

NEWS RELEASE

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What: 11th Annual Whistles on the Water

When: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sept. 28

Where: Palmer Park, St. Clair, MI

The Golden Age of steamboat travel on the St. Clair River returns on Sept. 28, 2019.



The 11th annual Whistles on the Water, a celebration of the steam-powered whistles that identified the freighters and passenger liners that once plied the Great Lakes, is 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28, at Palmer Park on the St. Clair River in the city of St. Clair. The event is free.

Whistles on the Water draws steam whistle collectors and enthusiasts from around the United States and Canada to hear the massive brass instruments, some of them more than six feet tall, sound off with window-rattling and ground-shaking roars.

Unlike other steam whistle events that rely on compressed air, Whistles on the Water uses a massive steam boiler that produces 161 pounds per square inch of pressure. The boiler produces an authentic sound common during the 19th century when steamships ruled the Great Lakes.

Hearing protection is recommended: A large steam whistle rumbling in a low bass uses 287 pounds of steam in a minute. That's 35 gallons of water.

Ship captains tuned their steam whistle to create a unique sound so their ship could be identified before it could be seen. Steam whistles helped ship captains identify vessels at night and in the fog and let people on shore know which ship was passing by.

The event also includes an area where people attending Whistles on the Water can operate a steam whistle.

Spectators also can watch and hear modern freighters as their captains respond to salutes from the steam whistles, a unique feature thanks to the event's location on the riverfront.

The event will feature the WILLIAM H. DONNER, a freighter that was launched in 1914 to replace the Charles S. Price, which sank in Lake Huron during the Great Storm of 1913.

The Donner was retired in 2016 and will be scrapped. Its whistle, which was removed when the freighter was converted to diesel, will taste live steam for the first time in almost 50 years.

For more information about Whistles on the Water, visit <http://stclairontheriver.com/whistles-on-the-water-2>.