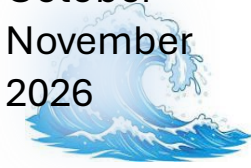


October
November
2026



Maritimers

Volume One
Issue One



The Newsletter of the Ashtabula Maritime
and Surface Transportation Museum



Ashtabula River

Ashtabula River Anthem

We think we are free as kayakers paddling to choice.
Frames like the coal loader buildings poking into the sky
Shape our paths from the ships and people
We inhabit.
We find free horizons paddling down rivers of choice,
While seeking open waters
Of Lake Erie possibilities.



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From the Pilot House: Our Museum Reaches Out to You

Welcome to the first issue of Maritimers. We will use this bi-monthly newsletter to reach out to you to let you know what is happening at the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum. We at the Museum want to bring you this newsletter even in the winter months when we are closed, because we think it's important to keep in touch with you and we have so much history here that we want to share it with you all year!

Thanks to your support we had another good year at the Museum, and we want to thank all of you who visited us and invite those of you who could not this year to put us on your calendar next year. We especially encourage you to visit our second-floor library which is still a work in progress, but progressing, even though slowly but certainly surely.



We have several winter projects, both in the library and in the other parts of the Museum. If you need a winter workout, climbing up to the library is worth an hour on the treadmill! When you reach the top of the stairs you will see rooms bursting with ship information, Maritime books, exhibits, a Lego model of Woodland Beach Park, Nautical Charts, railroad and dock information, and stories of maritime people and Ashtabula County landlubbers. Downstairs exhibits include Hulett's, ship and railroad models, a Titanic Survivor's story, people and ship stories, awesome views of the lake and a pilot house adventure.

The Veteran's Project is just one of the Library Projects. We found scrapbooks that Ashtabula resident Mrs. Horace E. Bremner compiled during the crucial World War II years of 1944-1945. By the volume and detail of the scrapbooks it is easy to tell that she spent hours clipping out information about soldiers and events from the Ashtabula Star Beacon. With this information we are tracing the soldier's stories and writing them on PowerPoints and will print some of them in a booklet in time for Veteran's Day. It will be an ongoing but meaningful project. It is so important for us to remember them and the sacrifices they made that allow us to live our lives in freedom.

We have a few more major projects that include sorting and cataloging pictures and posters, and organizing documents in folders. Our books need to be catalogued, and we need to do a walk-through inventory. The goal is to digitize everything and that will be a long-range project. If you can volunteer for a few hours of your time during the winter, we would really appreciate the help.

School groups are especially important to us, and we are working to expand our outreach to encourage more school and community groups to visit our museum. Currently, we are working on a curriculum plan that includes a weekly zoom history session for the classroom.

And those of you with research questions, thank you for your patience. We can devote more time to them since our hours are changing and in theory at least, there will be more hours on museum day!

We will keep you aware of what is going on here at the Museum all winter and we hope to see you before the Blessing of the Fleet in spring.

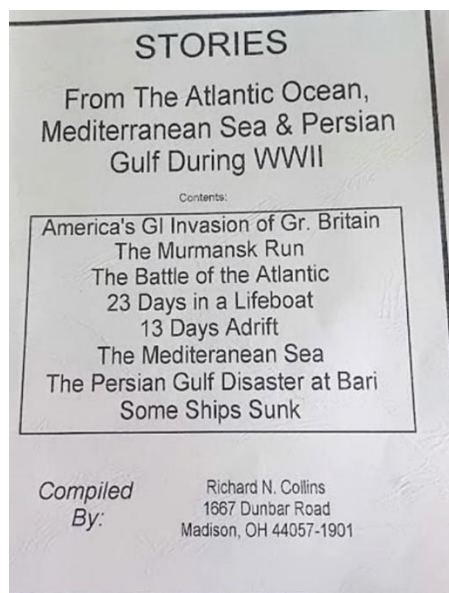
The Crew at the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum



Library Look-outs from the Library of the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum

These stories are based on documents and photographs in the archives in the second-floor library at the Maritime Museum. Some of them have appeared on our museum library Facebook page and we have a lot more to share.

Richard Collins and the American Merchant Marine Veterans Memorial



The Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum is steps away from the American Merchant Marine Monument in Point Park and the Merchant Marine archive on the second floor of the Museum is available to use.

