

Looking Back #27

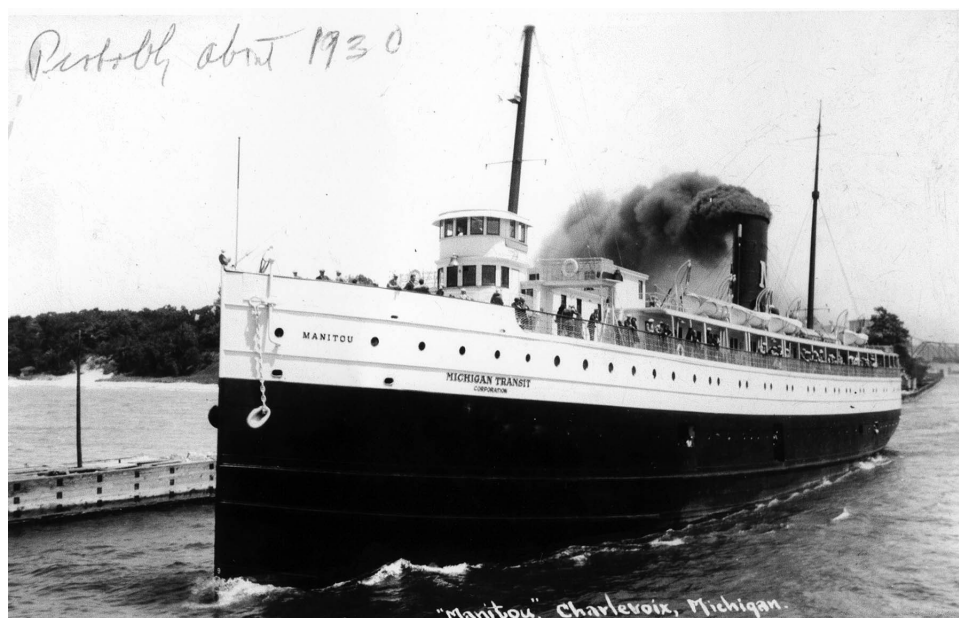
The Mighty Manitou, Lake Michigan Passenger Liner

By

David L. Miles, Curator

Museum at Harsha House

Charlevoix Historical Society



The mighty *Manitou* leaves Charlevoix, ca. 1930

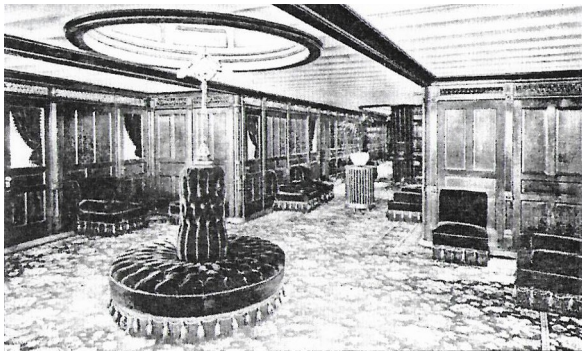
As northwest Michigan's resort industry began to gain momentum in the latter part of the 19th century, larger and faster boats were required to meet the steadily increasing demand for summer transportation between Chicago and Mackinac Island, plus other resort destinations. Before those boats could appear, medium-sized passenger steamers might take as long as forty hours to travel from Chicago to Charlevoix. This was mainly because of the numerous stops they had to make along Lake Michigan's east shoreline. The 171-foot *Petoskey* was launched in 1887, along with a few others close to that size and with fewer ports of call, but even they began to prove inadequate. Then, like a meteor streaking across the heavens, in 1893 appeared the mighty steel-hulled *Manitou*, Ojibwe/Anishinaabe for "Great Spirit." The inland seas had never seen anything like this apparition that quickly gained the nickname "Greyhound of the Great Lakes" for its incredible speed. Fabricated by the Chicago Ship Building Co. for the newly formed Manitou Steamship Co., this floating palace with capacity ca. 400 stretched to almost 300 feet, with a forty-two-foot beam. Inside, brass, velvet, oak, Mexican mahogany, the finest fabrics, glass, and marble stretched from end to end, a luxury that set a standard that few, if any, of the future liners to come onto the scene could equal. It was estimated that 10,000 people witnessed its launch.



