

THE ANCHOR

FALL | 2019

WISCONSIN MARITIME MUSEUM | QUARTERLY

CLAMMING

WISCONSIN'S
ROMANCE
WITH
PEARLS &
CLAMS
BUTTONS



QUARTERLY MAINSTAYS

BELOW DECK

News from the
Collections Vault

COBIA CORNER

The latest events of
our WWII sub

THE CURRENT

Highlights and milestones,
by-the-numbers

• ARTIFACT SPOTLIGHT •

**Wooden Stool salvaged
from Rouse Simmons**





75 Maritime Drive
Manitowoc, WI 54220
(920) 684-0218
museum@wisconsinmaritime.org

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- PRESIDENT RADM Gerald Clusen (USN, Ret.)
- VICE PRESIDENT Alex Allie
- VICE PRESIDENT John Brunner
- TREASURER Rich Larsen
- SECRETARY Jamie Zastrow
- Dr. Rebecca Abler, Ph.D.
- Dr. Robert Cornwell, M.D.
- Stephen Dudek
- Todd Lotz
- Philip Maples
- Tim McTigue
- Jason Ring
- Logan Rooney
- Carlton Schultz
- Dr. Joseph Trader, M.D.
- Howard Zimmerman

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

- Richard Boyd
- Abigail Diaz
- Cathy Green
- Tamara Thomsen
- Edward Warner

MUSEUM STAFF

- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Cathy Green
- DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & PROGRAMS Abigail Diaz
- SUBMARINE CURATOR Karen Duvalle
- REGISTRAR Hannah Patten
- GROUP SALES & RENTALS Caitlin Seguin
- EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR Emily Shedal
- VISITOR SERVICES LEAD Laura Lucero & Shane Lee
- FINANCIAL SERVICES Tom Smith
- VISITOR SERVICES & MEMBERSHIP Heidi Benjamin
- MAINTENANCE Paul Rutherford



THE PILOTHOUSE

CATHY GREEN,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



When is the last time you received an invitation that truly excited you? Communities here on the Lake Michigan shore extended an invitation to NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program back in 2014. They invited these scientists, historians, and resource managers to be a part of the maritime story of Wisconsin. Woven into that story were individual deeds of heroism, technological innovation, immigration and change, as well as a treasure trove of actual ships, artifacts, and waterfronts that are bound together in the tapestry of Wisconsin's maritime landscape.

The museum is incredibly encouraged by the renewed support Governor Tony Evers and Senator Tammy Baldwin expressed when they made an historic announcement here earlier this month. The sanctuary designation process is moving forward and we couldn't be more excited. The National Marine Sanctuary's mission dovetails neatly with ours. However, we aren't the only ones excited. Officials from Port Washington, Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Two Rivers as well as the heads of Wisconsin's Department

of Natural Resources and Coastal Management Program were on hand to demonstrate their long-time support of the initiative.

What does this mean for the museum? It means that our invitation to explore Wisconsin's maritime history will reach more people around the country. It means more scientists, historians, and archaeologists will be researching, interpreting, and sharing information with us. It means we have the opportunity to enrich the stories we tell with new voices. And, it also serves as an invitation to welcome more community members here in Manitowoc, Sheboygan, Ozaukee, and Keweenaw Counties to dive into our shared heritage.

I invite you to become more involved by attending one of our programs like Christmas Tree Ship Day (page 13). I invite you to help us extend our reach into the community by contributing to our annual campaign, which helps to fund our operation and programs throughout the year (page 14). Finally, I invite you to extend an invitation to someone in your life to be a part of this maritime story. A gift membership (page 13) is a perfect welcome this holiday season ■

Cathy M. Green

ON THE COVER

Four-legged wood stool recovered from the *Rouse Simmons* shipwreck. Also known as the "Christmas Tree Ship", the *Rouse Simmons* was carrying a cargo of Christmas trees when the ship went down during a powerful storm in 1912 near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.



The Anchor (Volume 50, Issue No. 1)

The Anchor newsletter is published quarterly by the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, 75 Maritime Drive, Manitowoc, WI 54220; tel. 920-684-0218; e-mail museum@wisconsinmaritime.org

Comments and suggestions regarding The Anchor may be directed to the editor at 920-684-0218 or e-mail: editor@wisconsinmaritime.org. The submission of articles and other material for publication is welcomed. Copyright 2019 by the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. The Anchor is designed by Freelance Artist, Remington Cleve.

The Wisconsin Maritime Museum is a private non-profit organization located in Manitowoc, WI, founded in 1968 as the Manitowoc Submarine Memorial Association, Inc., the Museum is dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of local, state and regional maritime history. The Museum has a membership program and distributes *The Anchor* quarterly to its membership. Other membership benefits include; unlimited free admission to the Museum and USS *Cobia*, discounts for purchases in the Museum Store, research services, and special events.

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Wisconsin Maritime Museum is also a member of the Association of Midwest Museums, Wisconsin Federation of Museums, Association for Great Lakes Maritime History, Council of American Maritime Museums, International Congress of Maritime Museums, Historic Naval Ships Association, and the American Association for State and Local History, and is a Smithsonian Affiliate.



CONTENTS

3 CLAMMING

WISCONSIN'S ROMANCE WITH PEARLS, CLAMS & BUTTONS

by Dr. Richard Boyd



Early clam diving rig on the Mississippi, c.1940. Courtesy National Geographic.

- 1**
- The Pilothouse
- 2**
- The Manifest
- 9**
- Below Deck
- 10**
- Cobia Corner
- 11**
- The Current
- 13**
- Member's Locker
- Back cover**
- Coming Events



THE MANIFEST

QUARTERLY BOOK REVIEW BY SHANE LEE

REBEL POET

MORE STORIES from a 21st CENTURY INDIAN

by Louis V. Clark (Two Shoes)

Oneida author and poet Louis V. Clark III (Two Shoes) gives an inventive voice to many who have been silenced for generations. Clark's second book, *Rebel Poet: More Stories from a 21st Century Indian*, mixes poetry and prose to convey the struggles his American Indian family faces. The Wisconsin author walks the reader through his search for an identity, his mother's alcoholism, domestic violence, job discrimination, and baseball. Clark combines beautiful verse with sparkling wit and heart-breaking honesty as he shares his journey.