Richard Collins, who passed away in March 2007, is represented in the library of the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum and in Maritime History. He served as the Vice-Commander of the Northeast Ohio chapter of the American Merchant Marine Veterans in the early 2000s, leading local efforts to preserve and honor the wartime history of WWII Merchant Mariners and he helped establish the American Merchant Marine Veterans Memorial at Point Park.



In 1939, Richard started his maritime career by serving as a deckhand on the ore boats on the Great Lakes. In 1941 after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he and his brother left the Great Lakes to attend the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in New London, Connecticut.

After he graduated as a Lieutenant J.G., Richard joined the U.S. Army and the U.S. Naval Reserve at the same time and joined the Army Transport Service on the Troop Carrier Henry Gibbons,

one of the largest troop transporters at the time, as a Junior Third Officer. The Henry Gibbons became the Command Post in the Mediterranean Sea, with Admiral William Blau as commander. He also joined the U.S. Coast Guard which heavily manned and officered large transport and cargo vessels during World War II, working closely alongside the U.S. Navy and War Shipping Administration. During WWII, individual vessel assignments varied widely between the Navy, Coast Guard, and Army.

Richard participated in the invasion of Sicily in 1943, and next he joined Southwest Pacific to Lae, New Guinea, and other Southwest Pacific operations. Switching oceans, he returned to the Atlantic Ocean, where he traveled several times to Northern Russia to join the troops in the far north.

After this assignment, Richard participated in the D-Day operations at Normandy Beach in France and the Normandy campaign. For his final tour of duty, he followed orders back to the Pacific Ocean, as Chief Officer of the first U.S. vessel to enter the Port of Nagasaki, Japan, after the atomic bombing.

After he mustered out of the U.S. Coast guard as a Lieutenant Commander, Richard returned to Ashtabula County, met, and married his wife, Joanne Koski, and earned recognition as a prominent businessman and community leader.

Before his death in March 2005, Richard Collins compiled, wrote, and printed several volumes of Merchant Marine History which now reside in the library of the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum. The Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum and upstairs library where his books are resting is just steps away from the Merchant Marine Memorial that he as the vice-commander of the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the American

Merchant Marine Veterans and organization chairman Wallace E. Wason, a retired U.S. Maritime Service lieutenant commander, worked with other dedicated people to create. They visualized the \$15,000 memorial as a black granite triptych overlooking the Ashtabula Harbor at Point Park.

The dedication ceremony which took place at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 29, 2001 featured local veterans, state, and federal dignitaries, and then United States Representative Steven LaTourette as the keynote speaker. During the ceremony, officials buried a time capsule containing historical artifacts and newspaper articles documenting the years of effort it took to build the memorial. Also, people placed several hundred commemorative bricks engraved with special names and memories in the ground around the memorial.

Tardy Recognition

The U.S. government first recognized the Merchant Marine as a formal national defense asset through the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, but World War II merchant mariners were only granted official veteran status in 1988.

Key Recognition Milestones

- 10775–1783 (The Revolution): Merchant mariners and privateers served during the American Revolution before an official U.S. Navy existed, though not under a unified modern "Merchant Marine" organization.
- 1920 (Jones Act): The Merchant Marine Act of 1920 regulated commercial shipping and noted the fleet's value to commerce and defense but did not create a unified service branch.
- 1936 (Formal Establishment): The Merchant Marine Act of 1936 officially established the U.S. Maritime Commission and declared the Merchant Marine to be a naval auxiliary and the "Fourth Arm of National Defense".
- 1988 (Veteran Status): A federal court ruling and subsequent legislation signed by President Ronald Reagan finally granted World War II merchant mariners official veteran status and access to GI Bill benefits after decades of denial.



The Ashtabula Maritime Museum when it was the lightkeeper's residence in the 1930s.

Captain Ole Brude and the Ashtabula Car Ferry: A Life Saving and Lifelong Partnership



Captain Ole Brude and the restored Uraed or “Brude Egg” covered lifeboat displayed outside Alesund Museum. Mariner Captain Ole Brude created the concept of a covered lifeboat in 1904, and this facsimile of the Uraed was built around 1908. Captain Brude’s covered

lifeboat design is a maritime standard today.