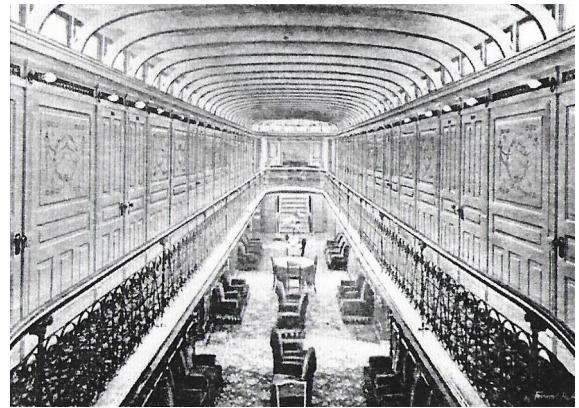
Finest woods, brass, glass on a Manitou stairway



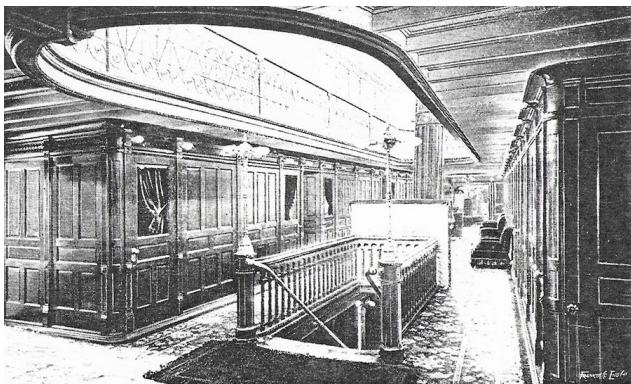
Plush velvets, silks, and satins in a lounge



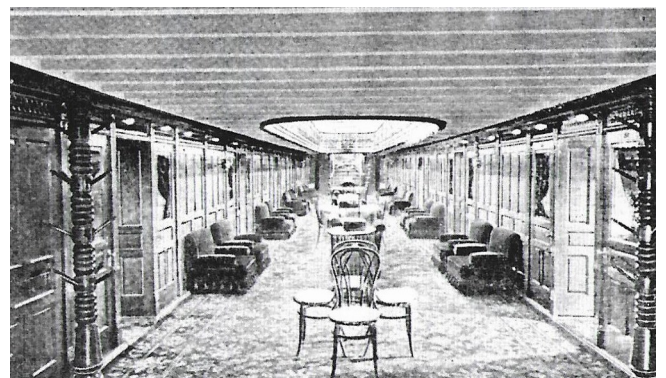
Ladies' salon, looking forward



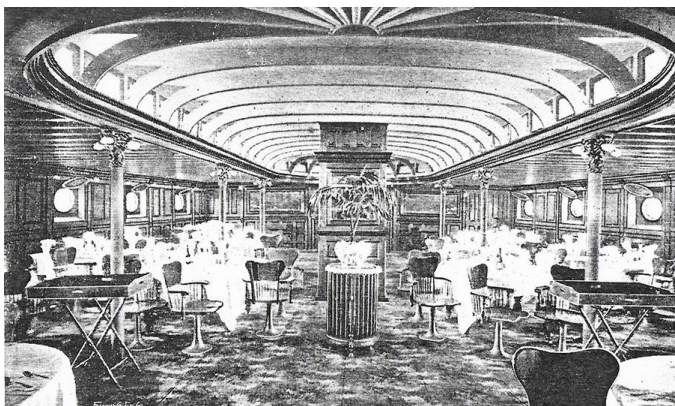
Gallery above main salon, Hurricane Deck



Saloon, spar deck, looking aft



Forward main salon, spar deck

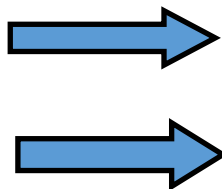


Dining room



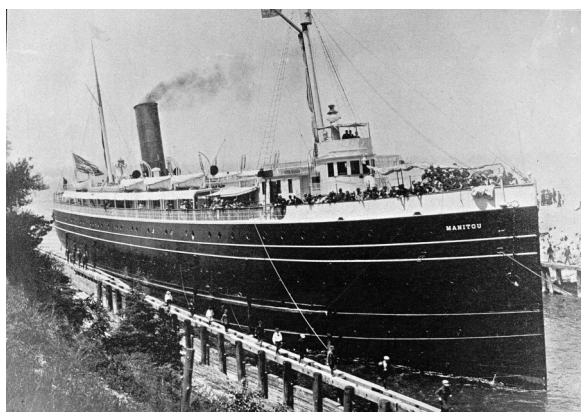
Deck scene, forward

Manitou schedule for northern Michigan including the "Annex Steamers" that connected Charlevoix and Petoskey to Harbor Springs for sailing on the liner