Rebel Poet:
More Stories from a 21st Century Indian

by Louis V. Clark, III (Two Shoes)

Available in the Pier 75 Gift Shop at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum



Clark concludes that in order for a people to survive, so must their traditions, even though Indian traditions have been oppressed and stripped away until only the red skin remains. That skin makes Clark's dreams seem unattainable, but he persists like the rebel poet he is. *Rebel Poet* is a quick read for those seeking a fresh perspective on racism or for those who need encouragement to continue the fight.

Rebel Poet and How to Be an Indian in the 21st Century are for sale in the bookstore. Members always save 10% on store purchases ■



YOU ARE INVITED TO BE PART OF SOMETHING INCREDIBLE!

PAGE 14 FOR MORE.



One would not expect that the lowly clam once figured prominently in Wisconsin's storied maritime history, but indeed it did. Wisconsin boasts some 15,000 lakes and 84,000 miles of inland waterways where several centuries of nautical activities have occurred. These waters also team with a myriad of aquatic life. Among these lifeforms are nearly 40 species of mussels, including 30 species of clams, some of which attain a shell length of eight inches. Today many of these bivalve critters are endangered or protected species, but it wasn't always so. A century ago, tremendous interest in these clams existed, primarily for three reasons: All Wisconsin clams can produce pearls (Fig. 1), some having extreme value, which sparked a 19th century "pearl rush." More pragmatically, clamshells were found to be a great matrix for fabricating fashionable buttons before the days of modern synthetic materials. In more recent times, it was discovered that a fragment of shell from Mississippi River clams was the ideal irritant to force oysters to produce fine pearls, a real boon for the cultured pearl industry.



Wisconsin clam pearls

Wisconsin clam pearls have been known since frontier times; Native Americans reportedly wore prized specimens, while others have been discovered in mound burials. These gemstones were undoubtedly found while hunting mussels as a food source. However, professional "pearl fishing"

CLAMMING

Wisconsin's
Romance
With
Pearls,
Clams
&
Buttons

by Dr. Richard Boyd

or "clamming" was originally considered to be an unrewarding waste of time, because clam pearls were uncommon and thought to be inferior to oceanic types. These assumptions are mostly wrong! Wisconsin pearls are largely indistinguishable from oceanic types, and can be of significant value due to their variety in shape and color. Notably, a pearl can be found for every 100 clams inspected, but a truly exquisite specimen occurs only once in about 10,000 shells.

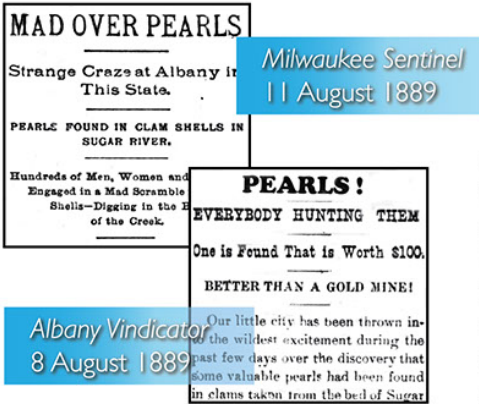
A remarkable range in color and shape occurs in Wisconsin pearls; white, pink, blue, lavender, lilac, and green gemstones have been found in round, oval, oblong, and aberrant forms. While irregularly shaped specimens are considered less



Custom ring with irregular clam pearl

valuable than perfectly round ones, they are nonetheless quite prized for custom jewelry (Fig. 2). Some believe that natural pearls are superior to cultured types because they may be nearly solid calcium carbonate throughout, whereas cultured ones consist of a relatively sizeable irritant particle (7-14 mm sphere) covered by thin layers of carbonate. Curiously, what type of pearl a clam produces depends upon its location within the shell. Excellent round pearls occur along the lip of the shell, whereas oblong types form along the back, and irregular types at the shell's ends. Color is dictated by the species of the clam itself.

Clams and oysters form pearls in a very similar manner. An irritant (sand, pebble, parasite) enters the shell, so the mussel begins to secrete substances to encapsulate and isolate it. These secretions consist of calcium carbonate in the forms of aragonite and calcite, bound together with an organic glue, called conchiolin. Depending upon the ratio of these chemicals and other ambient factors, the resulting pearls can have slightly



different mineral compositions, as well as variations in color, size, shape, or special features.

Interest in Wisconsin clams arose rather suddenly in 1889 in the small town of Albany in Green County. In August of that year, several local citizens were pearl fishing in the nearby Sugar River. The town millpond was lowered to facilitate that activity, so about 400 citizens began anxiously clamming, and finding a number of pearls (Fig. 3). Soon 800 local citizens were chasing clams. The grand prize went to John Tilley, who came up with a specimen worth \$100; this was a major find, since \$100 in 1889 would equate to about \$3,000 today. Other specimens were retrieved, valued from \$10 to \$55, creating great delight. Even a \$10 pearl was equivalent to a comfortable week's wages! The Albany discovery was glorified in several State newspapers (Fig. 4), and the rush was on! Curiously, Albany soon became nicknamed: "The Pearl of the Sugar River."

The craze quickly spread from the Sugar River at Albany to the Pecatonica, Rock, Mukwonago, Fox, Wolf, Wisconsin, and Mississippi Rivers, until about 23 Wisconsin communities were hunting clams. Residents of Brodhead, Darlington, Shiocton, Mauston, Chilton, Waterloo, Madison, Stevens Point, Omro, Fremont, and Prairie du Chien all got into the act. Pearl mania then spread to other states: Arkansas, Maine, Tennessee, Georgia, Ohio, and Florida all experienced incidents of wild clamming activity. Commercial pearl buyers and jewelry dealers loved this situation and promoted mass

pearl hunting. After all, they merely had to send a representative to the area and reap the benefits of other folks' labor; they did not have to pay anyone to harvest pearls, but merely purchase them from the seekers, probably at a significant profit. Soon the Albany area alone was supplying 8% of the pearl supply for a booming USA market. The mass of pearls retrieved in Albany during 1889 was sold collectively for about \$300,000 or around eight million dollars today.