The seas touching Norway’s shores, and the role of lifeboats combined to shape the life of Ole Brude as surely as his footprints shaped the sand on Norwegian and American beaches. Born on February 12, 1880, in Alesund, a port on the Atlantic coast of southwest Norway, Ole experienced the worlds of Norway and America at a young age. His family immigrated to Minneapolis, Minnesota when Ole was still a child and they lived there for three years. His early childhood years in America were lengthy enough to allow Ole to absorb the promise and possibilities of America. The memory of these qualities in the American national character stayed vividly in his mind even when his family moved back to his native land. Eventually, he would return to America as an adult to pursue American promise and possibilities himself.

Back in Norway in 1896, Ole Brude experienced the sea firsthand at age 16. His adventures as a sailor led him to enroll in a naval college in Alesund and later join the Merchant Marine where he earned captain’s papers. These early experiences and later, two maritime disasters drove the importance of lifeboats home to Ole Brude with the impact of a wooden lifeboat smashing against the hull of a ship.

As second mate of the steamer *Athalie*, Ole Brude observed firsthand how quickly, and easily stormy seas can destroy a wooden lifeboat. The *Athalie* encountered a severe storm on a voyage to Newfoundland and Labrador, and the captain ordered the launching of a lifeboat. An enormous wave seized the small wooden lifeboat, crushing it against *Athalie*’s hull. Twenty-two-year-old second mate Ole Brude vowed that he would build a better lifeboat. When he arrived safely in Alesund, he set to work designing a better lifeboat.



Another maritime disaster in 1904 deepened Ole Brude’s determination to build an egg-shaped lifeboat that could not be crushed or would not sink. The Danish transatlantic ocean steamer SS Norge ran aground on June 28, 1904. After collecting passengers in Denmark and Norway, many of them emigrants, the Norge set a course across the Atlantic Ocean to New York City. The Norge carried 727 passengers, with the largest number of steerage passengers being 296 Norwegians.

Caught in foggy weather, the Norge ran aground near Rockall in the North Atlantic and although she quickly reversed off the rock, the impact had torn several holes in her hull and water poured into the hold. Although the crew lowered eight lifeboats only five successfully reached the water, and many passengers jumped overboard and drowned.

Norge sank twelve minutes after it collided with the Hasselwood Rock on Helen's Reef. According to author Per Kristian Sebak, more than 635 people died, including 225 Norwegians. Many of them died of exposure in the lifeboats. The sinking of the Norge ranked as the largest civilian maritime disaster in the Atlantic Ocean until the Titanic disaster eight years later.

The death of so many of his countrymen and the fact that he passionately believed that his fully covered steel lifeboat that sheltered survivors from the air and sea and used a sail for propulsion could save many lives encouraged Captain Brude to translate his belief into action. He expressed his feelings this way in account of the creation and voyage of the Uraed.

"I have been a sailor for ten years and already at a very early stage of my sea faring life I have strongly felt the need of this and taken an interest in finding out the best possible construction for it as I found the lifesaving boats of the present time very defective on account of their open construction. Storms, rough seas, and cold weather very often make it difficult to realize the chief objectives of the lifesaving boat: to come to the aid of the shipwrecked. I concluded that lifeboats must have an over covering and be constructed in the shape of an egg with rigging, sail, and rudder so that they could be maneuvered and navigated in a fully satisfactory manner. To make a trial with this, I sailed from my native town Alesund across the North Sea and Atlantic to America. During this voyage it proved that my life saving boat completely fulfilled her purpose and surpassed all expectations."¹

After some successful fundraising, Ole arranged for Alesund Mechanical Works to build the first model of his innovative lifeboat, which the local press dubbed "The Brude Egg," because of its oval shape.

Now fully convinced that his new lifeboat which he christened the Uraed, Norwegian for fearless, could save many lives, Ole Brude searched for more funding sources. He got word that France offered a one-million-franc prize for an improved lifeboat, with the judging to take place at the World's Fair in St. Louis. Ole made what he considered an obvious decision. He decided to sail his new lifeboat across the Atlantic Ocean to New York to prove it could conquer the ocean and then load it on a train to St. Louis. Estimating the trans-Atlantic voyage would take three months, he calculated he and his lifeboat and crew would arrive in St. Louis before the fair closed in December 1904.