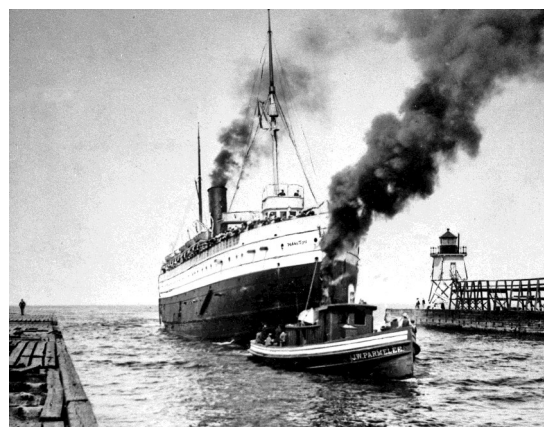
Time Tables of the Lake Michigan Division.					
(Express Steamship MANITOU.)					
NORTH BOUND.					
Lv. Chicago.....	Mondays....	12.00 Noon	Wednesdays	5.30 P.M.	Saturdays 9.00 A.M.
Lv. Harbor Spr'gs.	Tuesdays...	9.00 A.M.	Thursdays..	1.30 P.M.	Sundays.. 5.00 A.M.
Ar. Petoskey	{ Tuesdays... 8.30 A.M.		Thursdays..	2.00 P.M.	Sundays.. 6.30 A.M.
(via Annex Steamer)					
Ar. Charlevoix...	{ Tuesdays... 10.00 A.M.		Thursdays..	3.30 P.M.	Sundays.. 8.00 A.M.
(via Annex Steamer)					
Ar. Mackinac Is'd.	Tuesdays...	1.00 P.M.	Thursdays..	5.30 P.M.	Sundays.. 9.00 A.M.
SOUTH BOUND.					
Lv. Mackinac Is'd.	Tuesdays...	2.00 P.M.	Thursdays..	6.15 P.M.	Sundays.. 9.45 A.M.
Lv. Charlevoix ..	{ Tuesdays... 4.00 P.M.		Thursdays..	5.00 P.M.	Sundays.. 10.00 A.M.
(via Annex Steamer)					
Lv. Petoskey....	{ Tuesdays... 5.30 P.M.		Thursdays..	6.30 P.M.	Sundays.. 11.30 A.M.
(via Annex Steamer)					
Lv. Harbor Spr'gs.	Tuesdays...	6.30 P.M.	Thursdays..	10.30 P.M.	Sundays.. 2.15 P.M.
Ar. Chicago...	Wednesdays	2.00 P.M.	Fridays.....	7.00 P.M.	Mondays.. 9.00 A.M.
The above time tables take effect about June 15, and remain in force until about Sept. 15.					

The *Manitou's* initial schedules (above) included a stop in Frankfort to the south, continuation to Harbor Springs to our north, then on to Mackinac Island. Passengers wishing to go to Charlevoix or Petoskey were served by an "annex steamer" that connected those two ports with Harbor Springs via Little Traverse Bay. It only took three seasons for the Steamship Co. to realize the error of their scheduling, at least regarding Charlevoix. There was so much demand for that port that the *Manitou* added it to the 1896 schedule. When the liner first entered Round Lake on June 21 that year, the whole town turned out with a roaring welcome.



Hest Photo. FIRST ENTRANCE OF THE "MANITOU," JUNE 21, 1896. Post. Eng. Co.

