



"Riveting Philanthropy"

By: Paul C. LaMarre III

**NORTH STAR
BLUESCOPE
STEEL**

In the early 1800s, as the United States started to grow, its expansion was ultimately dependent upon how much steel could be poured into the bloodstream of its developing industrial revolution. In turn, a massive, low-cost transportation system was needed to provide for the movement of iron-ore from the mines of the upper Great Lakes to the steel mills of the lower lakes where the industrial strength of America was heavily seeded. When the most direct route of cargo carriage proved to be across an 800 mile span of freshwater, it was evident that strength of our country would flow from the lake-born commerce of vessels know as bulk-freight carriers or Great Lakes Bulk Freighters

Upon her launching in 1911, the *S.S. Willis B. Boyer (Boyer)*, then called the *Col James M. Schoonmaker* was proclaimed to be "The World's Largest Bulk Freighter." Built at the Great Lakes Engineering Works of Ecorse, Michigan the *Schoonmaker* was unsurpassed in both size and elegance. Maintaining her crown as "Queen of the Lakes" from July 1, 1911 to April 14, 1914, the *Schoonmaker* established multiple cargo records for iron ore, coal, and rye cargoes. Retiring in 1980, and opened as a museum in 1987, the *S.S. Willis B. Boyer* has served her community as a floating testament to our regions rich maritime heritage for over 20 years.

Yet, from her opening until 2005 the *Boyer*, though the largest museum ship on the Great Lakes and welcoming thousands of visitors annually, weathered a storm of deficient funding and deterioration. In 2007, finding a champion in the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, the *Boyer* Crew initiated a "Don't Give Up the Ship" campaign which started at the vessels deck-plates but reached the hearts of the Toledo community, and many gracious benefactors.

In the spring of 2008, the *Boyer's* Executive Director, Paul C. LaMarre III, was approached by one of his senior volunteers, Sam Snyder. Sam, a longtime friend of North Star's Nick Smith, said that had he had spoken to his comrade regarding some heavy maintenance projects planned for the museum ship's 2008 operating season. Nick would step aboard the *Boyer* for the first time in early June and again in July with North Star Bluescope Steel President, William R. Jacob.

Met by Mr. LaMarre, the North Star Bluescope executives were given a tour of a ship that is arguably the most historic to have ever sailed the inland seas. While walking her decks Mr. LaMarre pointed out that while the *Boyer's* inherent antiquity remains, the program faces numerous long-term and immediate maintenance challenges some of which included: major mid-ship gangway repairs, a new forward halyard, and the removal of deteriorated ship's equipment on the vessels boat deck. In turn, in what can only be described as a blessing by the *Boyer* Crew, Mr. Jacob said that North Star Bluescope Steel would be "glad to help in any way possible."

With that, on July 18th, contractors sponsored by North Star Bluescope, which included workers from Swanton Welding and Machining Co. Inc., and Henry Gurtzweiler Inc., arrived at the *Boyer* prepared to do just that. Working an entire day cutting, fabricating, and welding on North Star Bluescope's behalf, diligent craftsmen met the *Boyer's* every request and left a safer vessel one step closer to restoration.

In an age where historic preservation has become extremely difficult due to overwhelming advances in technology it is extremely rewarding to work with other organizations who embrace our past for the good of our future. North Star Bluescope's sponsorship of the S.S. Willis B. Boyer Museum Ship is truly priceless and all who walk her decks on a daily basis are eternally grateful.

* *Note*

All North Star Bluescope Steel employees and their families are welcome aboard the *Boyer* free of charge (with proper identification) for the remainder of the 2008 operating season. Please visit www.willisbboyer.org for further information.