Persuading three friends Iver Thorsen, 46, Lars Madsen, 28, and Johan Johannesen, 24, to join him on his epic lifeboat voyage, Captain Brude and his crew readied the Uraed for its trans-Atlantic voyage. They stowed provisions of tinned goods, salt meat, and ships biscuits stowed in the benches. They loaded petroleum to be used for lighting and fuel and five hundred gallons of water. The captain had invented a rain accumulator made of thin sail cloth and shaped like an umbrella that could be hung upside down on the mast. The rain accumulator would prove to be a useful tool on the voyage.

Captain Ole Brude and his crew left Alesund harbor in August 1904. The first month of their voyage featured smooth sailing with comfortable conditions and good weather. Leaving Scotland on the far horizon, the Uraed plowed ahead and reached the halfway point in its journey across the Atlantic.

The crew inside the Uraed enjoyed a snug ride. Their egg-shaped nest measured about eighteen feet long and eight feet wide and effectively shut out the wind and water. In September, their luck turned. They lost their mast, which significantly slowed down their progress even though they rode the waves westward with the help of a replacement sail they fashioned.

The voyagers spent their time chatting, reading, and smoking. Captain Brude described the movements of the Uraed as “those of a sea gull as she kept her horizontal position and lifted herself cautiously and quietly with the seas. The movements were so smooth and comfortable that swinging trays at the tables were superfluous. A glass of water could stand on the table in very rough weather without falling.”

Although Captain Brude and his crew rode safely inside the Uraed, the weather outside their snug ship produced one of the worst winters in the North Atlantic, with stormy, cold days and rough seas. The voyage of the Uraed lasted five storm-tossed months, and after five months at sea, they landed in St. John’s Newfoundland. Since New York, not Newfoundland and Labrador, was their destination, they sailed back into the winter storms. On January 6, 1905, the waves swept the Uraed onto Pavilion Beach in Gloucester, Massachusetts, forty miles from Boston. They were a month too late for the St. Louis Fair.

Gloucester Daily Times Jan 9, 1905, after a bad winter storm:



At Gloucester, the mariners of the Uraed received a hero’s welcome and created a frenzy of newspaper coverage. Even though they had missed the St. Louis Fair, Ole realized that newspaper coverage, publicity, and connections would be essential in his quest to promote and finance the Uraed. According to the Gloucester Daily Times account of the 2005 commemoration of the Uraed’s arrival, one of Captain Brude’s crew, Iver Thoresen, remained in Gloucester and became an American citizen.²

On January 16, 1905, the Uraed arrived in Boston. Captain Brude paid off his crew and headed back to Norway to file his letters of patent for the Uraed. The Marine Review, a Great Lakes maritime publication, recorded under marine patents that in 1906, Ole Brude of Alesund, Norway filed for lifeboat patent number 835,498.³

A story in the Minneapolis Journal datelined Two Harbors, Minnesota, sums up Captain Brude’s voyage by praising his seamanship and noting that the Uraed resembled “a small torpedo boat with a fin.” The story said that one of the crew members was the son of the American counsel in Alesund and the crew encountered contrary winds and severe storms that carried away some of