After Wisconsin pearls were recognized as rare and high quality, their value quickly escalated. One special jewel, the Genoa Pearl found at Prairie du Chien in 1903, was a perfect, nearly one-inch spherical specimen. This particular gem reportedly found its way into the British Crown Jewels. The Ismal Pearl, which had a rare iridescent quality known as "Flame," was originally purchased for \$1,000, but sold in Chicago for \$5,000, in New York for \$10,000, and again in London for \$20,000! A collection of 1,000 fine Wisconsin pearls displayed at the 1893 World's Exposition in Chicago was valued at \$150,000, or nearly four million in today's money. The fabulous Lady Dudley Necklace was reportedly fabricated with 47 perfectly round specimens of graduated size from the Pecatonica River. In 1902, it sold for 22,000-British pounds or over 3.4-million USA dollars today.

Sometimes even misshapen pearls could be real prizes. Clams form pearls by secreting layer after layer of calcium carbonate, so a low-grade pearl can be carefully "peeled" by single layers, sometimes revealing a gem of perfect shape or color within. Stories abound about experts finding a high-value pearl inside of an inferior gemstone, initially reviled as a "slug pearl."

Pearl hunting activity in Wisconsin lasted about seven years, although some historians claim that the craze persisted

into the 1920s. Interestingly, special conditions had allowed this phenomenon to blossom. The decades just before and after the turn of the 19th century was truly an "era of glitter;" huge fortunes were being amassed by entrepreneurs, while taxes were very low. Wealthy tycoons desired fine jewelry, and pearls were considered top-of-the-line. In many early civilizations, only royalty was allowed to own or wear pearls, so rich 20th century magnates likewise wanted the very best. Oceanic sources could not meet the demand, and the cultured pearl industry did not become relative until the 1930s. The insatiable market demand for pearls propelled hunters to pursue every last clam.

Pearl clamming became a nearly year-round occupation for some folks along the Mississippi River, fomenting seasonal migrations. Large groups, consisting of entire families or transients, came to the "Big Muddy" during the summer, where they camped out to seek the wily clam. Certain river towns, like La Crosse, Prairie du Chien, and Dubuque became "purchase centers," where professional pearl buyers set up shop. For example, La Crosse alone boasted 45 registered buyers in 1900 (Fig. 5).



Clamming for pearls was generally done in shallow water by wading and probing for the mussels with hands and feet. Once a clam was found, it was cut open, the tissue and shell were probed for a gem, and then discarded into the water or onto the shoreline. In these early times, little interest existed in the clamshell itself; their pearly

nature made them attractive material for decorative items like cigarette cases and handles for tools or pistol-grips, but they had no other widespread use. The flesh was rarely retained as a foodstuff, although some was ground for pig feed in certain localities.

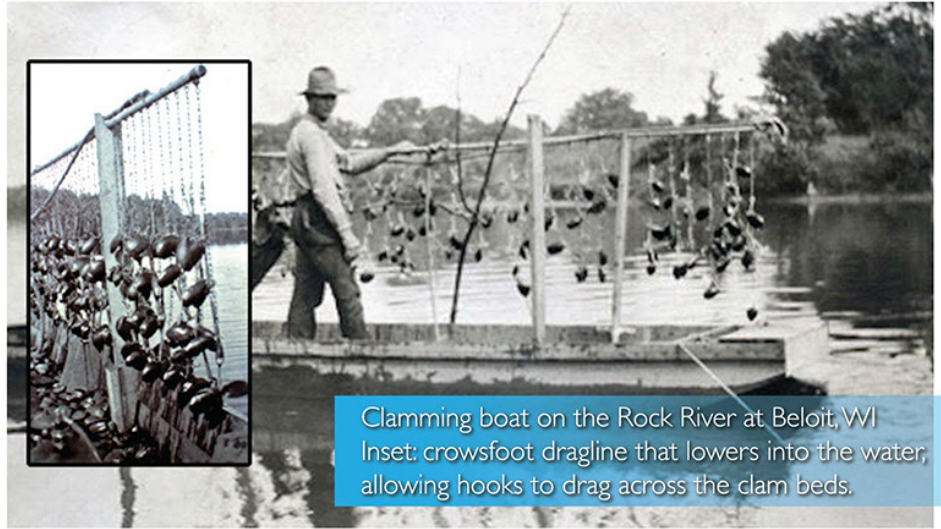
Eventually, pearl hunting activity was suffocated by the scarcity of clams, plus the offensive stench and massive environmental pollution created by the discarded refuse. Beds of easily accessible mussels had been almost annihilated. Introduction of cultured pearls also progressively depressed the market for clam pearls. Today, regulations protect most mussel species and harvesting them is illegal. However, the once active clamming community of Alma in Buffalo County still boasts a custom pearl jewelry business.

As pearl hunting began to wane in the 1890s, a new application for clamshells was blossoming. The clothing industry was flourishing and fancy buttons were in high demand. Modern synthetics did not exist, so bone, wood, glass, and metal



Clam shell button blanks

were used until it was discovered that clamshells, with their inner ornate surface, were a perfect matrix for elegant buttons. If a round disk was punched out from a shell, and then drilled and polished, a fine "pearl button" fastener could be produced. Surprisingly, that discovery occurred not in the USA, but in Germany in the 1880s. John Boepple was a skilled German craftsman who was making buttons from suitable miscellaneous materials. Having examined samples of the large clams from the Mississippi



Clamming boat on the Rock River at Beloit, WI
Inset: crowsfoot dragline that lowers into the water, allowing hooks to drag across the clam beds.

River, he concluded that these would be the ideal button material (Fig. 6) and subsequently relocated to Iowa near the river. He eventually garnered enough investment capital to open a factory in Muscatine in 1891.

Unfortunately, Boepple was not a sharp businessman and his shop failed after only four years, but his idea did not; it quickly spread up and down the river, generating enterprises at many localities. Other fabricators carried on in Muscatine, and by 1890, 43 button-related businesses with 2,500 workers had created a lucrative economy. In 1898, Muscatine was crowned the "Button Capital of the World," having produced nearly 140 million units that year alone.

Button companies sprang up in many river towns: La Crosse, Prairie du Chien, Stevens Point, Nekoosa, and Alma in Wisconsin; Dubuque, Guttenberg, and Davenport in Iowa; Meredosia, Naples, and Kampsville in Illinois, just to name a few. Clamming activity spread northward all the way to Lake Pepin, which supported an enormous clam population. In 1897, at least 13 Upper Mississippi River towns had clamming industries, which skyrocketed to 49 only one year later. At least a dozen more businesses were located on various inland streams.

