



# COMMERCIAL SHIPPING

## Off the Fox Point Shoreline Part 2

BY DOUGLAS H. FRAZER

Part 1 ended with an exploration of Port Milwaukee. We will conclude that discussion, take up the subject of ship spotting from our shoreline, and return to Fox

Point's contribution to Great Lakes maritime history.

Port Milwaukee operates more efficiently than you might imagine. The average time for a ship in port is only one or two days. Typically ships do not have to queue for a slip. However, ships sometimes wait in or off harbor for cargo that has not yet arrived. The U.S. Coast Guard provides icebreaking services, together with the port's own icebreaking tugboat, the *Joey D.* The U.S. Coast Guard is also in charge of Milwaukee harbor security. Regulations prohibit the public from touring the ships that dock in the harbor. But don't be discouraged: Port Milwaukee participates in historic Milwaukee's "Doors Open Milwaukee" weekend.

And here's a little-known fact, both Summerfest and Discovery World are Port Milwaukee tenants.

Port Milwaukee has two special features: The Lake Express ferry and the re-emergence of Great Lakes cruise ships.

The Lake Express ferry, a Port Milwaukee tenant, made history on June 1, 2004, as the first high-speed auto passenger ferry in the United States when it reestablished the historic Lake Michigan route between Milwaukee and Muskegon, Michigan. The ferry crosses Lake Michigan in just 2½ hours.

Milwaukee is also fast developing as a transit and turnaround port for cruise ships. In 2019, Milwaukee hosted 10 ships and 3214 cruise passengers. In 2020, the port is expecting 15 ships and 4000 cruise passengers. With the announcement in January 2020 that international cruise giant Viking Expeditions is making Milwaukee its home port for its eight-day Great Lakes explorer cruises, Milwaukee can expect 12,000 cruise passengers starting in 2022. Cruise ships most often dock near Discovery World.

If you are spotting ships from the bluff, Beach Drive, or at Doctors Park, several resources exist to identify vessels. With binoculars you might be able to spot the name and the flag (registration) of the vessel. Salties tend to be long and narrow in order to fit through the St. Lawrence Seaway locks. Switch on your computer or phone and go to [marinetraffic.com](http://marinetraffic.com). The site has real time maps that help you identify individual vessels, including each vessel's name and destination. Ships heading south, but not transiting at the Port Milwaukee, are likely heading to Burns Harbor, Indiana, or the Port of Chicago. Ships heading north could be going as far west as Port Superior (to pick up iron ore) or to Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, or points further east. *Know-Your-Ships* is an annually updated book that covers vessels that sail the Great Lakes. Another resource can be found at [seaway.dot.gov](http://seaway.dot.gov) in connection with all matters, including ship traffic, in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway.

No maritime history of Fox Point should omit our connection to the lake freighter Edmund Fitzgerald that sank in Lake Superior on November 10, 1975. When launched in 1958, it was the largest ship on the Great Lakes and remains the largest to have been sunk there.

The connection starts with Frank Bacon, who founded the American Rheostat Company in 1896, which became Cutler-Hammer. Bacon built and lived on the estate at 7829 N. Regent Road. Bacon's daughter Elizabeth married Edmund Fitzgerald, the president of Northwestern Mutual Life and the ship's namesake. Edmund Fitzgerald's daughter, Liz Cutler, lived with her husband Richard and family in a separate house on the estate accessed now from MacArthur Road.

In 1976, Gordon Lightfoot wrote, composed, and recorded this tale in his song "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald." The song has been covered by many performers.

Happy ship watching, everyone.

*Douglas H. Frazer is a Fox Point resident and neighborhood contributor as well as the village president. The views expressed are his own and not necessarily those of the Village, the village board, other village board members, or Best Version Media, LLC.*

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