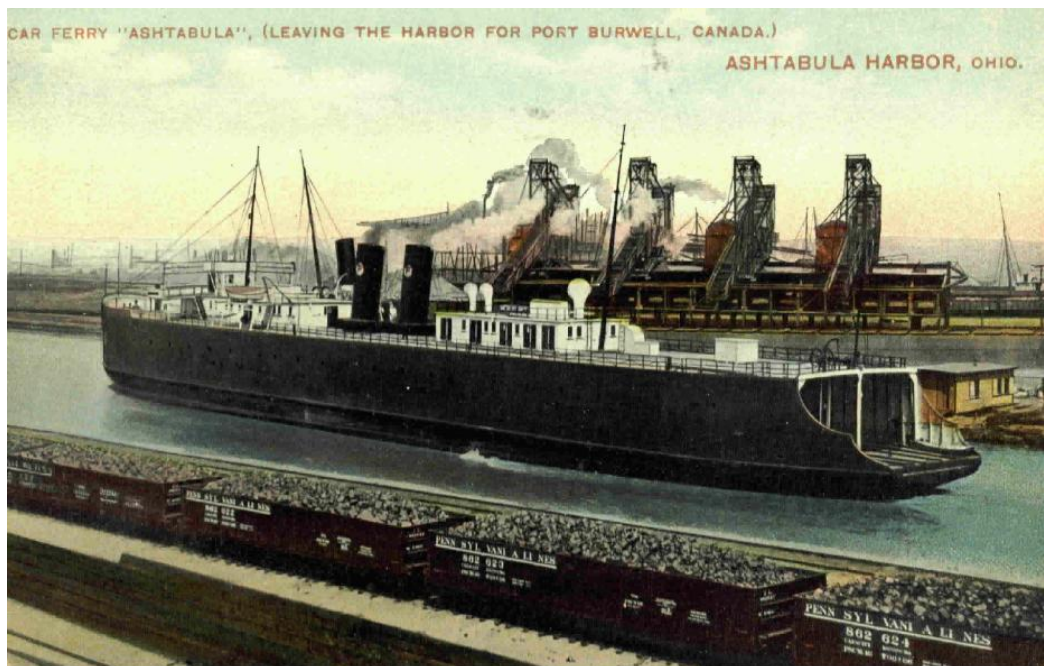
the Uraed's rigging but that it proved seaworthy. The trip was made in 112 days, and the story claimed that the Uraed was the first ship" that has ever crossed the Atlantic on its own bottom."⁴.

Optimistic about the future of his unusual egg-shaped lifeboat, Captain Brude established his own company in Alesund and began building lifeboats, but economics and timing were riptide detrimental to his progress. In the early twentieth century, producing one of his lifeboats would cost about 2,000 crowns while a classic open wooden lifeboat could be manufactured for about one hundred crowns. Captain Brude's ideas were far ahead of his time and pocketbook.

Captain Brude and his Uraed also battled the heads – at times he thought lunkheads- of the maritime establishments. After the Titanic sank in April 1912, he unsuccessfully approached the White Star Line with the plans of his lifeboat. Even though the sinking of the Titanic underscored the vital role of the quality and quantity of lifeboats, the loss of life did not change the minds or practices of the White Star or other shipping lines. It seemed like shipyards and ship owners could glimpse the possibilities of his Uraed, but they were not willing to expend the energy and economic investments it took to overcome the resistance of established maritime traditions and make his innovative lifeboat a reality. The captain could sell only about twenty-three of his lifeboats, and he finally went out of the lifeboat manufacturing business.

But Captain Brude still believed in his lifeboat and its life-saving potential, and he was not about to give up on his idea.

The Egg-Shaped Lifeboat and the Ashtabula Car Ferry



Picture credit Joe DiDonato



1Captain Benjamin Haagensen

The Ashtabula Car Ferry is Born

The Ashtabula Car Ferry was built in 1906 at the Great Lakes Engineering Works in St. Clair, Michigan, and on May 12, 1906, the Ashtabula Car Ferry was launched at Detroit, Michigan. The J.W. Ellsworth Company of Cleveland owned the ferry which could transport thirty railroad cars of coal. After the Ashtabula Car Ferry was launched, it received the finishing touches and then was sent to Ashtabula. The Ashtabula Ferry then was put in service and made her maiden voyage to the Canadian port of Port Burwell. The ferry transported coal for the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Canadian Pacific Railroad.

The Ashtabula Car Ferry arrived in Ashtabula at 7:00 a.m. on Saturday, June 30, 1906. According to Ashtabula historian Darrell Hamilton, Captain Benjamin T. Haagensen was the first captain of the Car Ferry Ashtabula. There were thirty-two crew members on the 350-foot ferry. C. F. Meyers. served the longest stint as captain, from 1915 to 1947. ⁵

Captain Ole Brude and the Ashtabula Car Ferry with the help of Captain Benjamin T. Haagensen would soon find their destinies intermingled. In 1909, Captain Ole Brude emigrated to America, for a time settling in Hibbing, Minnesota where his parents, Lars and Amelie lived. He worked various jobs to support himself, including farming and running a sawmill, and sailing the lakes, but he vowed to continue to promote and produce his lifeboat.

Once again, Captain Ole Brude's persistence and salesmanship produced results. A story in the Marine Review of January 1913, reported that a new type of lifeboat had been tested on the Car Ferry Ashtabula in Ashtabula Harbor on Monday, January 6, 1913. The test results were so favorable that the lifeboat had been adopted as part of the car ferry's lifesaving equipment.

