

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wisconsin
COUNTY: Douglas
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE SEP 9 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:
(Whaleback Carrier) METEOR

AND/OR HISTORIC:
The FRANK ROCKEFELLER

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Northwest tip of Barker's Island

CITY OR TOWN:
Superior

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Wisconsin Seventh

STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55** COUNTY: **Douglas** CODE: **031**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Comments Museum of marine history
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4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
City of Superior

STREET AND NUMBER:
City Hall

CITY OR TOWN:
Superior

STATE:
Wisconsin

CODE:
55

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Superior City Clerk

STREET AND NUMBER:
City Hall

CITY OR TOWN:
Superior

STATE:
Wisconsin

CODE:
55

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Wisconsin Survey of Historic Sites & Buildings

DATE OF SURVEY: **1969-74** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

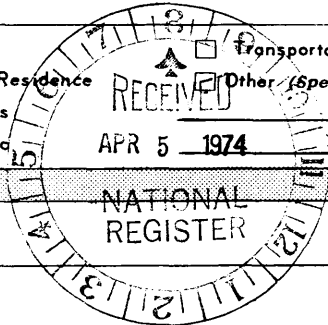
STREET AND NUMBER:
816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Madison

STATE:
Wisconsin

CODE:
55

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Wisconsin
COUNTY: Douglas
ENTRY NUMBER SEP 9 1974
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The METEOR was originally built as the steamer FRANK ROCKEFELLER by the American Steel Barge Company at Superior, Wisconsin, and launched on April 25, 1896. It was the 36th whaleback built in the Duluth-Superior area and had a length of 366.5 feet, beam of 45.0 feet, and depth of 26.0 feet. Its tonnage was 2,759 gross and 2,013 net. The ship was built as a cargo vessel to carry iron ore from the Mesabi Range in Minnesota.

The METEOR is typical of the whaleback design, which was invented and patented by a longtime Great Lakes sailor, Captain Alexander McDougall, in the early 1880's. The design took its name from its whale-like appearance. The whaleback had a long, narrow hull made of steel plates. The bottom was flat or sometimes slightly spoon-shaped, but the sides were rounded and tapered very nearly to a point both fore and aft. More than anything the whaleback looked like a floating cigar except that the tapered ends, both fore and aft, were carried upward from the keel so that the sides and bottom converged with the deck above the water line, giving the hull a conoidal snout at either end. This was more pronounced at the bow, however, where a circular flat plate truncated the cone and gave the appearance of a pig's snout. For this reason, whalebacks were also commonly called "pigboats." The stern had essentially the same configuration but it was less pronounced because of a smaller end plate and also because of the rudder and sometimes the propellers.

"Access to the whaleback's hull was through deck mounted turrets...one forward and three aft. The after turrets supported one or two decks [two on the METEOR] carrying the pilot house and whatever accommodations the vessel had. The engine room was directly below and these turrets also contained the exhaust and ventilation stacks as well as access ladders. The forward turret...housed steam winches. There was no interior passageway fore and aft, however, and for a crewman to go forward to man the winches or stand watch on the bow turret, he had to cross the open deck, often a very dangerous task in heavy weather."

In 1925 the ship was remodeled and fitted with hoppers for the sand trade. In 1928 it was renamed the SOUTH PARK and was used to haul grain and, for a time, fitted with deck rigging for hauling automobiles. The ship ran aground near Manistique, Michigan in November, 1942, and the following year, Cleveland Tankers, Inc., purchased it and had it converted into a tanker by the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company. At this time the name was changed to METEOR. After serving as a tanker from 1943-1969, the METEOR sustained damage and layed up at Manitowoc, Wisconsin. At that time it was the oldest active tanker in the world.

After three years, Cleveland Tankers donated the METEOR to the city of Superior and in 1972 the ship was returned home. It is now permanently beached on Barker's Island in the Superior harbor, only about one mile from where it was built seventy-eight years ago. Under the management of the Head of the Lakes Maritime Society, Ltd., the METEOR is being refurbished and converted to use as a marine museum. The fore part of the vessel has not yet been opened to the public, but the after portion was accessible to visitors during the summer of 1973.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

5. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As an invention in the direction of modernizing and bringing new efficiency into cargo transport on the Great Lakes, the whaleback carrier developed by Captain Alexander McDougall has considerable significance. The unusual design was not without merit: "The appeal of the whalebacks for bulk shipping of iron ore and grain lay in the rapid loading achieved by standardized hatch spacing on deck and the completely unobstructed cargo hold. The hatch covers were sealed with tallowed rope gaskets and bolted down to the deck. The hull was then supposed to be water tight. Waves could wash right over the vessel with a minimal effect." In addition, the streamlined design effected considerable saving of fuel needed for moving cargo.

