

## Raising the Anchor of the S.S. Greater Detroit

Photos and Article by John Polacsek

The Detroit & Cleveland Navigation Company has left many artifacts of the S.S. GREATER DETROIT scattered throughout the Detroit metropolitan area after it went out of service in 1950. While curator of the Dossin Great Lakes Museum I was able to secure the donation of three large paintings depicting the Battle of Lake Erie, the Port of Detroit, and Niagara Falls. The bell from this historic vessel was located in a Grosse Pointe garage and a three inch sapling

needed to be cut down before the tow truck could pick it up. However one of the more elusive artifacts was the anchor that was cut loose on December 12, 1956 when the vessel was towed out to Lake St. Clair and burned.

Captain William A. Hoey of the Gaelic Tugboat Company, mentioned how he had watched from the dock when the anchor was cut loose. Since there was no steam on board the vessel



After being positioned by the tug NANCY ANNE the crane barge from the Durocher Marine Division of Kokosing Industrial raised the 6,000 pound anchor of the S. S. GREATER DETROIT which had been on the bottom of the Detroit River for sixty years.

to operate the anchor winch, cutting the chain that held the bow of the vessel close to the dock was the only way to release the vessel. Lines were then attached to tow the S.S. GREATER DETROIT and S.S. EASTERN STATES vessel out to Lake St. Clair and Captain Hoey stated that the anchor was only fifty feet from the dock.

Some years later the Great Lakes Maritime Institute Dive Team was looking for another target in the river and the idea of an anchor just off the dock looked appealing. Captain Jim Hogan, President and owner of the J. W. Westcott Company donated the company's M/V JOSEPH J. HOGAN to serve as a dive boat. Captain Sam Buchanan commanded the vessel and provided the boat operators Captain Neil Schultheiss, and Captain James Hogan. The G.L.M.I. Dive Team under the direction of Dave Mabry, Malcolm McAdam, and John Polacsek spent a number of days combing the river near the old D & C docks. The water visibility was at the best five to seven feet and it took a number of dives to determine that the anchor was not where it was suppose to be. Finally the Dive Team widened the search field and located an anchor some 150 feet off the dock. The anchor was about the right size for a 6,000 pound stockless anchor with several pieces of anchor chain attached to it. A large wire cable was wound around it, looking like someone had tried to salvage the anchor and moved it 100 feet out in the river. The volunteer divers tried a number of ways to cut the cable from the anchor, and the most promising was an old fashioned hacksaw. It took a number



Mac McAdam and divers

of dives to clear the cable from the anchor as the dive boat bobbed some twenty two feet overhead. The next step was to find a home for it.

In 2012 The Great Lakes Maritime Institute contacted John Jamian the Director of the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority and attempted to start a fund raiser to cover the recovery costs. There was limited success as the anchor still remained on the bottom of the Detroit River. In 2015 John Loftus became the Director of the Port Authority and he worked towards creating a maritime orientation area. The anchor from the S.S. GREATER DETROIT will become one of the features of the orientation area with a metal container being the other. The metal shipping container had port holes attached, a handicapped accessible ramp, and will have graphics on the exterior. The interior will consist of a computer and monitor that will show the current positions of vessels on the Great Lakes and changing exhibits on the history of The Port of Detroit. Plans call for the unit to be dedicated on Maritime Day, May 22, 2017.

In October, 2016 the U.S.S. DETROIT was commissioned at the Port of Detroit, and some of the marine support came from the Durocher Marine Division of Kokosing Industrial. After the ceremony the tug, barge and crane were docked in Detroit near Belle Isle while the crew went to do more pressing jobs near the Straits of Mackinaw. The company was contacted and Trevor Lake stated that it may be possible to help out with the anchor recovery when the crew returned to the Detroit area.

On November 15, 2016 the crew returned to Detroit on their way to projects in Lake Erie and the recovery was underway. Westcott senior Captain Sam Buchanan prepared the dive boat, the M/V JOSEPH J. HOGAN, with Captain Neil Schultheiss at the helm.



Diver Brendon Smith, holding his GoPro camera on his chest, is waiting to assist in raising the anchor.



Paul Jagenow, one of the volunteer boat handlers.

Under the direction of John Polacsek and Malcolm McAdam, the divers Dave Mabry, Brandon Smith, Tom Parnin assisted by David Aliff went in and marked the anchor. The bobbing ‘Diver Below’ marker could be seen from shore where the access and media was handled by Dan Austin, Cynthia Bieniek, William Worden, Denne Osgood and Art Woodford.

Paul Macarthur from the Durocher Marine Division of Kokosing Industrial arrived at the J. W. Westcott Company dock and the dive boat with Paul Jagenow as crew left the dock. They went out to meet the tug NANCY ANN with Captain Lee Barnhill in command and the crane barge near the site. Paul Macarthur directed the barge, and shortly it was secured to the river bottom. Three divers then went into the river to attach straps to the anchor. The M/V JOSEPH J. HOGAN then recovered the divers and stood off. As daylight was slipping away the crane lifted some 7,000 pounds of anchor and chain that had been on the bottom of the Detroit River for sixty years. The anchor was secured and transported to the J. W. Westcott dock where it was off loaded. The weather was excellent



Full moon after the recovery.

and two days later the anchor was water blasted, cleaned, primed and painted by Ethan McAdam, Malcolm McAdam and John Polacsek.



The fluke has a hard coating on it, below this is a black mass that is made from water born organisms that will turn hard if not cleaned off while it is soft since it attracts moisture like a sponge.



Cleaning the flukes,  
left one done, right one to be done next.

The Great Lakes Maritime Institute thanks its members, volunteer divers and others who helped in the recovery of the anchor of the S.S. GREATER DETROIT: Art Woodford, Denne Osgood, Malcolm McAdam, Ethan McAdam, Dan Austin, Cynthia Bieniek, William Worden, Dave Mabry, Erik Erickson, Frank Polk, Brandon Smith, Tom Parnin, and David Aliff. From the J. W. Westcott Company: Captain Jim Hogan, Captain Sam Buchanan, Captain Jim Hogan Jr., Captain Neil Schultheiss, and Paul Jagenow. The Durocher Marine Division of Kokosing Industrial donated time, personnel and equipment, Captain Lee Barnhill, Paul Macarthur, and Trevor Lake.

Donations to [www.GLMI.org](http://www.GLMI.org) are always welcomed. For a \$100.00 donation received by March 1, 2017 you will receive a D & C Stock Certificate, a raffle ticket for a party of four adults to ride on a lake freighter, and two tickets to the anchor dedication. For a \$250 donation you will receive a limited edition print of the S.S. GREATER DETROIT by the artist William Moss, a year subscription to the Telescope magazine, and two tickets to the anchor dedication.



Cleaned, primed and painted anchor at the dock.