The story stated that Captain Ole Brude had invented the lifeboat which was the same type as the Uraed that he had sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in 1904. It emphasized that the lifeboat, shaped like an egg and entirely covered over, featured a sliding keel to prevent drifting and rolling. The railing on top provided safe passage to the lookout tower for the helmsman to secure a complete panoramic view through four glazed portholes. The bow of the ship had a double bottom divided into four watertight compartments which could be accessed through manholes. The compartments were used for storing provisions, water, and other necessities. If a sudden disaster occurred with no time to get the boat overboard, it could be released from its tackles and would float on the water as the ship sank. ⁶

Encouraged by his success with the Car Ferry Ashtabula, Captain Brude stopped in Lake Erie port cities promoting the advantages of his lifeboat. The Marine Review of January 1914 noted that Captain Ole Brude was in Cleveland trying to interest the lake men in installing his lifeboat. ⁷ Captain Brude and Captain Haagensen, both Norwegians, and both friends, combined forces to introduce his lifeboat to mariners who resisted the introduction.

Captain Brude had served with Captain B.T. Haagensen on the Car Ferry Maitland and the two formed a partnership that produced lasting results. A letter from the Marine National Bank of Ashtabula, located on Bridge Street in Ashtabula Harbor, dated March 2, 1914, and signed by William B. Hubbard, assistant cashier, attested to the character and accomplishments of Captain Haagensen.

The Marine Review story, the letter of recommendation for Captain Haagensen from the Marine National Bank of Ashtabula Harbor, and an application for a Seaman's Protection Certificate of Citizenship from Captain Ole Brude, support the newspaper reports that Captain Haagensen served as the representative for Captain Ole Brude's lifeboat.⁸

In his application, Captain Brude listed one of the ships he served on as the Maitland and Captain Haagensen had served as master of the Maitland in the time frame of Captain Brude's campaign for the Lake masters to adopt his lifeboat. The Great Lakes Engineering Yard at Ecorse, Michigan, laid the keel of the Maitland on March 13, 1913, and it was built as a steel, twin screw, cross lake railroad car ferry.

Launched on November 8, 1913, Maitland was enrolled at Cleveland, Ohio on October 20, 1916, to the Toronto, Hamilton & Buffalo Navigation Company at Ashtabula, Ohio with its home port of Fairport, Ohio. After a brief stint on Lake Michigan, Maitland began carrying railroad cars between Ashtabula, Ohio and Port Maitland, Ontario. Captain Haagensen and Captain Brude served on the Maitland together and developed a friendship.⁹

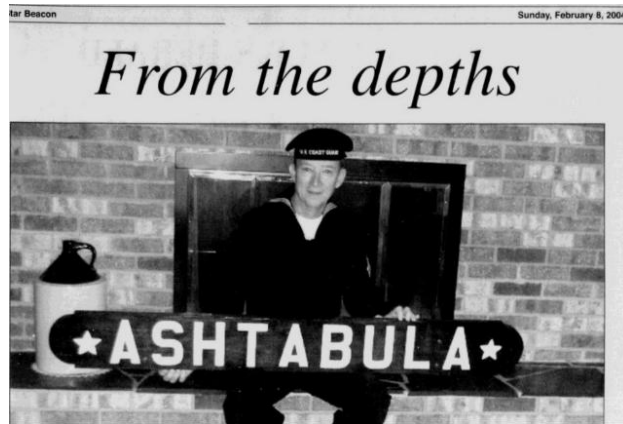
Captain Brude's Citizenship Application also revealed that the District Court at Duluth, Minnesota issued him his naturalization documents on January 28, 1915. Although Captain Brude stated that he lived in Bear Lake Minnesota at the time he filed the application, he made many trips throughout the Great Lakes Region promoting his lifeboat. Reading his application reveals that the captain measured five feet six inches tall, he had a medium complexion and brown hair and blue eyes. Like a true sailor, he had an anchor tattoo on his left arm.¹⁰

Thanks to the efforts of Captain Ole Brude, and Captain B.T. Haagensen, the Phoenix Foundry & Machine Company in Ashtabula had built the American prototype of the Uraed in 1912. In a letter to the Brude Company in Norway which he wrote in Swedish, Captain Haagensen told about the building of the lifeboat at Phoenix Foundry & Machine Company in 1913. Authorities in Washington later approved the lifeboat.¹¹

The Car Ferry Ashtabula plied Lake Erie between Ashtabula, Ohio, and Port Burwell, Ontario, Canada from 1906 to 1958. After the Maitland and the Marquette & Bessemer No. 2 ceased operations in the 1930s, the Ashtabula was the only car ferry on Lake Erie. Ironically, she sank at her own dock when she collided with the steamer Ben Moreell. Too damaged to be salvaged, she was scrapped in 1959.

