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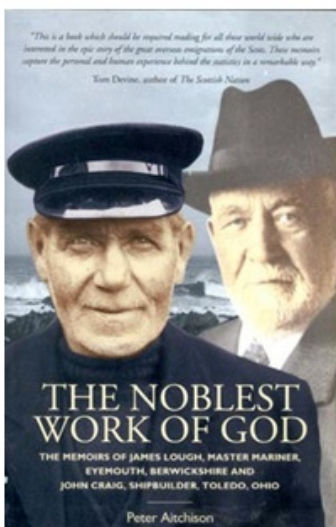
## Archival Chronicle

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December 2005: Volume 24, Number 3

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### Researchers Strike Gold at Historical Collections of the Great Lakes



▶ *The Noblest Work of God* won Honorable Mention in the Independent Scholar Division of the 2005 Local History Publication Award. Based in part on manuscripts found in the Craig Shipbuilding Company Collection ([GLMS 95](#)) housed in the Historical Collections of the Great Lakes, the book recounts the life stories of John Craig and James Lough and their part in the shipbuilding industry of the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are a defining feature of life in northern Ohio, a means of trade and transportation, of livelihood and recreation. Moreover, they are an important influence on the American economy and factor into our relations with Canada and our trading partners around the world. No history of this region can be written without an understanding of the effect of this waterway on the life and culture of the people who live nearby, and of our changing attitudes toward the care of this great natural resource. Researchers from around the world look to the resources of the Historical Collections of the Great Lakes for answers to their questions. Our collections are cited in scholarly and popular studies and consulted by the media the world over.

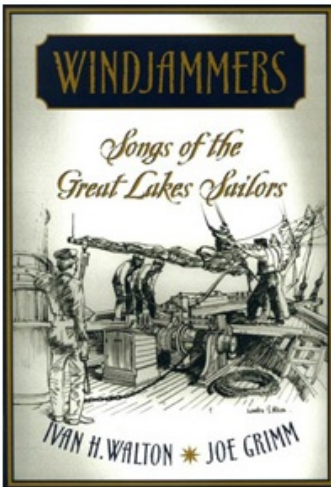
The Historical Collections of the Great Lakes (HCGL) has been an integral part of the Center for Archival Collections since its inception in the late 1960's as the Northwest Ohio-Great Lakes Research Center. Thanks to its continuing growth, this collection is now considered one of the finest on its subject in the Great Lakes region and the nation.

Our purpose is to collect, preserve, and make available to scholars, students, and the public, historical materials documenting the Great Lakes region and its connecting waterways. The HCGL's collections reflect the entire spectrum of life in the region. Materials cover such topics as industry (including commercial shipping and fishing, shipbuilding, labor history, and mining), history and society (including the history of Great Lakes ports, shipwrecks, maritime law, yachting, and popular literature) and nature (including freshwater ecology and recreation). Our holdings total more than 2,000 linear feet of manuscript and archival materials contained in approximately 450 collections. Among our major manuscript collections are the Lake Carriers' Association ([GLMS 44](#)), American Ship Building Co. ([GLMS 75](#)), Wilson Marine Transit Co. ([GLMS 27](#)), Loudon G. Wilson ([GLMS 71](#)), John E. Poole ([GLMS 15](#)), Richard J. Wright Marine Collection, the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority ([GLMS 2](#)), and the archives of the International Ship Masters' Association ([GLMS 28](#)). Most of these items are cataloged and accessible through [OhioLINK](#).

The formats in which this information appears are as varied as the subject matter. HCGL's collections include more than 9,000 volumes, 4,500 pamphlets, and 250 linear feet of periodicals. In addition, we have a large (550 vols.) collection of maritime news clippings dating from the 1860's. Vessel data sheets for approximately 10,000 vessels have been compiled and are available for study.

If one picture is worth a thousand words, imagine the information available through the study of our photograph collection, with some 130,000 images; and the several hundred thousand ship building drawings dating from the late nineteenth century; and the navigational chart collection.

Yet the HCGL is more than the sum of its collections. In order to make this vast quantity of data more accessible, we have also created several [online databases](#) documenting Great Lakes vessels, people, and ports. These databases are available through the [HCGL web site](#).



The Historical Collections of the Great Lakes was founded to encourage research by both scholars and the general public. Our resources have been cited in many recent scholarly works. Graduate students have drawn heavily on our collections. Among the recent masters' theses and doctoral dissertations resulting from research here are:

Entertainment on Lake Erie and the Great Lakes, 1913-1925, by Robert C. Berls. (BGSU Master of Arts thesis)

Labor Relations and the Lake Carriers' Association, 1900-1915. (BGSU Master of Arts thesis)

Sailing the Freshwater Seas: A Social History of Life Aboard the Commercial Sailing Vessels of the United States and Canada on the Great Lakes, 1815-1930, by Jay C. Martin. (BGSU Ph. D. dissertation)

"Changes of Vast Magnitude": The Development of an Iron Ore Delivery System on the Great Lakes during the 19th Century, by Bruce Bowlus. (BGSU Ph. D. dissertation)

The Provision and Value of Weather Information Services in the United States during the Founding Period of the Weather Bureau with Special Reference to Transportation on the Great Lakes, by Erik D Craft. (University of Chicago Ph. D. dissertation)

The history and development of shipbuilding in Ecorse, Michigan. (University of Toledo Ph. D. dissertation in progress).

