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Media Release

US Coast Guard Cutter Mackinaw finds a home.

An old friend has come home to live in Mackinaw City. An iconic fixture on the Straits for over 60 years, the *USCG Cutter Mackinaw* has been decommissioned and will live out its days as a historical museum, permanently moored at the Railroad Dock in Mackinaw City.

She was a comforting sight on the Straits for over 60 years, plowing along at 4 knots and parting three feet of blue as she passed. The *Mackinaw* was the largest, most powerful and most effective cutter to ever serve the Great Lakes. In over 60 years of operation, she never experienced a single breakdown while keeping the winter shipping channels clear, carrying out search and rescue missions, or as a training vessel for iron ore carriers.

Captain Joseph C. McGuinness, who held the *Mackinaw's* helm since 1967 quipped, "*She was a heavy-weight fighter that never lost a fight. Unbeaten and untied in 62 years.*"

During the throes of World War II, this country's war manufacturing complex was ravenous for steel. Keeping the Great Lakes open for shipping was critical to the war effort. The *Mackinaw* was built and commissioned in 1943 to help maintain the flow of iron ore throughout the winter months and proved essential to that military campaign.

Captain McGuinness remarks, "*Some folks think she won the war for us.*"

She has served the Great Lakes ever since.

At 295 feet long, 75 feet wide and wielding 10,000 horsepower, the *Mackinaw* hosts a crew of 80 and can transport 1,000 passengers. With her unique fantail, half-football hull and bold, white "racing stripe," the *Mackinaw* has long been known as one of the most recognizable ships on the Great Lakes.

Despite a long, reliable history, the *Mackinaw* became too expensive to maintain and was decommissioned by the US Coast Guard. Unable to stay at its homeport of Cheboygan and in danger of being sold for scrap, the *Mackinaw* needed both a buyer and a new home.

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Mackinac Island ferry owner Bill Shepler stepped forward to spearhead an effort to purchase the *USCGC Mackinaw* and convert it to a floating historical museum. Shepler, along with seven other prominent Mackinaw area supporters created the *Icebreaker Mackinaw Maritime Museum Committee* to oversee its management. Bill Shepler also provided mooring space at his historic Chief Wawatam Railroad Dock in Mackinaw City.

On June 21, 2006 the Cutter Mackinaw made its final voyage, taking about 5 hours to complete the trip from her home port in Cheboygan, Michigan. Upon arrival in Mackinaw City, her 600+ passengers were greeted by a large crowd and brass band.

The *USCG Cutter Mackinaw* isn't going anywhere. As the newly minted *Icebreaker Mackinaw Maritime Museum*, she'll stay right here where she can tell her own story in fascinating detail for generations to come.

Icebreaker Mackinaw Maritime Museum Committee Members

Bill Shepler, President
Shepler's Mackinaw Island Ferry

Dick Moehl, Treasurer
Great Lakes Lighthouse Keepers Association (GLLKA)

Sandy Planisek, Secretary
GLLKA

Jim Sutherland, Board Member
Good Hart Store

Bob Fisher, Board Member
Pancake Chef

Tom Chastain, Board Member
Mackinaw Services/Area Tours

Marilyn McFarland, Board Member
Mackinaw City Visitors Bureau

Keith Moore, Board Member
Reed Sewart Investments

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