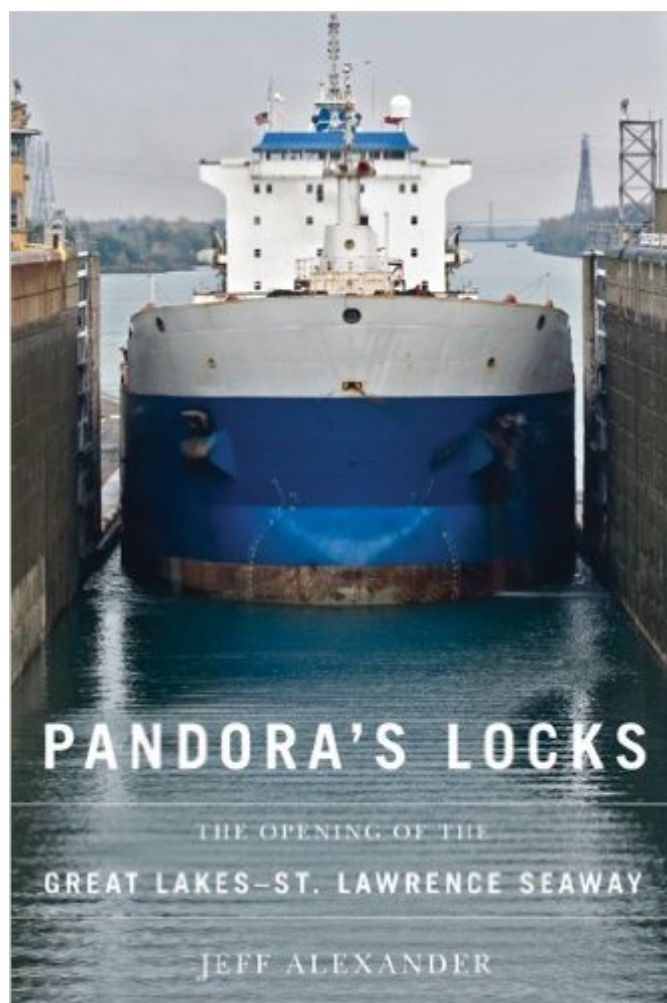


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Pandora's Locks: The Opening Of The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway



Synopsis

A 50-year retrospective of the St. Lawrence Seaway: The Seaway was considered one of the world's greatest engineering achievements when it opened in 1959. The \$1 billion project a series of locks, canals, and dams that tamed the ferocious St. Lawrence River opened the Great Lakes to the global shipping industry, linking ports on lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario to shipping hubs on the world's seven seas increased global trade in the Great Lakes region. But it came at an extraordinarily high price. Foreign species that immigrated into the lakes unleashed a biological shift that reconfigured the world's largest freshwater ecosystems. Pandora's Locks is the story of politicians and engineers who, driven by hubris and handicapped by ignorance, demanded that the Seaway be built at any cost. It is the tragic tale of government agencies that could have prevented ocean freighters from laying waste to the Great Lakes ecosystems, but failed to act until it was too late. Blending science with compelling personal accounts, this book is the first comprehensive account of how inviting transoceanic freighters into North America's freshwater seas transformed these wondrous lakes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was required to read this book for a university class on Great Lakes Geology. It was excellent. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in the Great Lakes, or the biological effects of invasive species, or the troubles that political policy has on enforcing environmental regulations. If someone is interested in any of these topics, this book is a must read. The book is easy to read and

interesting--it reads like a storybook. There are some dramatic stylistic touches in the author's writing style, but it doesn't take away from the abundance of information this book contains.