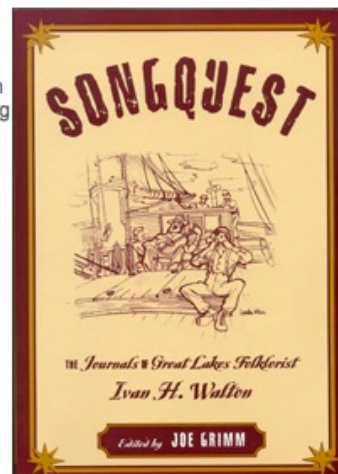
Writers have not neglected popular interest in the Great Lakes. Just a few of the more recent works drawing on HCGL resources include:

**The Noblest Work of God**, edited by Peter Aitchison (pictured above) won an Honorable Mention in the 2005 Local History Publication Awards. Based in part on materials in the Craig Shipbuilding Company Collection (**GLMS 95**), the book tells the story of the lives and adventures of James Lough and John Craig, richly illustrated with period and contemporary photographs. This book was the basis of a major BBC Radio program broadcast in January 2005.

**Iron Fleet: The Great Lakes in WW II**, by George J. Joachim focuses on the vital role played by the Great Lakes shipping industry during the Second World War. The bulk shippers of the lakes supplied almost all the iron ore necessary for wartime production. The author also explores the use of Great Lakes shipyards for the production of salt water civilian and military vessels.

**Windjammers: Songs of the Great Lakes Sailors**, by Ivan H. Walton and Joe Grimm. Recognizing that the traditional folksongs of the Great Lakes schooner men were disappearing with the coming of propeller-driven vessels, Walton discovered the melodies and lyrics to more than a hundred songs the sailors used ease their work and entertain each other. This edition features an accompanying CD with renditions of many of the songs.

**Songquest: The Journals Of Great Lakes Folklorist Ivan H. Walton**, edited by Joe Grimm, is a selection of the daily journal entries made by folklorist Ivan Walton during the 1930s as he collected the songs in the volume above. In the course of his efforts to document the songs of the Great Lakes sailors, Walton also gathered stories, tall tales, weather signs and other folklore.





## Media and Magazines

Thanks to the pictorial as well as written resources at the Historical Collections of the Great Lakes, our collections appear frequently in popular magazine articles including such publications as *Time for Kids*, *Timeline* (Ohio Historical Society), *Michigan History Magazine*, *Coastal Resources* (an NOAA publication) and *Currents* (also an NOAA publication). But the widest audience for our information is probably gained through film, especially television productions. The HCGL is a regular source of information for local television stations WTOL, WTVG, and WBGU. Our collections provide background information for such programs as *Mystery Hunters* and for programs on cable networks like the History Channel and Discovery Channel. The BBC Scotland broadcast of an adaptation of *The Noblest Work of God* was just the most recent collaboration with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Today, reference and other administrative services for the Historical Collections of the Great Lakes are being merged with the Center for Archival Collections, just as they were when the collections were established at Bowling Green State University. Our commitment to the continued development and research use of these valuable collections remains unchanged. We invite researchers to investigate for themselves the wealth of information available.

*—Robert Graham, Archivist  
Historical Collections of the Great Lakes*

## Databases Make Photographs Accessible



During the last six to eight years, the expansion of the Internet has increased awareness of the Historical Collections of the Great Lakes' holdings. This has resulted in a significant increase in requests for information from our collections. Advances in computer technology have also presented us with opportunities. One way in which we have responded has been to adapt some of our resources into database format and to make them available to the public on the Internet. Thanks to the support of several national and state grants, the HCGL has created three unique, online resources documenting Vessels, Ports, and Maritime Personnel of the Great Lakes region. The **Vessels Database** combines the vessel data sheets compiled by researchers over a thirty-year period with the photograph collection to provide an illustrated description of thousands of vessels that sailed the Great Lakes. The **Ports Database** features some 700 photographs of Lake Erie ports combined with a searchable database of descriptive

information. Finally, the **Maritime Personnel Database** compiles written information about those who belonged to various maritime organizations or were listed in various sailing directories. These databases have proved to be extremely popular. So far this year, our vessels database has been visited over 20,000 times. We plan to continue to maintain and expand these databases.

In addition to the databases, many of our manuscript collection finding aids are available on the web. In the future, we plan to add subject checklists and more digital content from our collections to the site.

*—Robert Graham, Archivist  
Historical Collections of the Great Lakes*

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**THE ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS ISSUE** highlight some of the many recent publications which have drawn on materials found in the archives of the Historical Collections of the Great Lakes.

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