In actual use, whalebacks had some serious disadvantages, however. The rounded decks meant that all spillage in loading or unloading was lost overboard. The big clamshell buckets used for unloading the vessels could dent a pigboat's deck plates so badly that the hatch covers could no longer be water tight. When carrying a light cargo or running empty, whalebacks could not take on enough water ballast to assure stability in heavy weather. Whether the ship was at sea or in port, the rounded decks were often too slippery for sailors to make their way safely between the fore and after turrets--usually a considerable distance.

Although the whalebacks were generally successful as a type, their greatest limitation lay in their basic design: "Up to 45 feet in beam the arched frames of the hull required no additional support, thus providing clear, unobstructed cargo holds. But with any increase in beam beyond 45 feet, vertical supports were necessary to strengthen the hull." Such supports as would be needed at that point would interfere with loading and unloading. "Also, the fore and aft stringers and rounded decks limited the size of the hatch openings." Because of these structural limitations and the increasing need for greater cargo capacity in bulk carriers involved in Great Lakes commerce, whalebacks eventually lost favor. "They simply couldn't be constructed large enough."

Nonetheless, the building of whaleback carriers was an important industry in Superior for a good decade at the end of the last century. Within a period of approximately twelve years, starting in 1888, forty-odd whaleback vessels--roughly half barges and half steamers--were built. Thirty-nine of these were constructed on the Great Lakes. Of the remainder, three were built in Brooklyn and one at Sunderland, England. (The latter was refused British registry, however, and sailed under the Belgian flag.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Data On The Whaleback Carrier Meteor," n.p., n.d., (furnished by Head of The Lakes Maritime Society, Ltd., Superior, Wis., 1973)
 Lydecker, Ryck, Pigboat...The Story of the Whalebacks, (Duluth, Minn., 1973)
 McDougall, Alexander, The Autobiography of Captain Alexander McDougall, (Great Lakes Historical Society, Cleveland, 1968).
 Wilterding, John H., McDougall's Dream: The American Whaleback, (Green Bay, Wis., 1969).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

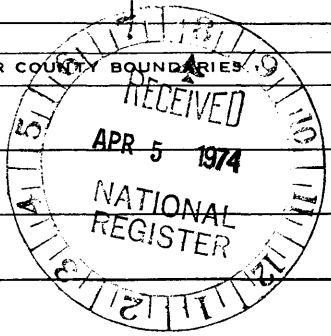
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	N 46°	43'	23.6"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	W 92°	03'	46.6"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"			
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

U/M
 15/2/74
 5177657
 C2

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2.0

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES:

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Donald N. Anderson, Asst. Director, Historic Sites & Markers Division

ORGANIZATION: State Historical Society of Wisconsin DATE: 31 January 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:
816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN: Madison STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name James Morton Smith
James Morton Smith

Title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Date 4/1/74

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 9/9/74

ATTEST:

[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 9-6-74

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Wisconsin	
COUNTY Douglas	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	SEP 9 1974

(Number all entries)

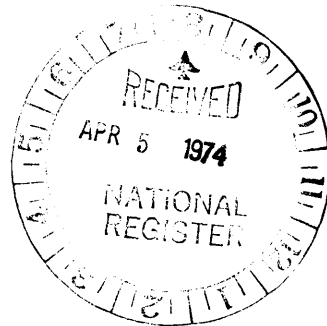
Whaleback Carrier METEOR

8. Several whalebacks remained in active service for as long as forty or fifty years--a respectable lifetime for any commercial vessel--and a few as long as sixty-five or seventy years. Their eventual disappearance was largely a matter of normal attrition: loss at sea; foundering; ramming; collision; explosion or other accident; and scrapping. The one built in Britain was torpedoed and sunk in the Atlantic in 1917 during World War I.

Finally, by 1969, only the METEOR remained--the last of all the whalebacks. Fortunately the owner was willing to donate the ship so that the only survival of a unique and significant kind of commercial vessel, used mostly on the Great Lakes but on the high seas as well, might be preserved. Fortunately also, an interested and active group in the Duluth-Superior area wanted the METEOR returned home permanently, preserved, and converted to appropriate adaptive use as a museum of marine history.

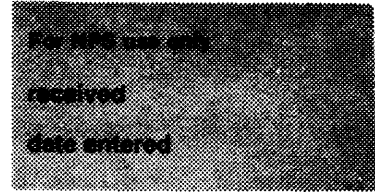
Historically, the whaleback was the forerunner of the modern Great Lakes cargo carrier; the METEOR is the oldest tanker in existence as well.

1. Lydecker, p. 29.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

PROPERTY NAME Meteor

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REFERENCE NUMBER

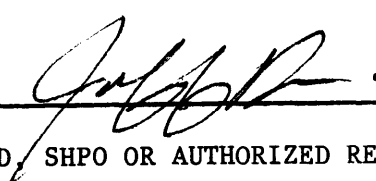
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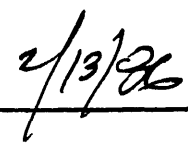
STATE

0	3	1
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COUNTY CODE

Correct name is METEOR (Whaleback carrier)


SIGNED, SHPO OR AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE


DATE