



March 2022

# *on the Move*

*Local maritime news, events and history from the Chicago Maritime Museum*

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## **CMM Historians Plan New Exhibits for the Museum**

Stronger and more focused stories help the museum accomplish its mission to educate the public about the importance of Chicago's maritime history. CMM has already made changes to the museum, including a new lobby and minor updates to some exhibits in anticipation of a broader plan to update the exhibits.

After much deliberation amongst the museum's four historians - **Ted Karamanski, Bill Derrah, Patrick McBriarty and Jim Jarecki** - the exhibit plan is almost complete and ready for presentation to the museum's exhibit designers.

Based on their skilled story-telling and historical expertise, CMM historians are proposing four new maritime exhibits and one exhibit to honor the museum's financial supporters:

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### **Trailblazing: Leave No Trace**



The invention of the canoe was an integral part of our ancestors spreading across the world. It was our first tool designed for travel and wherever people went, they adapted it to suit their needs, local conditions, and available materials. As a boat builder, Ralph Frese felt a direct connection to traditional boat builders and was keen to learn from them.

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### **Cultural Crossroads: Bridge the Divide**

Whether it was indigenous peoples or French traders plying trade routes via canoe, Irish immigrants who built the I&M Canal, or the many 19th century merchants across the globe who sailed to and from Chicago, Chicago's waterways served



as a crossroad and trading ground for the growing city's diverse population. Together, these cultures learned how to bridge divides through innovative engineering and visionary problem solving to create the Second City.

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### **Captain Bill Pinkney's Commitment: Unleash the Potential**



Having sailed the Great Lakes and the world's oceans for more than thirty years, Pinkney decided to embark on a solo trip around the globe in 1990 at the age of 56. Thousands of students in Chicago, Boston and elsewhere tracked his journey and learned science and history along Pinkney's route.

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### **Underwater Archeology Explores History of Shipping**



Lake Michigan, Chicago's vast underwater museum hold the remains of almost every type of vessel that sailed the lakes from small sail boats to large freighters and even military aircraft and a WWI submarine. Each shipwreck is a time capsule of knowledge that gives us firsthand evidence of how the vessels were built, the valuable cargo they carried and the often-tragic stories of their loss.

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### **Honor Financial Supporters**

A small exhibit area of the museum will honor the many people who have made major donations to the Chicago Maritime Museum.

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The museum anticipates the new exhibits will have several important outcomes, including increased attendance, stronger outreach to Chicago Public Schools and more funding for other projects.

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## **Curator Dylan Hoffmann Works to Preserve More than Artifacts**



Whether it was planting native flowers and grasses during his high school years to restore McHenry County's Nippersink Creek or saving a species of cutthroat trout in the streams of the Santa Fe National Forest as a recent college graduate, Dylan Hoffmann is innately dedicated to preserving our waterways.

As a former middle school history and science teacher, he also delights in the stories of maritime past.

Clearly, the stars aligned when, in 2018, Dylan was named curator of Chicago Maritime Museum – an organization that both explores local maritime history and works to promote waterway stewardship.

“I’m happy to be in a position where I can follow my passions for both history and the environment,” says Dylan. “I’ve always loved Chicago history and waterway preservation was instilled in me at a young age. And because the museum is small, I have more responsibility and opportunity than most people in my position.”

In addition to hosting patrons and groups for tours of the museum, with the help of interns Dylan also manages the collection by processing new acquisitions, conducting provenance research, cataloging, and providing preventive conservation care for all museum objects, photographs, library, and archives. Over his tenure at the museum, he has also led the Collection Stewardship Museum Assessment Program, provided by the American Associations of Museums that involved creating a Collections Management Policy, Emergency Response Plan, and Collections Development Plan.

Occasionally, Dylan’s job leads to long adventures and deep dives into maritime history. Take for example the discovery and acquisition of a 21-foot-long WPA mural entitled *History of Ships*. Had Dylan not attended a Chicago Museum Exhibitors Group meeting at Martyrs Bar on Lincoln Avenue one cold night in December 2019, he might never have learned of the coveted artifact. After a group member mentioned the mural’s availability to Dylan, he

promptly went to work to learn about and acquire the piece.



However, with a pandemic looming, it would take an entire year before the mural's delivery to CMM. Between conference calls with executives at UBS (who graciously offered the mural to CMM at no cost and helped with transportation and installation), scheduling a joint viewing at fine art handlers Terry Dowd in Pilsen with several CMM colleagues, researching the mural's provenance, and managing the logistics of its move to the museum, the acquisition was long-term feat for the museum that will benefit future generations.

"It's really perfect for our space," says Dylan. "We are located in an art center so tenants and visitors to the Bridgeport Art Center make an effort to come down and see the mural. It's nice when history and art intersect."

After receiving an MA in Education from National-Louis University, Dylan began a career in Geographic Information Systems until he switched gears to become a middle school teacher, first in Nashville and then in Oak Park, Il. Around 2016, just as CMM had moved to its new location in Bridgeport, Dylan began volunteering as the museum's archivist. Recognizing his talent and skills, CMM hired Dylan as a full-time curator in 2018.



"Dylan's skills and expertise help to tell our maritime stories," says CMM vice chairman Jerry Thomas. "He understands the relationship between history and artifacts – the stories we tell and objects that support those stories. His knowledge and dedication are true assets to the museum."

