

Great Lakes Grandeur Seen Aboard the Steamer *Canadian Leader*

By George Tombs

Correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor*

On a starry night, the 730-foot *Canadian Leader*, the last bulk-carrying steamship built on the Great Lakes, slips silently past illuminated buoys near Montreal on a five-day voyage up to Thunder Bay, Ontario, on Lake Superior.

After unloading titanium ore at the St. Lawrence River port of Sorel, the ship is proceeding empty toward the upper lakes. With the recent economic downturn, there is less demand for her typical upbound cargo of iron ore pellets. Captain George Wheeler, a 40-year veteran of the sea originally from Northern Ireland, has taken on freshwater ballast from the river, to maintain the ship's stability and maneuverability.



This was the view toward the stern of the 730-foot *Canadian Leader*, a Great Lakes bulk freighter, as it passed from Lake Erie to Lake Huron on its way to Thunder Bay, Ontario. Detroit is on the right. (Photograph by George Tombs, *Christian Science Monitor*)

Taken together, the Great Lakes are a vast inland sea representing more than one-fifth of all surface

fresh water on the planet. More than 40 million Canadians and Americans draw their drinking

water from the lakes, which play a vital role in public health, the environment, industry, commerce, and leisure.

But there are causes for concern: invasive species, declining water levels, uncertain quality of drinking water, and pressures to divert water from and into the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin.

Signed into law by President George W. Bush October 3, the Great Lakes Compact takes effect December 8. The binational agreement, the fruit of regional initiatives, obliges eight American states and two Canadian provinces to work together to protect the lakes system.

"The Great Lakes Compact is an awesome victory," said Jeff

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Michigan Politics

By George Weeks



Strong, United Voices Helped Secure Auto Aid

Kudos to the Brothers Levin, Governor Jennifer Granholm, and other Michigan politicians for successfully beating drums that helped produce the commendable action by President George W. Bush to extend a lifeline to the auto industry.

"These are not ordinary circumstances," said Bush, correctly defying Senate Republicans and reversing his own previous position against the bailout. "In the midst of a financial crisis and a recession, allowing the U.S. auto industry to collapse is not a responsible course of action."

An earlier president dealing with auto industry grief was Michigan's Gerald R. Ford, who during the mid-1970s recession days touted a BAC button ("Buy a Car") as part of his Back America promotion.

Ford recalled that at the time, "Automobile plants were closing all over the country, causing massive layoffs." But those problems were not as massive as this year's mammoth economic meltdown.

During deliberations on Capitol Hill, and, ultimately, the consideration by Bush, there were no stronger voices for the auto industry than those of Senator Carl Levin and his older brother, Representative Sander Levin of Royal Oak, the Democratic nominee for governor in 1970 and 1974.

In an unusual joint statement, the Levins said Bush's action "gives the industry breathing room to cope with the global financial crisis and take restructuring steps essential to return to economic health."

There also was a joint press release with statements from Granholm and Lieutenant Governor John Cherry, who is expected to seek the 2010 Democratic nomination to replace term-limited Granholm.

Granholm thanked Bush "for using his executive authority to save millions of American jobs by providing bridge loans to the U.S. auto companies so they can build the products and cars that are the foundation of the future. The loans are recognition by the administration that the nation's fragile economy simply cannot sustain the human and economic toll of further massive job loss. The auto industry is the backbone of American manufacturing, and the ripple effects of bankruptcy would have touched communities and families all across our nation."

This issue brought considerable media time on the national front for Granholm, who has had a mixed record on the home front.

Last week on NBC's "Meet the Press," she did well in a testy face-off with ex-Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, a Michigan native who has been critical of Granholm's record and the auto bailout.

On Friday, Granholm had an impassioned defense of the auto industry during a CNN interview, branding as "total bunk" assertions that auto workers are overpaid.

She said: "The auto industry made mistakes in the past. I don't apologize for that. But they have been in the middle of a restructuring that leads us to the plug-in electric hybrid vehicle, exactly where people want to go."

"The unions have made enormous concessions, and they are going to make more, as is the rest of the industry."

"But to say that the auto industry is in the same position as the financial industry, when the financial industry is the one that caused this financial meltdown – the mortgage industry caused this meltdown. But to blame the auto industry for that, that's not fair."

Representative Bart Stupak (D-Menominee) a frequent Bush critic, said: "I commend him for stepping up to help the automakers and middle class Americans whose jobs depend on the auto industry at a time when Senate Republicans were willing to let the automakers collapse."