The shallow water clam retrieval methods used by inland pearl hunters were not suitable for the Mississippi River with its greater depths and swift currents. Use of nets, shovel-scoops, and

snorkel devices had proved suitable for clamming in the river shallows, but not in larger open water. Boepple is credited with originating a fairly clever solution for large-scale clamming; he invented the "crowsfoot dragline," consisting of a metal bar, about 10-feet long, which trailed a number of small treble-hooks on short cable or chain lines. In the Mississippi, clams develop layered beds many feet high, where the mussel usually rests with its shell open, facing into the current. When the clamming boats pulled these draglines across the beds, alarmed clams would tenaciously snap shut onto the wires and hooks and were pulled to the surface (Fig. 7).

Clamming boats were rather unique in several respects. The boats themselves were the typical shallow-water johnboats, 15 – 20 feet long, although some larger models existed. They were rigged with one or more stanchions that extended the length of the craft, and could be lowered over the sides. Each held a row of crowsfoot draglines that could be dropped, trolled, and then winched back to the surface with a catch of clams. Most boats also had a special device called a "mule." It consisted of a flat board with a canvas conduit that, when fastened to the boat's stern, would move the craft sideways downstream in the current, allowing optimal operation of the draglines. By 1890, clam boats were operating in great numbers up and down the Upper Mississippi. In 1911, it was estimated that

2,600 boats were operation in Illinois waters alone. An efficient clammer could harvest up to 500 pounds of shellfish a day!



A clam-boiling operation in 1918

The harvested clams were brought ashore and boiled in large vats to loosen the flesh. The boiling process was generally described as a "hold thy nose" operation (Fig. 8). Steamed mussels are popped open, inspected for any pearls, and stripped of flesh; the meat was usually discarded or occasionally ground into animal food. The shells were stored in large containers or bins and periodically trucked or barged to a company that produced "button blanks" (Fig. 9). There they were soaked in water to soften the shell, which might be as thick as ½-inch and very hard to drill. The shells were bored with a special hole-saw that yielded a disk called a button blank; 3 – 20 blanks could be obtained from each shell, depending upon its size.

Drilling was a very messy job that generated heavy particulate dust and quickly dulled tools. During this process, shells were held with gloved-hands or a special tool, creating a rather hazardous situation. Many small shoreline companies could produce button blanks, but only a few could fabricate a completed, marketable "pearl button," so blanks had to be sent to finishing factories for the final processing. The largest plant in Wisconsin was at Fremont on the Wolf River; another noteworthy facility was in La Crosse.

Interestingly, button production was a highly structured process, involving over 25 different tasks. Cutting and

drilling the blanks was considered strictly a "man's job," that garnered about \$7 - \$20 per week. It was paid as piecework; the buttons completed by each cutter were weighed and inspected for quality. Craftsmen were docked for inferior products, which often drew some heated protests, but "cutters" were considered "primo technicians," so firings were infrequent. Boys often carried out the prefinishing jobs, where the dull outer layer of the shell was removed and ground to an even thickness. A series of washing and polishing steps followed.

Women, usually on the second floor of the button plant, then completed the processing, for which they were paid \$4 - \$6 per week. This work involved polishing, drilling the sewing holes, and finally sorting and packaging for shipment to major retailers and manufacturers. These final steps were no small tasks; dozens of different varieties of shapes, colors, and hole-patterns were produced. Inspecting, sorting and packaging the products was very labor intensive, but the output of these plants was truly enormous. Each factory

worker could turn out about 3,300 units per day. The Wisconsin Pearl Button Company of La Crosse could fabricate about 238,000 units per year by 1907, which skyrocketed to 1.5-million by 1913. A job in a button factory at any position was considered good-paying employment in that era.

As had pearl hunting, "button clamming" incited a huge influx of seasonal workers from southern states and Midwestern inland areas. Clam beds in the Mississippi south of the Illinois River had been decimated by pollution from the Chicago Sanitary Canal carried by the Illinois River. Clammers who operated south of the Illinois River flocked north in great numbers, where they set up "tent cities" or houseboat camps (Fig. 10) along the river to harvested mollusks, which were sold to clam-buyers or processing companies. An estimated 20,000 seasonal clammers were operating in 1902. In fact, farmers and small businesses complained about the loss of available summer labor because so many workmen turned to clamming for "easy summer money." Successful clammers could clear \$16 per day, and



Button blank factory in Guttenburg, IA. Courtesy city library.

a few could haul in \$200 per week, tremendous money back then. At first, clamshells were only worth about \$3 per ton, which climbed to \$50 by 1900, and then to \$125 by 1910.

By the 1920s, the pearl button industry was being extinguished by resource depletion, protective legislation, Japanese competition, and the introduction of early plastics and fasteners like zippers and Velcro. Electric washing machines and dryers also took a toll; their heat caused ugly discoloration of pearl buttons. Mechanization in the sewing and clothing industries required highly uniform buttons with very precise holes, which were often lacking in hand-made pearl buttons. By 1930, clamming for button manufacturing was largely over, having consumed 16-million pounds of shellfish in that year. American button fabricators cleared only \$5.3 million that year, down from the peak of \$12.5 million in 1916. Clam-shell button companies had faded into history by 1950, although a few persisted by