First entry into Charlevoix, June 21, 1896



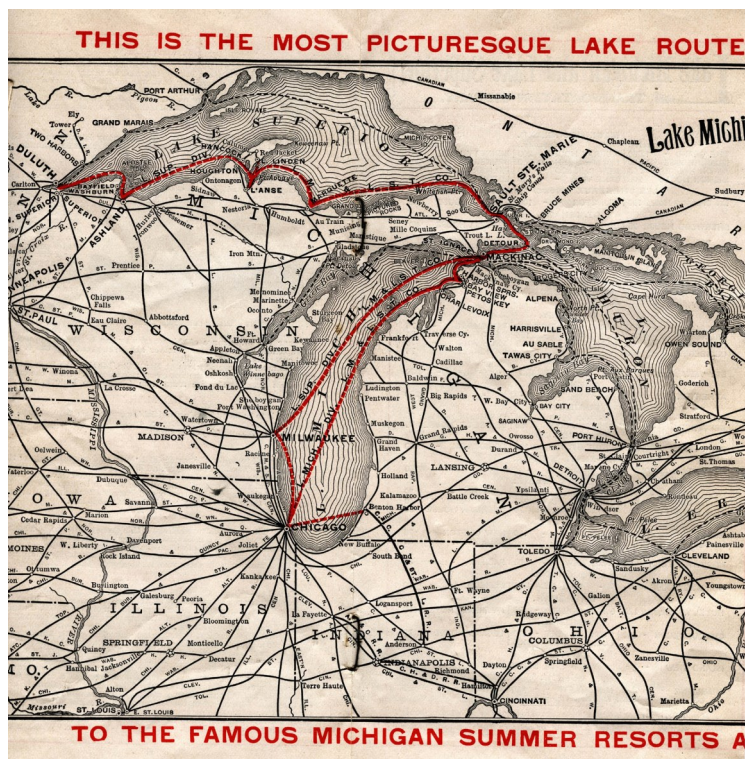
For well over a decade, the liner was brought in by tug . . .



, , , and turned around in Round Lake to head into dock near the lower channel bridge, here 1908.



That habit ceased once new Capt. William Finucan took charge in 1908 and realized, after doing it a few times, he could do it without the aid of a tug.



From 1896 on, the destinies of Charlevoix and the *Manitou* were inextricably intertwined. So popular did Charlevoix become so fast that Frankfort was soon dropped from the schedule. Charlevoix became the first port of call, as seen on the map at left. The lower red line in Lake Michigan stretches from Chicago to Charlevoix without a break, then on to Harbor Springs and Mackinac Island. The first leg was covered in a record-breaking twenty hours. Three round trips were made each week with even enough time left over for an overnight stay on Mackinac Island on Saturday night. In 1918, it was reported that, over the past two decades, on average, 75% of the tickets sold for the *Manitou* were destination Charlevoix. By then the town

was also served by other liners, and had had railroad connection to the rest of the country since 1892. Which means that Charlevoix could have survived very well without the *Manitou*, but the *Manitou* could never have survived without Charlevoix.

Capt. William Finucan (1859-1921), one of the most highly regarded captains on the Great Lakes, took command of the *Manitou* in 1908. He was not unfamiliar with Charlevoix from his travels on other vessels, and decided to make his home here. Before that, for years other captains of larger vessels had been leery of the fickle currents and winds that could affect turning around in Round Lake. They either did it with the aid of a tug or went out into Lake Charlevoix where they turned around and came back in to dock. Finucan discovered he could do it easily. According to Charlevoix builder in stone Earl Young, "Captain Finucan would turn the *Manitou* around at the southwest end of Round Lake by reversing its huge propellers, agitating the water and even vibrating the shore where the new George Priest photographic studio building was built. To the extent that Priest could not use his camera in his studio and the surgical instruments in Dr. Armstrong's office on the second floor would fall off the glass shelves in the cases."



Manitou Capt. William Finucan, who made Charlevoix his home



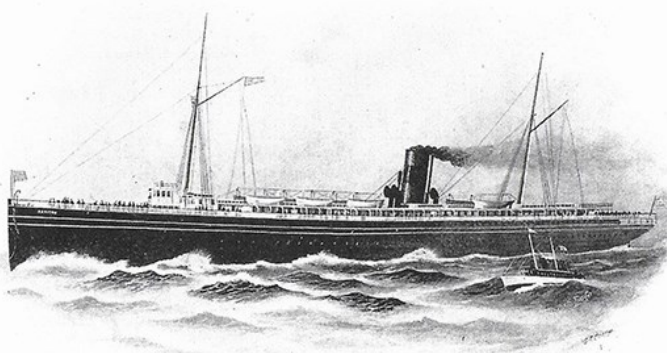
Photographer George Priest's 1913 photo studio building at Mason and Bridge Streets near Capt. Finucan's turnaround spot. The *Manitou*'s vibrations during turnaround shook it to its foundations. The building later became the famed Parkside restaurant.