Representative Dave Camp (R-Midland) said: "This financing will ensure that the automakers have sufficient time to make the cuts and reforms necessary to remain viable and competitive. At the same time, it protects taxpayers by setting firm deadlines and stringent conditions on loan repayment."

And it is a loan – not a gift.

George Weeks retired in 2006 after 22 years as political columnist for *The Detroit News*. His weekly *Michigan Politics* column is syndicated by *Superior Features*.

Northern Michigan News Roundup

The news in brief from communities around the U.P. and northern Michigan

Compiled using information published in various community newspapers.

Commissioners Question Value of Economic Development Group

An economic development organization in Emmet County has come under scrutiny by the county board of commissioners after questions were raised about whether the county sees enough of a return on its roughly \$86,000 annual investment. The board of commissioners ultimately decided to approve funding for next year for the Northern Lakes Economic Alliance, during its budget approval meeting Thursday, December 18, but has decided it will dole out the funding quarterly and place the unused money in a contingency fund, releasing it throughout the year as certain goals are met by the alliance.

Commissioners debated whether the alliance is producing tangible results for economic development in the area, and whether cutting the funding completely would further hinder the process.

Board chairman Jim Tamlyn said this is a difficult time to judge an organization dedicated to economic growth, and suggested more information is needed from the organization.

– Petoskey News-Review

Gaylord Chain Store Expects To Offer 300 Jobs

A new Meijer store under construction at Gaylord is expected to offer between 300 and 400 jobs when the store opens this spring, and people interested in employment are being advised by the company to apply online on the supermarket chain's Web site (www.meijer.com).

With the new store being the first in the chain in this area, store officials don't expect many transfer requests from existing Meijer employees at other locations, and say most of the jobs will be filled locally. The next nearest store is in Traverse City.

Stockers, cashiers, and management positions will be among jobs offered.

This is one of three new stores in the state to be opened by the chain. Landscaping and parking lot work have been completed and construction crews have now moved inside the store.

The cost of the development is around \$15 million.

– Gaylord Herald Times

600 Families To Receive Christmas Food Baskets

About \$10,000 worth of food and money were donated to the Kiwanis Club Christmas basket program in the Gaylord area this year, and will feed about 600 needy families. Thirty volunteers packed food baskets Thursday, December 18, for distribution throughout the area.

– Gaylord Herald Times

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bridge Cards Might Fall Under New Expiration Law

To the Editor:

I see from your December 18 story about bridge commuter cards that the Mackinac Bridge Authority is mulling over expiration dates for the pre-loaded cards. The Authority may want to check a new state law, intended to protect consumers from expiring gift cards sold by retailers, that makes it illegal for such cards to expire – ever. The law went into effect November 1, 2008.

The bridge folks may argue that a commuter card is not a gift card, but check out the definition from the legislation:

"Gift certificate" means a written promise or a gift card or other electronic payment device that meets all of the following:

- Is usable at a single retailer, is usable at an affiliated group of retailers that share the same name, mark, or logo, or is usable at multiple, unaffiliated retailers or service providers.
- Is issued in a specified amount.
- May or may not be increased in value or reloaded.
- Is purchased or loaded on a prepaid basis for the future purchase or delivery of goods or services.
- Is honored upon presentation.

Don Weeks
Elk Rapids

fishing. There was always something to do.

4. The churches: The communities at Zion and Trinity embraced our family, but all of the churches in town are strong and it was a great gift to work together as we did.

Thank you for including and loving us for this past decade. Please look us up if you are ever in Juneau.

Pastor Tari Stage-Harvey and family
St. Ignace

The Season of Signatures

To the Editor:

'Tis the season of signatures. Don't know what I mean? Let me explain. Each day, during this season, I receive several signatures of friends and acquaintances. What's up with sending me your signatures? I already know your name. These holiday cards, and we all receive them, with no personal info, no news, no "hope you are fine," just a signature on a card that somebody else wrote the tacky verse, probably in China. Well, I may not be infected with the holiday spirit, as I am told, but I do make an effort to at least make inquiries and mention their families or some personal reference that makes the card intended for them, and not just anybody. I receive cards from people I have not spoken to in years, nor seen in more, and all I get is their signatures. I want to scream, "Are you happy? Are you married? Any children? Do you work? Have you come out of the closet? Any grandchildren? How are you? Really!" Give me some bit of information about your life, express a sentiment, share a moment with me. But please, please don't simply mail me your signatures.