The sinking of the Car Ferry Ashtabula marked the end of an era for the city and its people who flocked to the harbor to witness its coming and goings and watch it settle safely at its dock. The 51-mile trip across Lake Erie took about three hours and 45 minutes and Ashtabula citizens were

on hand to watch it depart and return to its home port. Its whistle punctuated daily Ashtabula activities.



Ashtabula maritime museum member Neil Barton holds the name board from the Ashtabula Car Ferry. He is also a former U.S. Coast Guard member and was the Ashtabula Lighthouse keeper from 1957-1959. He was the one on duty from September 18, 1958, when the Ashtabula Car Ferry sank in Ashtabula Harbor.

Historian Carl Feather's You Tube video brings home the impact of the

[Car Ferry Ashtabula's](#) sinking to the city of Ashtabula and its people.

No one is sure what happened to the Brude lifeboat after the Car ferry Ashtabula was scrapped. Brian Hubbard, a long-time member of the Ashtabula Maritime and Surface Transportation Museum, remembers playing in the lifeboat with his friends as a young boy and he believes that it remained in the harbor for several years. But he is not sure about its fate. It is unfortunately likely that the Brude lifeboat suffered the same fate as the Car ferry it served.

Captain Brude's Lifeboat Goes to War

Captain Brude's lifeboat was used by Norwegian and Spanish warships in the First World War. In a newspaper story near the end of his life, Captain Brude recalled with pride that thirty-one men on a Spanish merchant ship traveled three hundred miles to shore and safety in his lifeboat when the Germans torpedoed their ship.

Retiring from his sailing career in 1925, Captain Brude left the sea and became an agent for an oil company in Minnesota. He retired in 1945 and left to make his home in Edmonds, Washington.

At the end of the Second World War, in 1948, the townspeople of Alesund celebrated the 100th anniversary of their town and they honored Captain Ole Brude by paying his way to Alesund and back. They held a festival and named a waterfront street in his honor. Captain Brude also had an audience with the King of Norway, and the French government awarded him a porcelain plaque for his lifeboat achievements.

Captain Ole Brude died in Edmonds, Washington on November 4, 1949. His aunt, Mrs. Marie Weibust of Seattle and his sister Mrs. Peter Cain of Edmonds and a niece, Mrs. Iver Leland of Seattle, survived him. Captain Brude is buried in Alesund, Ovre Cemetery in Alesund, Norway.



The Alesund Museum exhibits a restored boat of a 1908 version of the Uraed and in the 20th and 21st centuries, many mariners rediscovered his lifeboat design and many large ships carry Brude lifeboats.

Descendants from the family of Captain Brude's brother now run the Brude Safety Company, which produces ship safety technology, although it does not hold the patent for the Uraed.

Captain Ole Brude contributed more than his patent to mariners. His lifeboat gave them the gift of surviving and a second chance at life.

Captain Ole Brude (left) and the crew of the Uraed.



The Uraed sailing at sea.



The Uraed ending its Atlantic Ocean voyage.

Ashtabula and Conneaut Dock Workers Did Not Unite!



Ashtabula Dock Workers



Fast Plant Dock Workers, M.A.
Hanna Dock, Ashtabula

Heat that surpassed Death Valley, dust like a choking hand, 12–14-hour workdays in coffin like spaces, wages that snapped instead of stretched, and multiple ways to die- these were the working conditions of most Conneaut, Ashtabula, and regional and national dock workers in the 19th century. Dock workers did not strike often or lightly, but when they did, they made an impression!