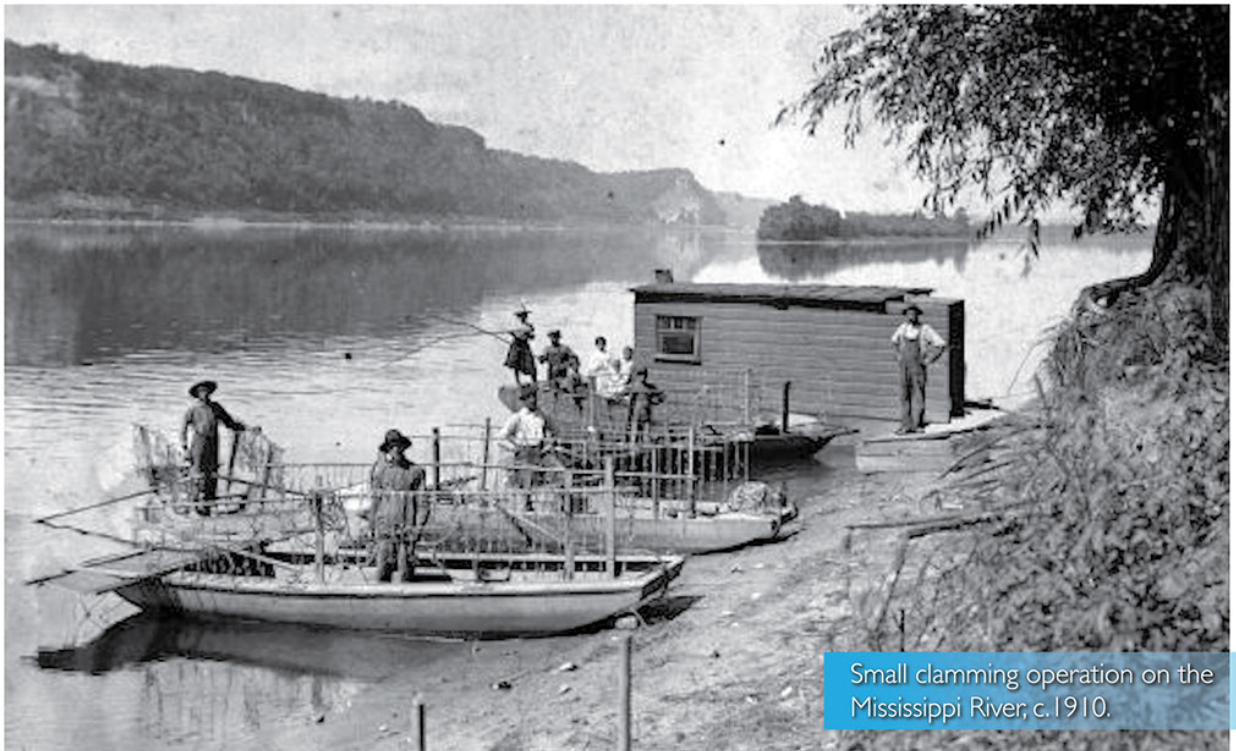
producing plastic or novelty buttons.

The wholesale harvesting of clams took an enormous toll on the bivalve populations. The government attempted to reestablish the decimated clam beds by reintroducing cultured mussels. A clam-rearing facility was built at Fairport, Iowa; unfortunately, this effort failed miserably due to a virus infection that decimated the population and by pollution in the river, which had become too toxic in many areas to support mussels in their original natural habitats.

A respite several decades long occurred until the 1960s, when a second round of clam mania occurred on the Mississippi. By that time, the cultured pearl industry was expanding and developing in various oceanic areas. This industry is a highly fastidious business, subject to many problems such as infective diseases, accidental predation, and troublesome weather. Another obstacle is how best to induce the oyster to produce a pearl, which is normally accomplished by placing

some irritating pellet inside the mussel. But not just any substance worked satisfactorily. Fragments of clamshell were often used, but again, not every variety of shell worked successfully. Then it was discovered that a portion of clamshell from the Upper Mississippi worked elegantly for this arcane purpose, and another "clamming rush" was set in motion. Foreign cultured pearl farmers bought Mississippi clamshells by the boat-loads. A ton of shells yielded only about 60 pounds of suitable seed nuclei, so millions of pounds of clamshells were consumed for this purpose from about 1950 – 1990. In 1966, two million pounds of shells were harvested from Illinois waters alone for this singular purpose.

Of course, the previous developed methods for clam harvesting were still suitable for this purpose, but a new technology was also available; scuba and SAS (Surface Air Supplied) underwater diving. Some adventuresome clammers had begun using homemade diving rigs



Small clamming operation on the Mississippi River, c. 1910.



Early clam diving rig on the Mississippi, c.1940.
Courtesy National Geographic

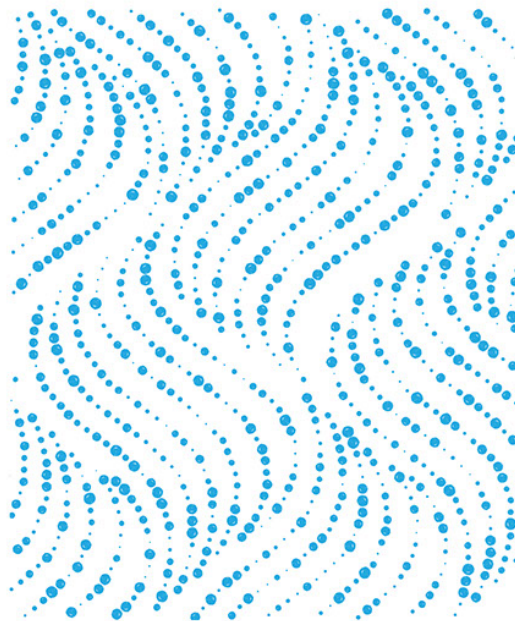
early in the 1900s (Fig. 11). However, most professional clambers were not trained divers. Some took sport diving certification courses, whereas others read a book on the subject or just took their chances.

Some of the largest and most productive clam beds were in deeper spots in the Mississippi, where the depth and current interfered with dragline operations. For example, at the junction of the Mississippi and Wisconsin Rivers an underwater basin exists, over 80-feet deep in spots, which holds enormous clam beds, reported to be 10-miles in length. Surprisingly, these amateur divers conducted regular successful harvests from these huge beds, while confronting the deep, dark water and treacherous currents. No deaths or diving disorders have been reported among those scuba-clammers.

Devastation of the clam populations was once again horrendous. In 1990, seven million-pounds of clams were harvested from Illinois waters alone. The resource became threatened with extinction, so legislation was enacted to curtail clamming. Certain species were recognized as threatened and endangered species, thereby becoming lawfully protected. Wisconsin required clambers to be licensed; resident permits cost \$300.00, whereas non-residents paid \$2,500, the latter fee to discourage the huge rush of seasonal, out-of-state clambers who haunted State waters. Also, Wisconsin clams

faced a new danger: the zebra mussel. This invasive species finds clamshells a highly suitable substrate for attachment, and they can literally smother clams under their rapid proliferation.

The previously mentioned restrictions proved insufficient to save the clams. Today no commercial or private clamming is allowed in Wisconsin. It is even illegal to possess the shells of most species. The great pearl and clam rushes on Wisconsin rivers and lakes have been relegated to interesting vignettes in the too-often forgotten inland maritime history of Wisconsin ■



1

Johnson, George. "The American Pearl Rush: Its Wisconsin Beginnings." *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 95, no. 3 (2012): 2-15.