I wondered if it might be the tough economic times; maybe people need to stretch their ink a little longer, thus the signature only. Or are people actually so busy, they sit and just sign cards in a generic "assembly-line manner," not knowing, nor caring for whom the card is intended? Maybe we should all just mail our business cards out instead. It may go farther in stimulating our economy by promoting our own businesses.

I'm really not that much of a holiday grinch – well okay, maybe just a little, but I recognize and acknowledge "personal" sentiments for others. Well, I've got lots of business cards to send. Happy holidays. Bah! Humbug!

Jack Bosley
St. Ignace

Concert Performance and Crowd Shows Strength of Community

To the Editor:

I would like to comment on the concert at the St. Ignace Middle School Thursday evening, December 18. It was superb. When you look at the number of children involved and how they, in a completely orderly fashion, went to the stage and sang songs (with all the accompanying gestures), that was beautiful. It says so much about the love and attention given to the children by the teachers. You can't produce something of such precision without the dedicated work of the teachers.

And while I'm congratulating those who took part in the concert, I have to extend that also to the moms, dads, grandparents, brothers, sisters, and friends, who completely filled the gym in support of this program. I can't tell you how much I enjoyed the whole affair...it says so much about the health and strength of our community.

Father Norbert Landreville
St. Ignace

St. Ignace News Policies

Letters:

All responsible letters will be considered for publication and may be edited. They must be signed and a telephone number must be included for verification. Personal thank-you notes, personal attacks against other people, form letters, and letters promoting political candidates are not accepted, although letters for or against ballot proposals are welcome.

Obituaries:

The St. Ignace News maintains a policy of not charging for obituaries and we do often add information or rewrite them for clarity and reader interest. Obituaries that the family wants published exactly as submitted can be placed in the newspaper for \$75. Photographs are welcome at no charge.

Weddings:

Weddings with photographs are published without charge within 45 days of the ceremony. After 45 days, a photograph can be included for \$35.00.

Internet:

The complete edition of The St. Ignace News is available online at stignacenews.com.

Contact:

The St. Ignace News
359 Reagon Street
PO Box 277
Saint Ignace, MI 49781
(906) 643-9150 (phone)
(906) 643-9122 (fax)
e-mail: news@stignacenews.com

The St. Ignace News

and *Les Cheneaux Islands Weekly Wave*

359 Reagon Street, PO Box 277, Saint Ignace, MI 49781

Telephone (906) 643-9150 • Facsimile (906) 643-9122

www.SaintIgnaceNews.com

USPS Periodical Publication Number - 462-380

ESTABLISHED 1878

Published each Thursday at Saint Ignace, Mackinac County, Michigan

Entered in Saint Ignace, Michigan Post Office as Periodical Mail Matter, Act of March 3, 1879

Periodical Postage Paid at Saint Ignace, MI • Additional Postage Paid at Gaylord, MI

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to St. Ignace News, PO Box 277, St. Ignace, MI 49781

Volume 129, Number 38 Thursday, December 25, 2008

Publisher/Editor

Wesley H. Maurer, Jr.

Associate Publisher

Mary R. Maurer

Publisher 1975-1995

Wesley H. Maurer, Sr. (1897-1995)

Editor

Ellen Paquin, news@saintignacenews.com

Staff Writers

Ryan Schlehber, ryan@saintignacenews.com

Karen Gould, karen@saintignacenews.com

John S. DeMott, john@saintignacenews.com

Jonathan Eppley, jon@saintignacenews.com

Advertising Department

Tammy Matson, David Moyalson

ads@saintignacenews.com

Print Shop Manager

Sherry Cece

Circulation Manager

Wendy Colegrove



Subscriptions:

\$42 in Mackinac, Chippewa, Emmet, Luce, and Cheboygan counties.

\$52 elsewhere in the United States and military post offices.

\$35 for the Web edition at www.saintignacenews.com

We take Visa, MasterCard, and Discover

The quotation under the flag of *The St. Ignace News* on Page 1 is from the 10 triads written by Dr. Fred Newton Scott, creator and teacher of the first continuous course in journalism in the United States at the University of Michigan in 1890. The 10 triads are chiseled on the parapet of the Detroit News Building at 615 Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit. They were headed "Ideals of the Press" or "The Newspaper in a Free Society," and serve as a reminder of what a free press means to us.