

Volunteers needed for Port Washington work

By John Jensen

State Underwater Archeologist

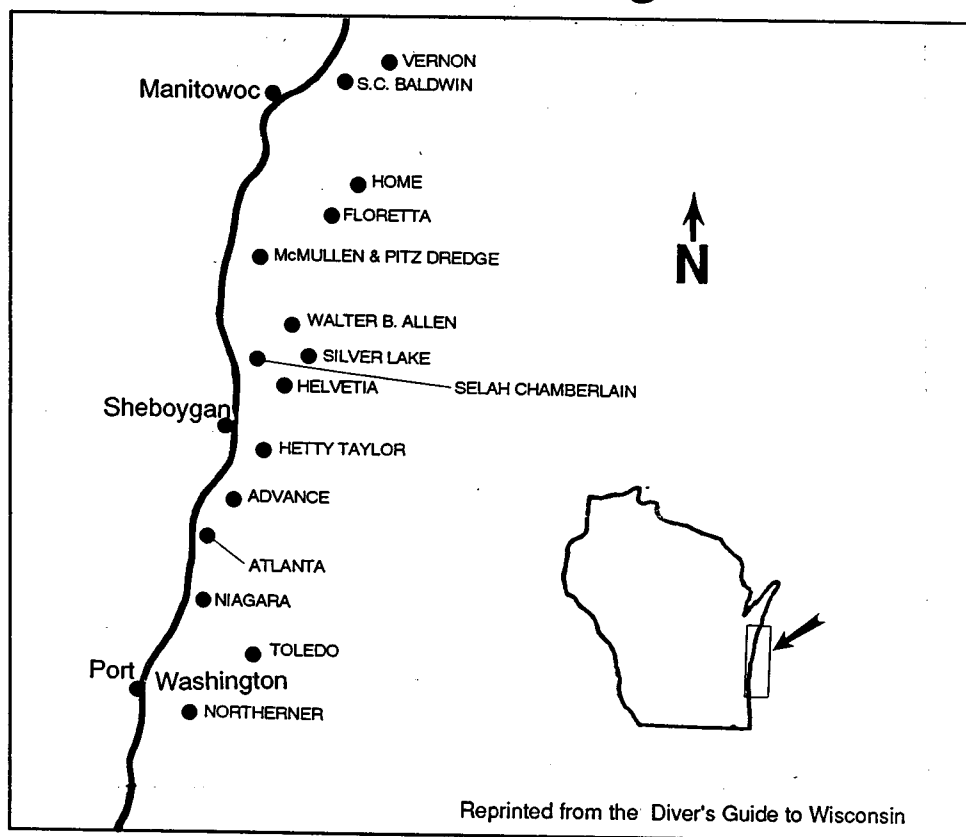
The State Historical Society's underwater archeology program will be conducting field investigations in the Port Washington area during Aug 5-26, and is looking for volunteers to assist in the project.

Activity will focus on a survey of the sidewheel steamer Niagara, which burned with terrible loss of life in 1856. The steamer was built in 1845 by the Buffalo, N.Y., firm of Bidwell and Banta, a yard whose roots date back to the earliest days of commercial shipbuilding on the Great Lakes.

Volunteers will be assigned a variety of tasks including taking offset and trilateration measurements, measured sketching, photography, video taping, and general support activities. Space is limited and priority will be given to volunteers with archeological experience preferably with the WUAA or State Historical Society.

However, individuals with strong diving skills and who are committed to shipwreck preservation are encouraged to apply. Those with specialized skills, in such areas as photography, drawing, mechanical-electrical experience, are also encouraged to apply.

Prospective volunteers should be aware that the Niagara site is exposed to Lake Michigan's weather. Travel to and from the



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site, and anchoring, can be in rough seas.

Volunteers will be responsible for supplying their own meals, dive gear, and possibly housing. A limited number of spaces may be available at the former Coast Guard station in Port Washington.

A final commitment on the use of the station's cottage, which was built in 1860, is pending. If available, however, accommodations will be limited to a spot on a dry floor for a sleeping bag, and limited cooking and bathroom facilities.

In addition, participating divers will be required to contribute to the costs of charting a dive boat, which should cost no more than \$60 per day. To participate in the project, prospective volunteers must submit an application questionnaire prior to July 27 (contact Bob O'Donnell at 1-800-236-5739 or 1-414-722-8465 for a copy).

Volunteers will also be expected to attend an orientation meeting on either Tuesday, July 27, at 7 p.m. at the State Historical Society in Madison, or in Port Washington on Saturday, Aug. 7.

At the time of its construction in 1845, the Niagara was considered one of the largest and finest steamers on the lakes. The ship's engine, which is still in place, was built by James Allaire, the successor to Robert Fulton, and one of the most important American steam engine manufacturers in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The data gathered from this summer's survey will be used in preparing the Niagara's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and in the development of future guides for sport divers. One or two other sites may also be examined as time and weather permits.

Fieldwork update

Eight divers from WUAA continued our association's work on the wrecks at the Leathem & Smith Quarry site near Sturgeon Bay on the weekend of June 12-13.

Divers worked on documenting the wreckage of the Joseph L. Hurd, a wooden steam barge built in 1861; and the Mueller, a wooden screw steamer that was built in 1887. Work on the site is a priority since state and county officials are going ahead with plans to build a new launching ramp at the quarry.

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Upcoming Projects and Conferences

- July 27 **Niagara Project Meeting**— 7 p.m. at the State Historical Society building in Madison (see page one for details).
- Aug 5-26 **Fieldwork Opportunity**— The State Historical Society is planning a survey of shipwrecks in the Port Washington area, including the steamer Niagara (see page one for details).
- Aug 7 **Niagara Project Meeting**— Port Washington with time and place to be announced (see page one for details).
- Aug 8 **WUAA Field Training Program in Sturgeon Bay**— A one-day, on-the-water program on underwater remote sensing techniques by Dick Boyd. To register or for more information, call Tom Villand at 608-221-1996 or Bob O'Donnell at 414-722-8465
- Sept. 16-18 **Association for Great Lakes Maritime History**— annual meeting at South Haven, Mich. We will be organizing a group from WUAA to attend the conference. More details in upcoming newsletters.
- Oct. 2 **WUAA Fall Conference** — 9 a.m. at Manitowoc Maritime Museum. We are still looking for more program ideas, and members who would like to talk about their summer diving/research work. Call Bob O'Donnell at 414-722-8465 for more information.

Wisconsin Underwater Archeological Association

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For those interested in studying and
preserving Wisconsin's underwater history