In 1894, national conditions like a slow recovery from the Panic of 1893, powerful corporations like the steel and railroad industries, and plentiful immigrants for cheap labor, were just some of the factors that motivated local dock workers at the Ashtabula Docks to strike, and strike they did on July 12, 1894. A Finnish cornet band supplemented by violins and accordions joined the strikers and boosted morale enough to transform an undisciplined mix of strikers into a coordinated parade.

Hearing rumors of trouble, Dock Superintendent Captain Erastus Day dismissed the dock workers and he and Mayor Fred Parker alerted the local police force and swore in multiple deputies who went to the harbor about 4 p.m., taking defensive positions along the Shenango R.R. tracks.

Captain Day and Mayor Parker also requested Ohio Governor William McKinley to use his powers of military intervention. Governor McKinley called out the state militia and a unit called The Geneva Rifles hurried to the scene on two special trains. Soon armed deputies and the Geneva Militia lined the railroad tracks guarding the port and the troops were housed in the local GAR Hall for the night.

The strikers arrived at Conneaut Harbor about 5:30 p.m. on July 12 and prepared to persuade their counterparts on the Conneaut Dock to join their strike. They successfully stopped the local dock hands from shoveling ore by boarding the Steamer Grecian and demanding that the bucket be lifted from the hold of the vessel. When they were refused, the strikers left the boat without any violence. A large crowd of curious spectators who had gone to the harbor expecting to see

some excitement left about 8 p.m. and the night passed quietly. The fact that the harbor saloons had closed at 3 o'clock and the uptown saloons at 7:30 helped create the peaceful evening.

The following day the militia marched from the G.A.R. Hall to the harbor to disperse the Ashtabula strikers. About six hundred spectators were on hand to watch. The Conneaut dock workers stayed home. About 350 Ashtabula men invaded the docks. Some boarded the tug Erastus Day and were immediately arrested. The only blood shed occurred when two policemen entered a residence of a Conneaut man in searching for a suspect. During the fracas which followed, he was beaten before he could be taken to jail. No further disturbances occurred.

Realizing the reality of their strike situation, the Ashtabula strikers eventually retreated from the Conneaut docks and marched back to Ashtabula around midnight. The Geneva Rifles remained on guard duty in case the strikers returned as some of them threatened to do. There is no record of a return engagement.

Harbor Happenings -Ashtabula Harbor

- Ashtabula Harbor was a small, sleepy port until competing railroads connected the Pittsburgh and Youngstown, Ohio steel mills. By 1893, it had grown to one of the greatest iron ore ports on the Great Lakes.
- Ashtabula Harbor has been a large ore and coal port since the late 19th century.
- Ashtabula Harbor was a center of steel manufacturing developed around the Great Lakes.
- Immigrants from many nations, including Italy, Finland, Norway, and Sweden were employed at Ashtabula Harbor.
- Hulett ore unloading machines were installed in Ashtabula Harbor in the early twentieth century.
- Today, Ashtabula is a taconite, stone, and bulk materials port for self-unloading vessels. It is also a recreational port featuring marinas and fishing charters.
- The Port of Ashtabula still contains miles of railroad tracks with hundreds of hopper cars filled with iron ore.
- At the beginning of the 20th century, hundreds of immigrants worked on the docks, loading, and unloading as many as sixty-five boats. They worked, fought, and raised families in the growing city.
- In 1901, The Ashtabula Beacon Record reported that “there are fifty-three saloons at the Harbor, not including those in Italy, Sweden or one near Woodland Park.



From the Ashtabula Star Beacon (September 17, 1982)

Harbor Architecture: Walk Slated October 2

About the Picture: Plans are discussed for the October 2 Architectural Walk, sponsored by the AAUW and the Ashtabula Area Museum and Historical Society by (standing from left) July Pallutch, restoration committee co-chairman; Ruth Payne, museum trustee; Dorothy Bishop, refreshment committee co-chairman (seated from left) and Kathryn Owen, owner of the 1840 Greek Revival home that will be featured on the walk and Junita Erickson, AAUW president, holding the Architectural Walk brochures cover.



An "Architectural Walk" that will benefit both the Ashtabula Area Museum and Historical Society and the Ashtabula Branch of the American Association of University Women is being planned from 1 to 4 p.m. Oct. 2 in Ashtabula Harbor's historic residential area.

Proceeds will benefit the restoration of Hubbard House by the Museum Society and AAUW local project funding. Tickets are available through members of both groups.