



on the Move

Heavy Rains Cause Sewage Backup at CMM

By Dylan Hoffmann, CMM Curator

During the four-day period of May 14-17, 2020, Chicago recorded 7.88 inches of rain. This prompted the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District to reverse the flow of the Chicago River into Lake Michigan at both the Wilmette Pumping Station and at the Controlling Works downtown. This action was less successful than previous efforts due to the high lake level, and many areas flooded along the river.

Monday morning May 18th, I expected to see Bubbly Creek flowing high and fast to the north, away from the Racine Avenue Pumping Station as combined sewer overflow relieves the system during heavy rains. I was not prepared to see almost a foot of standing water at the bottom of the stairs as I entered the Bridgeport Art Center. The immense pressure from days of rain caused a sewage backup in the building.

Upon entering the museum, I could see one-foot high water stains on the pillars. The water was brown and foul smelling. I immediately started to assess the damage. Fortunately, the water levels did not reach any of the display cases or artifacts in the south storage area. The racks in the north storage area are not as high, so items placed on the lowest shelves were completely saturated in sewage water. Some of the artifacts damaged include shipwreck items, trophies from the Lincoln Park Boat Club, VHS tapes and photographs from the Ralph Frese Collection, models, a canvas folding kayak, magazines, and books.

The staff at the Bridgeport Art Center was very helpful and accommodating. Building maintenance crew worked to remove the standing sewage water from the basement. They also provided us with a storage locker on the third floor and an event space on the first floor. Valuable and sensitive items were first transported to the third floor, escaping the humid environment in the museum. Some of the wet items were moved to the event space on the first floor to be evaluated and dry out.



Chicago Fire and Water Restoration was hired for mitigation. Crews worked around the clock and through a holiday weekend to clean and protect the museum. Two feet of drywall was cut out of the bottom of each wall. Dehumidifiers and air scrubbers ran day and night to stabilize the environment. Items that could be salvaged were cleaned and placed in high and dry locations. While many items were spared, the loss was great. Almost all the furniture in the museum was destroyed. All the appliances in the kitchen were lost. Tools and equipment in the model shop had to be discarded.

Many volunteers have offered their assistance. Because the water in the museum was raw

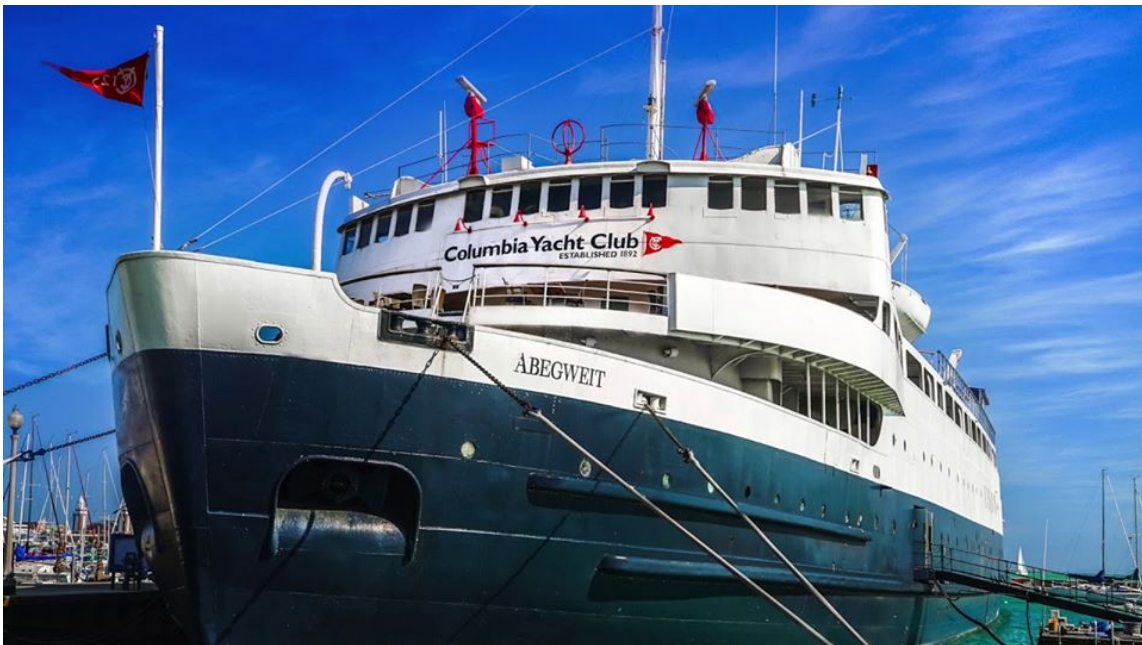
sewage and we are still in the midst of a pandemic, the Chicago Maritime Museum utilized professional crews to clean up. While we work to recover from this disaster, we would like to thank you for your continued support.