Prior to Capt. Finucan's arrival, it is difficult to piece together what actually happened schedule-wise with the *Manitou*. Apparently the liner's avoidance of the Leelanau Peninsula region after 1896 caused some of the wealthier resorters in that area to complain of being neglected and inconvenienced, and were eventually listened to. For instance, the Charlevoix Historical Society possesses three promotional brochures, from 1904 through 1906, each with full page *Manitou* ads, two with timetables. 1904 lists, without departure/arrival times, Chicago, again Frankfort, Northport at the tip of the Leelanau Peninsula, Charlevoix, Petoskey, Bay View, the huge Methodist resort near Petoskey, Harbor Springs, and Mackinac Island. 1905 drops Frankfort, Northport, and Bay View, with departure/arrival times for all except Petoskey. Was it still served by the annex steamer? In 1906, Frankfort again returns to the schedule (below), with Petoskey the same as before. All very confusing.

MANITOU STEAMSHIP COMPANY "The MACKINAC LINE"

Three times each week
between

CHICAGO
FRANKFORT
CHARLEVOIX
HARBOR SPRINGS
PETOSKEY
and
MACKINAC
ISLAND



Note our week-end trips for the special benefit of business and professional men. No other line offers such excellent facilities. Luxurious dining-room, service a la carte at reasonable rates. Everything first class. Printed matter free for the asking. Apply to any agent or address the General Passenger Agent of the Company.

The Steel Constructed Steamship **MANITOU** For Passenger Service Exclusively

NORTH BOUND First sailing from Chicago, June 20					SOUTH BOUND Last sailing from Mackinac Island, September 9			
Leave Chicago	Mon. 11:30 A. M.	Wed. 2:00 P. M.	Fri. 6:30 P. M.	Leave Mackinac Island	Tues. 12:15 P. M.	Thurs. 2:00 P. M.	Sun. 8:00 A. M.	
" Frankfort			Sat. 7:30 A. M.	" Harbor Springs	" 4:30 P. M.	" 6:15 P. M.	" 12:15 P. M.	
" Charlevoix	Tues. 6:00 A. M.	Thurs. 8:00 A. M.	" 1:00 P. M.	" Charlevoix	" 6:00 P. M.	" 7:45 P. M.	" 2:00 P. M.	
" Harbor Springs	" 7:30 A. M.	" 9:30 A. M.	" 2:30 P. M.	" Frankfort	Wed. 12:00 Noon	Fri. 2:00 P. M.	Mon. 8:30 A. M.	
Arrive Mackinac Island	" 11:30 A. M.	" 1:30 P. M.	" 6:45 P. M.	Arrive Chicago				