I purchased it to learn more about the St. Lawrence Seaway in prep for a cruise. I got more than I expected. Well written for the layman, scientist and/or avid environmentalist, political scientist and social psychologist to have a concise history of how in almost the past two hundred years engineers and bureaucrats have compromised, albeit ruined, one of the most pristine and largest freshwater systems in the world. Requirements for permits and licenses are criticized today by some as "hindering job growth" or "depressing the economy" but this history of the Great Lakes clearly tells us why protections are needed. Yes, there is red tape and government bureaucracy moves slowly but if there is a chance to avoid further damage then those problems are a small price to pay...if we can trust those in government to do the job correctly. The full chronological narrative will depress and sadden the conscientious and conscionable reader at times. As you read there are stories that will constantly remind one of why we have to support these environmental protections. Unfortunately, we also come to see that there are the lazy and the incompetents who get the public positions, by election or appointment, and pander to industry for money and/or job security. These selfish people have no concern about leaving a legacy for future generations.

A must read for those interested in the true story of the destruction of one of the world's great natural resources, the North American Great Lakes. But, this is not simply a Great Lakes story, as evidenced by the quagga mussel expansion out west (chapter 23). Although many stories have been written about the plague of aquatic invasive species, none with the thoroughness and eloquence of this book. Anyone interested in our natural resources should read this book. The St. Lawrence Seaway is just a subplot, as the real story is about the harm that resulted from the inaction of various federal agencies, Coast Guard and EPA particularly, to adequately protect the Great Lakes from invaders in the ballast tanks of transoceanic freighters. Jeff Alexander tells a great, and compelling story.

I have been doing some traveling lately and had some time to read Jeff Alexander's new book, "Pandora's Locks". The book is described as: "A probing retrospective on the St. Lawrence Seaway, an engineering marvel that allowed a biological plague into the Great Lakes when it opened 50 years ago." I highly recommend this book for anyone who fishes the Great Lakes or one of its tributaries; anyone who enjoys the Great Lakes for recreational purposes; and anyone who is

involved in management of the Great Lakes. The book tells the story of each major invasive species to hit the Great Lakes over the last 50 years, and the impact that each species has had upon the lakes. Jeff describes the missed opportunities to limit their damage and the negligence displayed by some of our government agencies that were supposed to protect our lakes. We are only now starting to try and close the door to this invasion of the Great Lakes, but are our efforts too little too late? The cost to consumers and taxpayers to this series of invasive species has been over \$2 billion a decade in the U.S. alone. The slow motion response to this invasion has made the future of our Great Lakes extremely uncertain. Perhaps if more people have a better understanding of where we have been, the choices going forward will be more clear cut.

As a lifelong Michigan resident with a deep love of the surrounding waters, I was dismayed to learn the extent of the damage wrought by carelessness and the delay of any remedy. There was no mention of the effect that has been breaking my heart for a couple of decades now: zebra mussels degrading the best shipwrecks in the world. I've watched the sickening progress firsthand. To learn of the many other hugely expensive and overwhelming effects of these preventable invasions was disheartening. I would like to see more citizen outrage in defense of priceless resources threatened by short-term gain and political cowardice.

Pandora's Locks is an amazing account of the invasion of the Great Lakes by foreign species since the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway, of the devastating effects of this invasion, and of the ineptitude of the U.S. and Canadian governments in dealing with the situation. The author conveys a strong love for the Great Lakes and a righteous indignation at the neglect of the authorities' who had the power to protect the Lakes but didn't. This reviewer, himself a lover of the Great Lakes who enjoys the magnificence of Lake Michigan at his summer home on Beaver Island, strongly recommends this book to anyone who cares about the Great Lakes, one of North America's greatest treasures.

A gem of engineering genius, the St. Lawrence Seaway was not easily built, not by any stretch of the imagination. "Pandora's Locks: The Opening of the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence Seaway" tells the story of the canal's creation and the road leading up to its historic opening. A story of trade, politics, and science, "Pandora's Locks" discusses the canal from many perspectives, with special care to the environmental approach. "Pandora's Locks" is a far reaching and scholarly look at the St. Lawrence Seaway.

I think I learned more than I really wanted to know about environmental problems in the Great Lakes ! But it was very interesting and informative.

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