2

Kunz, George Frederick and Charles Hugh Stevenson. *The Book of Pearl* (New York: The Century Co., 1908): 862 p.

3

McCann, Dennis. *This Storied River: Legends and Lore of the Upper Mississippi* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017), 192 p.

4

Ternte, Eric. F. "A Brief History of Clamming and Pearl Industry in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin," *Special graduate seminar paper* (La Crosse WI: University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, 1968): 35 p.

1

Objects in the Wisconsin Maritime Museum's Permanent Collection

2

A68-1-1 This display of submarine construction materials was the first object formally accessioned by the Wisconsin Maritime Museum (then the Manitowoc Maritime Museum). It is a prime example of something that "falls within the Collection Scope" because it represents a significant aspect of the Museum's mission engage and educate the public about Wisconsin's WWII submarines.

3

One of seven "Manitowoc 28" commemorative ashtrays in the collection

If you have any materials you would like the Wisconsin Maritime Museum to consider for acquisition please visit our website. Guest services staff cannot accept any donations at the front desk.



BELOW DECK

NEWS FROM THE COLLECTIONS VAULT
BY HANNAH PATTEN,
REGISTRAR

Why We Collect the Things We Do

Though the average visitor is more familiar with our exhibits and programs, collections staff spend much of their time behind the scenes researching, documentation, and making recommendations for acceptance or rejection of donations of artifacts that have been offered to the Museum. Here are the 3 main considerations taken into account when we decide what materials to accept.



FOLLOWING POLICY

The foundation of any museum collection are clear policies and procedures outlining what artifacts can be accepted into the collection. Every museum has a Scope of Collections Statement that defines what materials can be accepted into the collection and the reasons for doing so. A museum's collection exists to further its mission. The Wisconsin Maritime Museum, therefore in order to preserve maritime history for future generations, seeks to collect materials pertaining to the maritime history and heritage of Wisconsin and the Great Lakes region, including Wisconsin's World War II submarines and USS Cobia. Another part of our mission is engaging and educating the public through exhibits and educational programs. It is then essential that the artifacts in our collection can be utilized to meet that goal. But as the museum has grown, the mission too has been adapted in an effort to meet our current audience. It follows that the scope of the collection



has grown over time. Only recently have we begun to recognize that our interpretation of maritime history largely overlooked American Indians who also called this region home. Currently there are very few materials in our collection that represent maritime heritage from that viewpoint. We hope to grow the collection with an eye to increasing the diversity of perspectives.



AVOIDING REDUNDANCY

One of the most common reasons for rejecting a potential donation is that we already have similar artifacts in the collection. With limited resources and storage space, it is essential that we avoid redundancies. For example, we currently have seven accessioned "Manitowoc 28" commemorative ashtrays, so it is unlikely we would accept another into the collection.

In this case the objects are exact duplicates, but we also want to avoid over-representing one class of artifact or perspective in the collection. It is important that we prioritize accepting under-represented histories, perspectives, and narratives in order

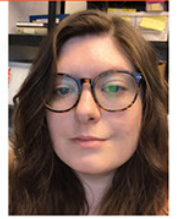
to diversify our collection and achieve our goal of preserving and presenting all aspects of maritime history in the Great Lakes region.

CONDITION

We also assess the condition of the objects in the proposed donation before accepting them. If an object is in such a poor state that we do not have the resources to care for it or that even with conservation it could not be used to forward our mission we are unlikely to accept it. Conversely, we may accept duplicate items if the proposed donation is in better condition than the example in our collection, after which the Museum may decide to deaccession the example that is in poorer condition.

While all these considerations are important when assessing a possible donation, perhaps the most critical element is the Museum's duties as stewards of the collections we hold in the public trust. It would be unethical and irresponsible for the Museum to accept anything it cannot properly house and preserve.

As a part of a world-wide community of museums we want to be sure that potential donations find the right home where they can be properly preserved and utilized for the public benefit. Though this may seem like a demanding and lengthy process, following these steps ensures both that our collection stays relevant to our mission and that we are meeting industry-wide standards for best practices



Hannah Patten is the Registrar at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. She can be reached at (920) 684-0218 x111 or hpatten@wisconsinmaritime.org.



COBIA CORNER

USS COBIA NEWS
BY KAREN DUVALLE,
SUBMARINE CURATOR



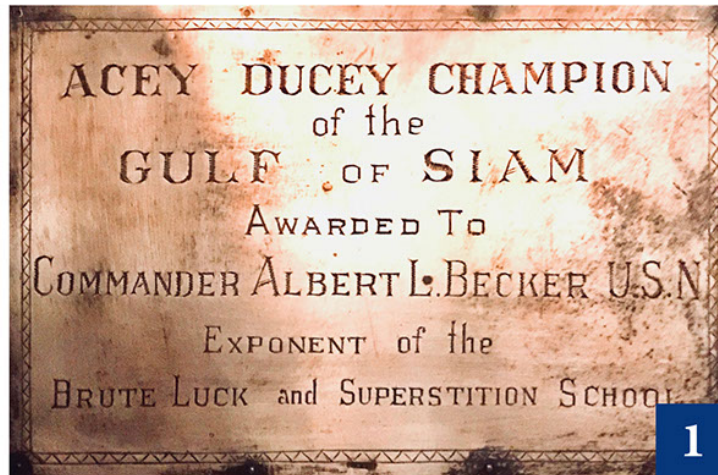
Captain Becker

In August, we were honored to host Joseph Becker and his wife Betsy. Joe is the son of Albert Becker, Cobia's commanding officer for her first five war patrols. This was their first visit to Cobia, so we gave them a VIP tour and showed them his father's cabin and where he stood on the bridge. They were also excited to meet our volunteer, Mark Becker, a navy vet with the same last name. Mark has been adding little touches to the boat to give her a more lived-in look, especially in the captain's cabin. Because they share a last name, Mark has donated old name tags and uniforms to make the cabin look like Becker just left it.

“Our Captain, Albert Becker, was transferred from the Cobia the day we went to the hotel for rest. We all hated that, for even if he was sort of a dare-devil at times, we had confidence in him and didn't want to see him go. He made a nice speech to the crew. He told us that we were the finest, most efficient crew he had known and that all of his merits and awards were his because of his good crew and that not once did he meet any danger that he didn't have confidence in his crew could handle it. That made us feel pretty good. He was a good 'old codger.'”