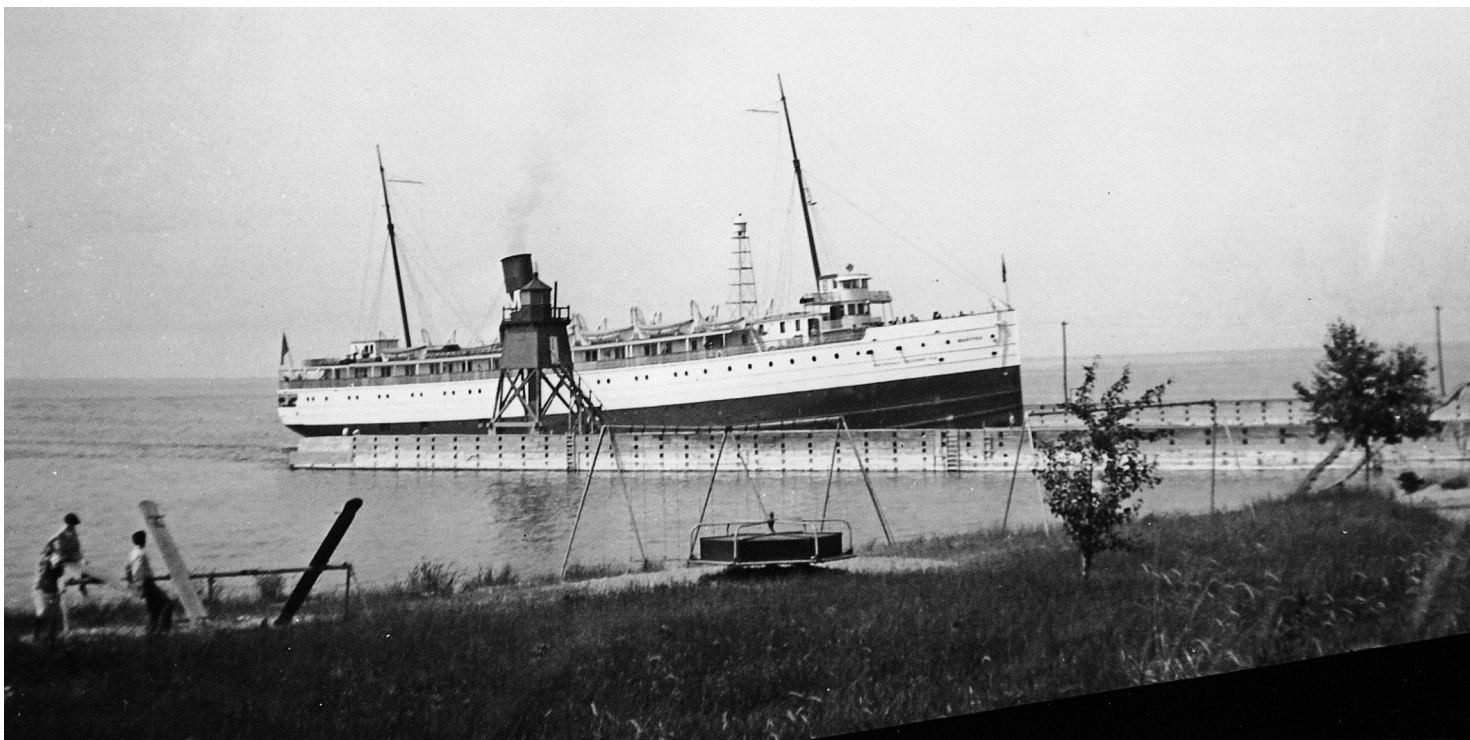
JOS. BEROLZHEIM, G. P. A., Rush and North Water Sts., CHICAGO, ILL.

The 1906 schedule, with no departure/arrival times for Petoskey

The *Manitou* kept up its sterling service and reputation year after year during the warm season. It came into Charlevoix six times a week, three times on the way up Lake Michigan, three times on the way down, carrying tens upon tens of thousands of passengers safely. During the 1908 season, the fare from Chicago to Charlevoix was \$5 with meals. A sleeping berth was extra. Today that \$5 would be \$176.

Only one brief period occurred when the liner did not come here. In March of 1918, the *Manitou* was called for unspecified duty during the last months of World War I. It was replaced by the Chicago, Duluth & Georgian Bay Transit Company's *North American*, launched 1913. That boat received so much business that its sister ship *South American*, launched a year later, was called in during the latter part of the season. Even with the return of the *Manitou* in 1919, the *Americans* remained to become two of the favorite passenger vessels ever to visit Charlevoix for the next three and half decades.

But even then, the *Manitou* began to experience difficulties. Its parent, the Manitou Steamship Company, 1903-1907, had become the North Michigan Transit Co. between 1907 and 1920. That became the Michigan Transit Co. from 1920 to 1925, at which time the Central Securities Company took over for a year before it came back into the Michigan



The *Manitou* passes the Charlevoix lighthouse, early 1930s. It came in about 75 times a year for well over thirty years.

Transit hands. In 1933, the liner ceased to be the *Manitou*. A new company, the Isle Royale Transportation Co. took over. It repainted the vessel all white and changed its name to *Isle Royale*, which continued to visit Charlevoix for the rest of its very short life.

What had been the glorious *Manitou* met an inglorious end. On the night of October 10-11, 1936, now considered beyond hope, it was hauled to a Manistee, Michigan layup for scrapping. But a mysterious fire erupted which took the life of an aged watchman. The scorched hulk was converted to a barge, reportedly in service into the World War II years, until the last mention of it in 1949, with the simple word: "Abandoned." Thus ended the long life of the *Manitou*, which had become such a strong thread in the fabric of Charlevoix for so many years, the likes of which will never be seen here again.



A favorite Charlevoix pastime, watching the *Manitou* come into dock