Patrons, Members Show Strong Support for Flood Recovery

The CMM Recovery Fund, set up shortly after the flood, has received more than \$5,000 to date. These much-needed funds will help with immediate expenses incurred by the overflow of sewage water, as CMM works with building administrators to sort out insurance coverage.

[Donate to the Recovery Fund Here](#)

Voyage Through History Gala Rescheduling in the Works



First it was COVID-19. Then came the flood. No doubt, these are tough times for the CMM, especially as we plan our first-ever gala benefit. Originally scheduled for April 30, *Voyage through History*, aboard Columbia Yacht Club's *Abbey*, will be rescheduled for Fall of 2020.

With new expenses incurred due to the flood, now more than ever, we need a successful fundraiser to help us recover and set us back on track to grow. Sometimes disasters can be an opportunity as well. We intend not just to recover but to use

these events as a chance to make the museum better than it was before, rethinking all the things we have learned since we opened including our space usage and exhibits. So, sponsorship opportunities are available online on the [Gala Page](#) at chicagomaritimemuseum.org. Here is your chance to help unlock the future by shaping the next generation of maritime historians. Consider partnering with us at the Master, Commander, Navigator, Helmsmen or First Mate level.

[Sponsor the Gala Here](#)

Bubbly Creek Cleanup Moves Forward with Corps Feasibility Study



The Army Corps of Engineers is seeking approval and funding for a restoration plan that would restore approximately 40 acres of channel and adjacent riparian areas of Bubbly Creek.

Bubbly Creek, the south fork of the south branch of the Chicago River, once served as a dumping ground for the Union Stockyards meatpacking district. The Stockyards closed in 1971, but the creek still receives sewer overflow from the Racine Avenue Pumping Station during heavy rainfalls.

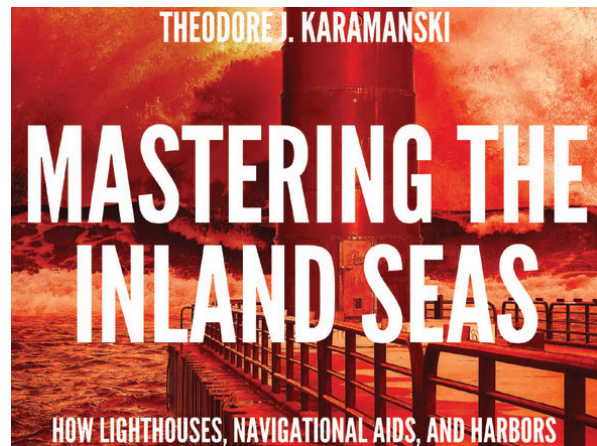
The plan selected by the Corps includes five measures – substrate restoration, riparian plant restoration, emergent plant restoration and woody debris restoration. The total cost of the project is \$17,934,000 and if all goes well construction would begin in 2024 with completion in 2029.

That same year, 2029, the McCook Stage 2 Reservoir, with a capacity of 6.5 billion gallons, will become operational, resulting in less combined sewer overflow discharges from the Racine Avenue Pumping Station. The completed plan will provide spawning habitat for Illinois endangered fishes such as the grass pickerel and banded killifish and critical flyway habitat for migratory waterfowl that is currently absent.

[Read More Here](#)

CMM Founding Member Pens New Book, *Mastering the Inland Seas*

CMM founder and Loyola University of Chicago history professor, Ted Karamanski, has written a sweeping maritime history book that demonstrates the far-ranging impact that tools for navigating the Great Lakes had on the national economies, politics, and the environment of continental North America.



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Chicago's DuSable Bridge Turns 100

The elegant Beaux Arts bridge doesn't just span from one side of Chicago River to the other. It spans the history of two pandemics.

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Debris In Lake Michigan Puts Boaters, Swimmers In Danger

As if shoreline erosion wasn't enough, communities and property owners on Lake Michigan are now dealing with another problem due to record high water levels — trash. Up and down the lake, large amounts of it are washing up on shore.



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Maritime Event Calendar

Check out local maritime events at the Chicago Maritime Museum website calendar page:

<https://www.chicagomaritimemuseum.org/events.html>

Submit maritime events in the Chicagoland area or story ideas to Mary Ann O'Rourke at maorourke@ameritech.net.

We hope you've enjoyed our monthly e-newsletter, On the Move. If you have a Chicago maritime story idea please forward it to maorourke@ameritech.net



