

TOP HAT CEREMONY



On November 27th, 1829, the sailing vessel, **Ann & Jane** became the first ship to enter the new **Welland Canal**. Suitably decked out in an array of flags, ensigns and pendants, the tiny vessel was greeted by throngs of enthusiastic supporters. This historic first passage continues to be celebrated annually on the anniversary of the event as **Merritt Day**, after the founder of the canal, **William Hamilton Merritt**.

The pageantry of that trip was recreated 118 years later, when in 1947, **Feasby Garment and Linen Rental** sponsored an event to recognize the first upbound ship to enter the Welland Canal at the start of the navigation season. A symbolic top hat was presented to the captain and this presentation has carried on every year since.

Work Wear Corporation of Canada assumed sponsorship of the hat in 1985. Since the captains of each ship had signed the top hat, there were so many signatures by 1989 that the original top hat had to be *retired* from service; it would no longer accommodate any more signatures!

In 1991, **G&K Workwear Corporation of Canada** assumed sponsorship of the top hat. G&K Workwear Corporation is the largest uniform and textile rental company in Canada.

The original '1947' top hat, and the history it represents, is now an important part of the Canal Ceremonies showcase in the St. Catharines Museum.

ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY
VOIE MARITIME DU SAINT-LAURENT



TOP HAT CEREMONY
for the **OPENING** of

The St. Lawrence Seaway
Welland Canal
2009 Navigation Season

March 31, 2009

S/S MONTREALAIS

The **S/S Montrealais** wintered in the Port of Hamilton where nearly \$1.5 million was spent on it for maintenance. The vessel is currently in ballast and is heading for Thunder Bay where she will load grain for shipment to a lower St. Lawrence Port.

The **Montrealais** was built in 1962 at Davies Shipyard in Quebec for the Papachristidis Fleet of vessel out of Montreal, Quebec. In 1972, Upper Lakes Shipping purchased the fleet and retained the original ship's name Montrealais.

The **Montrealais** is powered by a 9,000 horse power General Electric Steam Turbine engine and is 222.5 metres (730') long with a beam of 23.1 metres (75') which represented the maximum size seaway vessel for her time of build. The vessel can carry 26,000 tonnes of cargo at Seaway draft and 29,000 tonnes at maximum draft. The normal trading pattern is grain cargoes downbound through the Seaway and ore cargoes upbound. However, in its history, the vessel has also carried sugar and other bulk cargoes and of significant note, was a full deck load of containers in the early 1980's demonstrating her capabilities to meet any "short sea shipping" opportunities.

The **Montrealais** has a crew of 20 skilled mariners under the command of Capt. Austin Peckford who has been with Upper Lakes since March 1981 and sailed as Master on many of the Upper Lakes ships since 1988. He hails from Lewisporte, Newfoundland.

Chief Engineer, Michel Brassard, has been with Upper Lakes since February 1992 and has sailed as Chief Engineer since 1994 and resides with his family in L'Ancienne-Lorette, Quebec.

1030 hrs.
1100 hrs.

St. Catharines Collegiate Jazz Band
Master of Ceremonies, Harley Smith

O Canada

Greetings & Presentations

Brian McMullan, Mayor, City of St. Catharines

Henry D'Angela, Mayor, City of Thorold

Peter Partington, Chair, The Regional Municipality of Niagara

Graeme Cook, Vice President, Business Development
Upper Lakes Group Inc.

Jean Aubry-Morin, Vice President, Niagara Region
The St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation

Keynote Speaker

The Honourable Jim Bradley
Minister of Transportation

Presentation of the Top Hat

Arden Phair, Curator, St. Catharines Museum

Seaway Flag Presenter

Dedication Prayer

Chaplain Arthur Taylor, Welland Canal Mission

Season Declared Open

Jean Aubry-Morin

Light refreshments available in the Burgoyne Room, Welland Canals Centre