



Historic Christening of the First New U.S.-flagged Great Lakes Bulk Carrier in Nearly 40 years

CLEVELAND, OHIO, SEPT. 1, 2022: More than 600 people will witness Great Lakes history unfold today on Cleveland’s waterfront as the ceremonial bottle of champagne is broken on the bow of The Interlake Steamship Company’s Motor Vessel *Mark W. Barker*, the first Great Lakes freighter built on the freshwater Lakes in nearly four decades.

“This is truly a historic celebration for our Company and for the United States maritime industry as we proudly christen the newest vessel to join the U.S. flag fleet on the Great Lakes and our first new build in 41 years,” says Mark W. Barker, President of The Interlake Steamship Company and the vessel’s namesake. “While this ship may bear my name, it is a testament to the innovation, skill and grit of our employees who have powered our industry and propelled our Company for more than 130 years.”

Skillfully constructed at Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, the 639-foot vessel was made from iron ore mined in Minnesota by Cleveland-Cliffs, and carried on U.S.-built, U.S.-crewed, and U.S.-owned Lakers to Cleveland-Cliffs’ Burns Harbor mill in Indiana. There the pellets were forged into steel plates and shipped to the Wisconsin shipyard.

“This American-made vessel is not only a veritable Great Lakes success story, it is a Cleveland ship, through and through,” says Chairman James R. Barker. “Designed to navigate the winding curves of the Cuyahoga River, built with Cleveland-Cliffs steel and coated with Sherwin-Williams paint, the M/V *Mark W. Barker* was most significantly built as part of a long-term partnership to move Lake Erie-mined salt for Cargill Inc.”

“We are thrilled to partner with The Interlake Steamship Company to connect Cargill’s customers with salt from the Great Lakes region,” says Sonya Roberts, president of Cargill’s salt business. “We are proud to be a part of the Cleveland community and communities across the country that rely on us to deliver products that protect lives and enhance commerce by keeping roads clear in the winter.”

U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (OH-09) is the keynote speaker at the ceremony that will welcome many federal, state and local dignitaries, as well as industry leaders. Referred to by many as the First Lady of Great Lakes shipping, Congresswoman Kaptur is the longest serving woman in

congressional history. Kaptur is joined by U.S. Rep. Shontel Brown (OH-11) and Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb, who will welcome the crowd to the outdoor Christening event being held next to FirstEnergy Stadium. The culmination of the ceremony will be when Christening Sponsor Megan L. November breaks the bottle of bubbly on the bow.

Great Lakes shipping, which supports nearly 150,000 jobs and represents \$35 billion in economic impact, is the most efficient and environmentally responsible form of transportation. This ship will carry an average of 25,000 tons per trip, which is equal to the carrying capacity of 250 train cars, and 1,000 trucks. Notably, the M/V *Mark W. Barker* is the first ship on the Great Lakes with engines that meet EPA Tier 4 emissions standards.

“This new vessel not only brings with it additional cargo carrying capacity and capabilities, it is the most versatile in our fleet and strategically sized to navigate into nearly any port on the Great Lakes,” says Brendan P. O’Connor, Vice President of Marketing and Marine Traffic. “The M/V *Mark W. Barker* will give us unmatched ability for cargo operations and to carry unique project cargoes because of her square-shaped cargo holds, her larger hatch openings, reinforced cargo hatches which can support deck cargo, and a forward mounted unloading boom. She truly was designed to be a vessel for the future.”

ABOUT THE M/V MARK W. BARKER: The new River-Class, self-unloading bulk carrier is believed to be the first ship for U.S. Great Lakes service built on the Great Lakes since 1983. The Jones Act qualified vessel, measuring 639 feet in length, 78 feet in beam, 45 feet in moulded depth and 28,000 dead weight tons, the ship will transport raw materials such as salt, iron ore, and stone to support manufacturing throughout the Great Lakes region. The ship will also be capable of transporting specialty cargoes such as steel coils and windmill towers and blades. The ship is crewed with licensed officers represented by The Marine Engineers’ Beneficial Association (M.E.B.A.) and unlicensed crew represented by United Steelworkers Local 5000.

The Interlake Steamship Company, Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding (FBS) and Bay Engineering jointly designed the bulk carrier, complete with advanced vessel and unloading system automation. The carrier was built by FBS’s nearly 700 skilled trade workers, and generated business for partnering contractors, vendors and suppliers. Major partners for the project included: American Bureau of Shipping (ABS); Cleveland-Cliffs, Bay Engineering (BEI); EMD Engines; Caterpillar; EMS-Tech, Inc.; Lufkin (a GE Company), Sherwin-Williams, Kongsberg and MacGregor.

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About The Interlake Steamship Company

As the largest privately held U.S.-flag fleet on the Lakes, Interlake together with its predecessors have carried the bulk cargoes that have fueled the region's economy for more than 100 years. A second-generation, family run company, Interlake is propelled by a long-term vision to make its fleet of 10 vessels the most efficient and environmentally responsible in the shipping industry.

The Company has invested more than \$100 million to modernize and improve its ships to safely and reliably transport 20 million tons of raw materials annually, including iron ore and flux stone for the steel industry, stone for the construction industry, coal for power generation and salt for de-icing needs on roads and highways. Interlake employs about 400 men and women who live and work in the region, and the cargoes they deliver help generate and sustain more than 103,000 jobs across the eight Great Lakes states.