you to a \$150 tax credit this year! The new furnace will also be more fuel efficient.
Come in and see one of our loan representatives TODAY to start saving.
906. 635. 6250
FDIC