



## LIGHTS ON THE GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes, which are also known as the "inland seas" or the "third coast of the U.S. and Canada," consist of the five Great Lakes: Erie, Huron, Michigan, Ontario, and Superior. Together, they cover an area of 94,250 square miles (244,100 square kilometers) and contain one-fifth of the world's fresh water. They are so huge that they can be seen from the Moon. Two of them derive their names from the Indian tribes that once inhabited the area: the Eries and the Hurons. Before being given its current name, Lake Michigan was called "Lake of the Stinking Water," "Lake of the Puants," and "Lac des Illinois." Ontario in Iroquois means "beautiful lake." "Le lac Superieus," the name given to Lake Superior by French explorers, means "Upper Lake," and, indeed, its elevation is higher than the others. It is also the biggest and deepest of them

all. Rivers and channels connect the lakes: the St. Mary's River connects Lake Superior to Lake Huron; the St. Clair River, St. Clair Lake, and the Detroit River connect Lake Huron to Lake Erie; the Niagara River (with Niagara Falls) connects Lake Erie to Lake Ontario. The border between the U.S. and Canada runs down the middle of Lake Erie. The Great Lakes greatly affect the weather, climate, and the way of life of the inhabitants of the 10 states and provinces that they touch. The states and provinces include: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Ontario, Pennsylvania, Quebec, and Wisconsin. In this issue of *Zoom in on America* we will take a closer look at some of the lighthouses that have guarded the 10,500 miles (16,900 km) of coast that make up the Great Lakes.



*Ice covers the South Haven lighthouse and gantry along the Lake Michigan shore in South Haven, Michigan, Photo © AP Images*

# VICTIMS OF THE GREAT LAKES



The largest and longest vessel ever built on the Great Lakes, the 729-foot ore carrier SS Edmund Fitzgerald, slides into the launching basin, on June 7, 1958, in Detroit, Michigan. Photo ©AP Images

The Great Lakes have never been easy to navigate. The fall months, October through December, have frequent storms, with the waves reaching a height of ten meters at times. There was such a severe storm on Lake Superior on November 10, 1975 that the largest ship to have ever sailed the Great Lakes at the time, the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, sank within seconds.

The ship, captained by Ernest M. McSorley, began its fateful journey from Superior Wisconsin with a cargo of 26,000 tons of taconite. It was scheduled to land on Zug Island on the Detroit River; however, an unexpectedly strong blizzard made the captain change his course northward towards the more secure waters of Whitefish Bay. There was also a lighthouse in that bay; unfortunately, though, its light was not working that day due to the severity of the storm. Tragically, with only about 15 miles separating her from the Bay, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank without ever even sending an SOS (distress signal). The crew of 29 sailors all perished.

The *Edmund Fitzgerald* is just one of thousands of ships that have wrecked on the Great Lakes. Another tragic disaster happened near the Grosse Point Light in Evanston, Illinois when the steamer ship known as the *Eastland* capsized while pulling away from its dock because someone had forgotten to release the ropes on her stern. The accident resulted in the deaths of 835 of the ship's 2,500 passengers.

Violent storms are known for collecting deadly tolls, and storms on the Great Lakes are no exception. In 1905 alone three such storms killed 116 people on Lake Superior, while one record gale in November of that same year wrecked 30 ships.

Another difficult year was 1897 when a freighter, the *Idaho*, carrying a cargo of Christmas confections sank near Dunkirk Light on Lake Erie. For weeks after the shipwreck, slabs of chocolate washed up on the lake's shores.

The Great Lakes Shipwreck Research Foundation researches shipwrecks and explores the still relatively unexplored lakebeds in search of schooners, steamers, and other sunken ships embedded in the depths of the Great Lakes. When explorers come across these sunken ships they usually leave them as they find them. In the case of the *Edmund Fitzgerald*, however, the bell of the unfortunate ship was lifted out of the water and placed in the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum in Whitefish Point, Michigan. A copy of the bell was cast and taken down to the wreck to replace the original.

The memory of those who have perished on the lakes lives on. For example, each year on November 10 lamps are lit at the Split Rock Lighthouse in commemoration of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* tragedy 33 years ago.



# ACTIVITY PAGE

## Win a Prize!

*Zoom in on America* thanks all of you who sent us warm New Year's greetings.

January 2009 CONTEST

Give at least two nouns that contain the word "house", e.g. "lighthouse"

Send the answer (with your home address) to: zoom@usinfo.pl

Deadline: February 5

## Win a Prize!

The answer in the December 2008 Contest:

Ralph Bunche was awarded the 1950 Nobel Peace Prize

Thank you for participating

The winners are: Marianna, Ania, and Magda

CONGRATULATIONS  
The prizes will be sent to you by mail

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We extend best wishes for a happy and prosperous New Year to all of our dear readers. And - as suits the topic of this issue - may the light from all the lighthouses around the world show you the best and safest paths.



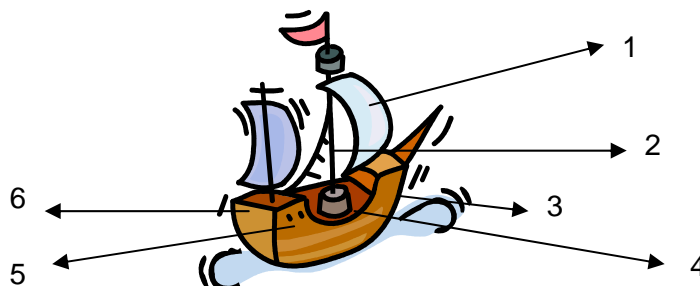
### Exercise 1:

Comprehension: true (T) or false (F)

1. Lake St. Clair is counted as one of the five Great Lakes.
2. Being a lighthouse keeper was a job only for men.
3. Local residents took pride in the old lighthouses and wanted to restore them.
4. The Edmund Fitzgerald was lifted from the bed of Lake Superior.

### Exercise 2

Please name the parts of the SHIP indicated by the arrows:



## End of the Year Contest

The readers have chosen the nicest 2008 Zoom cover:



The winners in this contest are:

**Sebastian, Maya, Wanda, Pawel, Jan and Jake**

The book albums will be sent to you by mail!

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

## Glossary

(in the order of appearance)

- derive** - arise from or originate  
**ply** - (about a vessel) travel regularly over a route  
**list** - (of a ship) lean to one side, typically because of a leak or unbalanced cargo  
**stern** - the rearmost part of a ship  
**confection** - a delicacy made with sweet ingredients  
**streak** - a long line or mark of a different color from its surroundings  
**luster** - having a shine or glow