~Charles Stewart~

Joe and Betsy's visit was a rare new connection to a Cobia crewmember. Not only did they share some new Captain Becker stories with us, but they are also considering donating some photos and artifacts to our Cobia Collection. But, for now, here is a little background information on our beloved Captain Becker:



LCDR Albert Lilly Becker was born in Brookhaven, MS on December 3, 1911. In 1930, he attended the U.S. Naval Academy and served aboard USS Argonaut as an ensign and was the Executive Officer on USS Blackfish at the start of WWII. When he was assigned to USS Cobia as part of the Commissioning crew he was just 32 years old, but the young crew still called him "the Old Man." Becker was loved and respected by his crew because he genuinely cared about them and took the time to get to know them.

Becker would often spend time in the crew's mess chatting with the crew, challenging them to a game of Acey-Ducey or setting up a cribbage tournament that would last the entire patrol. In fact, he was the Acey-Ducey champion of the Gulf of Siam in June of 1945.

For his outstanding service during his period of command, he was awarded the Navy Cross, Silver Star, and a Letter of Commendation. After Becker retired from the Navy in 1964, he taught general science and physics and was an Assistant Principal for 11 years. He fully retired in 1975. Beloved by his crewmen even after the war, Captain Becker stayed active with Cobia reunions, frequently

returning to his submarine right up to the year he passed away. He provided several in-depth oral histories about his experiences on Cobia which are an invaluable resource ■



“The captain had a calm presence about him. I never heard him raise his voice. In emergencies and battle attacks, his slow southern accent never changed, but everyone got the word.”

~Herbert Starmer~

1

Captain Beckers Acey Ducey plaque

2

Joe Becker aboard Cobia during his visit

Karen Duvall is the USS Cobia Submarine Curator at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. She can be reached at (920) 684-0218 x105 or kduvalle@wisconsinmaritime.org.



The Aquarius Project is a teen-organized expedition out of Adler Planetarium. You can learn more on Adler's website or by subscribing to their podcast.

Not Just Shipwrecks

If you've visited our galleries, you know how much we love shipwrecks at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. Each submerged vessel is a history book, frozen in time, telling the story of innovation, bravery and loss. We can learn much from wrecks like *Home*, which was likely involved in the Underground Railroad, or *Gallinipper*, an early fur trading schooner or dugout canoes found under the water after sometimes thousands of years. But there is more than just shipwrecks out there!

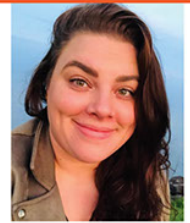
In Lake Huron, a submerged prehistoric forest lies in about 40 feet of water. Lost material culture, like evidence of the fur trade or logging boom, lie beneath our inland waterways. We can see evidence of *SS Badger's* years of lake crossings by looking for coal along the bottom of Lake Michigan. Changing lake levels have meant that many areas that are now underwater were not always so. Some American Indian sites, once frequented by the first people to traverse our waterways, are now beneath the waves. Stone tools, lodges, petroglyphs, burial sites could all lie under the cold, fresh water around us. With over 70% of the world covered in water, it's no wonder that some of the most fascinating things end up there.

In 2017, a ball of green fire lit up the night's sky as a 600-pound



meteor crashed into Lake Michigan. Three Chicago institutions, Adler Planetarium, Shedd Aquarium and the Field Museum of Natural History, wondered if they could find it. Chris Bresky, Teen Program Manager at Adler Planetarium, was inspired. The Aquarius Project was born from this inspiration. Based out of Chicago's Adler Planetarium and led by youth in the Teen Program, the Project seeks to find a submerged meteorites right off the coast of Manitowoc.

Over the past two summers, groups of scientists have come up to Manitowoc and ventured out on the lake. They used the Wisconsin Maritime Museum as a base; after each day of searching, they had



dinner with us and were able to get a behind the scenes look at our exhibits and collections. I was even able to join them out on the research vessel this year!

In September, the Museum welcomed teen and adult scientists for a special public program attended by over 50 people. The group, led by Chris Bresky, shared their first-hand experiences hunting for meteors in Lake Michigan. This incredible partnership continues into next year as the Museum prepares to host a temporary exhibit on The Aquarius Project, opening January 2020.

While shipwrecks remain one of our favorite things to talk about at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, it's important to remember that there is so much more at the bottom of the lake. There are more mysteries than answers, so take a page from Adler Planetarium's book and get exploring! ■

Staff Updates



Our Director of Collections, Tiffany Charles, departed the Museum this fall to start a new adventure at the Field Museum in Chicago. We wish Tiffany all the best and hope she visits soon.



Welcome Amelia Gale Benjamin! Born October 18, 2019 (the same day as her mommy, Heidi) at 4:26 a.m. weighing 5lbs 14oz, 18".

We're happy to welcome Colleen Kelly to the Museum. She is joining us as a Visitor Services Weekend Lead and comes to the Museum with over 20 years of experience, including years of Naval service. Welcome, Colleen!

Abbie Diaz is the Education Director and at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum. She can be reached at (920) 684-0218 x 115 or adiatz@wisconsinmaritime.org.

Exhibit Updates



Indigenous Waters temporary exhibit on the main level will be leaving this December. The dugout canoe on display has been on loan from the Menominee Cultural Museum for about six months and thousands have come to see it. Thank you to the Menominee Nation for allowing us to share this important part of our maritime culture!



Replacing *Indigenous Waters* will be an exhibit from Adler Planetarium about their search for a submerged meteor in Lake Michigan. This will open the first week of January.

Community Outreach in Manitowoc

BY EMILY SHEDAL

This summer, the Museum's Education Department started to consider who we were not serving in our region. We began by calling local homeless shelters and asking how we could be a better community partner. Immediately, we were able to start providing free family passes to all shelter residents along with bus tokens to get to and from the museum. We encourage residents to bring their families and friends to the Museum and make this a place to gather outside of the shelters. When we visited InCourage, we knew we could do ever more.

InCourage is Manitowoc County's domestic abuse shelter; they support victims of sexual assault and domestic violence by offering them a safe place to stay and conseling. They shelter houses around 40 people at a time and there can even be a waitlist. Oftentimes those affected by sexual assault and domestic violence include children. The Museum's Abbie Diaz and Emily Shedal began working with staff to understand what more we could do to engage the children and families at InCourage.