Unexpected disasters in 2020 required Dylan to go beyond his curatorial duties to help save the museum. Not only did a Covid-19 shutdown affect museum attendance in 2020, but also, a May flood from heavy rains caused sewage backup into the museum. While managing pandemic protocols, Dylan also played a key role in the restoration effort over several months, to clean up the

museum.

“Assessing the damage, determining what can and can’t be salvaged, working with building personnel and insurance companies, was a significant challenge, but we got the job done,” said Dylan, “And we actually took advantage of the downtime by developing emergency policies and updating exhibits.”

If knowledge is the key to preparing for the unexpected, Dylan has armored himself with new skills and information. To keep abreast of museum trends, Dylan is working on a master’s degree in Museum Studies from John Hopkins University. He also received a Small Museum Pro Certificate in 2019 from the American Association of State and Local History.

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## Curator’s Corner

By Dylan Hoffman

### Early History Maps Acquisitions



John M. Gerty Jr. donated two significant map collections to the Chicago Maritime Museum. In 2014, he donated a set of insurance maps from 1886 published by the E. Robinson Co. of Chicago, Illinois. The map set coverage includes the Chicago Loop from Division Street to the north to 14th Street to the south and from Halsted Street on the west to the Lakefront on the east. The maps were collected by John’s grandfather Francis J. Gerty, MD.

Just this past month, John donated a portfolio titled **“The Mapping of the Great Lakes in the Seventeenth Century, Twenty-Two Maps from the George S. & Nancy B. Parker Collection,”** published by the John Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island. The set contains reproductions of

28" x 21" maps of the Great Lakes dating from 1650 to 1698.

These substantial contributions will help support the early history focus area of the CMM collection.

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## Lake Michigan's Buried Ghost Town

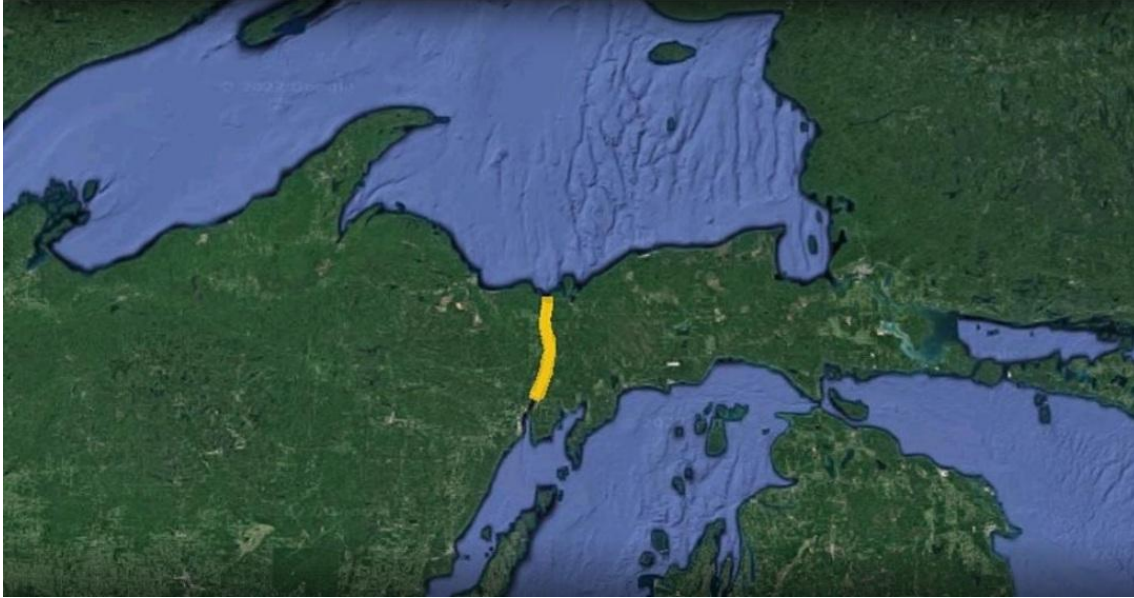


Once located near the mouth of the Kalamazoo River, Singapore has gathered lore and mystery since its ultimate demise in the early 1900s, with some deeming the site "Michigan's Pompeii."

[Read More Here](#)

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## Canal Joining Lake Superior and Lake Michigan: Failed Piece of Michigan History



How was it going to happen and why did it ultimately fail to take shape?

[Read More Here](#)

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## **Treasure Hunters Search the Bottom of Lake Michigan as Hobby**



British coins, gold rings, and other interesting finds discovered in Traverse Bay by hobbyist treasure hunters.

[Read More Here](#)

# Maritime Event Calendar

Check out local maritime events at the Chicago Maritime Museum [website calendar page](#).

Submit maritime events in the Chicagoland area or story ideas to Mary Ann O'Rourke at [maorourke58@gmail.com](mailto:maorourke58@gmail.com).

## Ready to join or renew your membership?

Information about our membership offers can be found [here](#). If you need further membership support please email us at [cmm@chicagomaritimemuseum.org](mailto:cmm@chicagomaritimemuseum.org)

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*We hope you've enjoyed our monthly e-newsletter, On the Move.*