Starting the last week of August, members of the Education Department began leading weekly science clubs at InCourage. Using materials from the Museum of Science and Industry science club curriculum, children at InCourage get to do one science based activity a week. Activities vary from making roller coasters to making ice cream to building balloon rockets. Numbers at the shelter fluctuate; we may have twenty kids one week at science club and only eight at the next. The kids have been having a blast and we have gotten good feedback from the parents. One mom said, "It was so much fun! I used to make ice cream with my Grandpa and we would have to crank the handle to make it, I didn't know that there was a different way. I am going to make it again". One child even asked for the recipe for ice cream so he could make it later with his mom.

When the Wisconsin Maritime Museum says, "we are a place for all people", we mean it. The thousands are artifacts we have and the stories we preserve are held in the public trust. We are only fulfilling our mission when we remove all barriers to accessing this wealth of material and historical culture. Creating meaningful partnerships is the key to success and we are proud to be able to work with local organizations that provide essential human services to members of our community.

The key to volunteering at InCourage is that they will fit you with what you enjoy doing so that it is a rewarding experience. They are very flexible regarding your time commitment. Please contact Lisa Robertson at lisa.robertson@incouragewi.org to discuss how you can make a difference at InCourage.

Are you looking to make a difference in Manitowoc? InCourage, the domestic violence shelter, needs you! The Wisconsin Maritime Museum's Science Club at InCourage is supported by our All Hands on Deck Fund. To help sustain programs like this, please consider making a donation to the Fund on our website or by calling Abigail Diaz at (920) 374-4005.



SUPPORTING VICTIMS of
DOMESTIC ABUSE and
SEXUAL ASSAULT

GIFT THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP THIS HOLIDAY



Buy an Individual or Family Membership as a gift this holiday season and receive a **free** submarine ornament along with your personalized membership packet.

Visit

[wisconsinmaritime.org/
join-and-give/
membership/](http://wisconsinmaritime.org/join-and-give/membership/)



75 MARITIME DRIVE • MANITOWOC, WI
WISCONSINMARITIME.ORG



WISCONSIN
MARITIME
MUSEUM
AT MANITOWOC

Christmas Tree Ship Day

**FREE
ADMISSION**

**SAT., DEC. 7
9 A.M.-3 P.M.**

**CHRISTMAS
TREE SHIP
ARRIVES
AT 9 A.M.**

**FAMILY FUN | ARTS &
CRAFTS**

**MEET SANTA
9:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.**

PRESENTATION ON THE ROUSE SIMMONS AT 11 AM

**SELF-GUIDED SUB TOURS
WITH REENACTORS**



**75 MARITIME DRIVE
MANITOWOC, WIS.
WISCONSINMARITIME.ORG/EVENT**

REFRESHMENTS

SPECIAL THANKS TO WISCONSIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, DRUMM'S TREES,
VERVE CREDIT UNION, SUSIE-Q FISH COMPANY, & MCMULLEN & PITZ CONSTRUCTION.

LAUNCHING OF USS ROBALO, MAY, 1943 AT MANITOWOC SHIPBUILDING CO. ROBALO WAS LOST JULY 1944. A SURVEY TEAM RECENTLY LOCATED THE WRECKAGE OFF THE PHILIPPINES.



**WISCONSIN MARITIME MUSEUM
PRESERVING OUR PAST.
CELEBRATING OUR HERITAGE.
INSPIRING OUR COMMUNITY.**

YOU ARE INVITED TO BE PART OF SOMETHING INCREDIBLE.

IN 2019

we hosted **3,300**  on our overnight programs.

We hope to host 500 more in 2020.



we served **5,500** students.

We want to increase that by 1,000 in 2020.

we welcomed **30,000**  guests to the museum.

We expect to welcome 35,000 guests in 2020.

**TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS,
WE NEED YOUR HELP.**

YOUR GIFT TO THE MUSEUM IS TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WILL HELP FUND EXPEDITIONS TO MANITOWOC-BUILT SUBMARINES USS LAGARTO AND USS ROBALO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WILL PURCHASE A YEAR'S WORTH OF PAINT FOR MAINTENANCE OF USS COBIA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WILL FINANCE A HALF-DAY MUSEUM FIELD TRIP FOR A CLASSROOM INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WILL ALLOW A STUDENT TO ATTEND AN UNDERWATER ROBOT CAMP AT THE MUSEUM.
\$10,000	\$3,000	\$500	\$50
\$4,000	\$1,000	\$150	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WILL COVER MUSEUM UTILITIES COSTS FOR ONE MONTH. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WILL HELP FUND A NEW SLATE 2020 TEMPORARY EXHIBITS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WILL UNDERWRITE A SCIENCE CLUB SESSION AT A LOCAL SHELTER. 	

The museum appreciates federal, state, and local support through grants and in-kind contributions. We are currently not a line item in any government budget. Your support sustains our museum. **Please return the envelope attached in this copy of *The Anchor* or visit wisconsinmaritime.org to donate today!**



NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE PAID
MANITOWOC WI
GRAPHIC
COMPOSITION INC

75 MARITIME DRIVE, MANITOWOC, WI 54220
(920) 684-0218 • WISCONSINMARITIME.ORG
museum@wisconsinmaritime.org



UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas Tree Ship Day DECEMBER 7

A fun-filled family free day with cookie decorating, crafts and a visit from Santa.

Operation Santa DECEMBER 7

An overnight for military kids whose parents are deployed

Nook and Cranny Tour DECEMBER 8

An in-depth look at USS *Cobia*

Homeschool Day DECEMBER 11

A special field trip day geared towards homeschool families

Sensory Friendly Morning DECEMBER 14

A quiet morning at the Museum for families and children with disabilities

Saturday Learning Series: Lightning Strikes Twice DECEMBER 14

A documentary screening and presentation with underwater archaeologist Cathy Green on the *Two Brothers* shipwreck

Smithsonian Saturday DECEMBER 21

A documentary screening from the Smithsonian Channel

JANUARY 11

A presentation with shipwreck explorer Steve Radovan on the *Robert C. Pringle* wreck

Visit www.wisconsinmaritime.org for updates on all of our activities.