

Wisconsin's Underwater Heritage

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A publication of the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association

Spring 1996

Association News

WUAA SPRING MEETING

The 1996 Spring Meeting of the Association was held on April 13, 1996 at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc.

In addition to a presentation on wooden shipbuilding by Richard Young, Association members toured the Maritime Museum's archives with Joanie Kloster of the museum's staff. During the business portion of the meeting, it was noted that the Association has \$300 in checking and \$2,000 in savings.

A major portion of our financial resources are due to the generosity of Dave Cooper and Dick Boyd who have contributed their share of the proceeds from previous years' workshops at Our World Underwater and Pearl Lake to the Association.

In addition to discussing upcoming projects (see details later in this column), it was also noted that work continues on the Lakes of Madison book project. In other business, Betsy True explained that she has begun work on a traveling display for the Association to increase our visibility and membership. Those interested in using the display should contact Betsy at (608) 233-2066 (e-mail: btrue@facstaff. wisc.edu).

OUR WORLD UNDERWATER

In April, Association members assisted Dave Cooper of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and WUAA Member Dick Boyd in conducting an Underwater Archeology/Research Diver program at Our World Underwater in Chicago.

The classroom workshop provided participants with a basic understanding of the skills required for sport divers to assist underwater archeological survey teams. A follow-up course with in-water experience will be held at Pearl Lake Resort on Sept. 21, 1996 (see details later in this column).

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Barrels and the Edmund Fitzgerald continued to make news in 1995

By Dick Boyd

With the start of the summer diving season, it's an appropriate time to review some of the recent events in the exploration, study and archeology of notable shipwrecks in the Great Lakes.

LAKE SUPERIOR

On Lake Superior in the summer of 1995, the EPA continued an ongoing search off Minnesota's North Shore for metal drums which had been dumped in the lake during the early 1960s. Government records indicated that perhaps hundreds of these barrels contained a mysterious waste from classified government munitions projects.

Since the exact nature of this waste was uncertain, a significant program was launched to locate and recover some of these containers. For several summers, salvors have searched the floor of Lake Superior with sophisticated sensing equipment and retrieved some sample barrels.

Those barrels recovered to-date have not contained any noteworthy toxic or dangerous materials. An estimated 1,450 barrels remain on the lake bottom, but based on several years of sample work, the EPA seems satisfied that they pose no serious hazard.

During the sonar searches for the mysterious barrels, an intact shipwreck was found in 300 feet of water off the North Shore in 1994. This vessel has been identified as the wooden tug **E.T. Carrington**.

In 1907, this small steam craft was caught in a 40-knot blow that pounded her seams open, resulting in profuse leaking. As the 30-year-old tug settled, the crew was rescued by a passing freighter. It plunged to the bottom soon thereafter.

The **Carrington** was actually the second wreck found during the search for jettisoned drums. In the late spring of 1994, the search crew found the wreck of a gasoline yacht in 420 feet of water off Knife River.

This vessel was 120 feet long by 15 feet in beam, and has been identified as the **Fiorgyn**

which burned and sank in 1926. Historical records indicate it was undergoing a trial run after some rebuilding when a fire broke out. The crew abandoned ship and was rescued by a passing tug.

EDMUND FITZGERALD

The summers of 1995 and 1994 both saw significant activity on the famous wreck of the **Edmund Fitzgerald** in Lake Superior. In 1994, the three-person mini-sub **Clelia** descended to the wreck in a series of dives that gathered further evidence about the freighter's sinking.

Among the items discovered, the ship's telegraph was on ahead full-speed indicating the ship had not been significantly checked down because of the intensity of the storm or some operational problem. This suggests that the crew probably never suspected the vessel's impending demise.

Most evidence suggests that the vessel dove into a huge wave and could not recover. Instead she continued to the bottom at a 45 degree angle, striking so forcibly that the mid-section actually shattered.

The unsupported stern inverted and plunged to the lake bottom about 170 feet from the upright bow. The bow and the pilothouse settled relatively undamaged, although it was driven 10-20 feet into the muddy bottom. No evidence or explanation was postulated as to why the vessel did not or could not recover from its encounter with an extraordinarily large wave.

The **Clelia** dives were sponsored by the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute, the Canadian McInnis Foundation, NOAA, and the University of Connecticut. Cooperating in the effort were the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society, Michigan State University and Four Winns Corp.

During the summer of 1995, the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society and the McInnis Foundation were joined by the Canadian Navy in an effort to recover the ship's

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Wisconsin's

Underwater Heritage

is published by the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association, a non-profit association of individuals and organizations who are interested in studying and preserving the underwater cultural resources and historical sites of Wisconsin.

In addition to publishing this newsletter, the Association also holds two annual meetings and provides financial support to members' research and publication projects.

President:

Tom Villand, Madison
Telephone: 608-221-1996

Vice President:

Bob O'Donnell, Wausau
Telephone: 715-842-1762

Secretary:

Dave Neudek, Madison
Telephone: 608-246-0351

Treasurer:

Danny Aerts, Madison
Telephone: 608-233-2066

Directors:

Dick Boyd, Delafield
Telephone: 414-646-2092

Craig Fink, Neenah
Telephone: 414-722-0051

Bob Korth, Shawano
Telephone: 715-787-4444

Mike Tock, Sheboygan
Telephone: 414-452-5725



Association News

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LAC DU FLAMBEAU SURVEY

In May, several members of the Association assisted Dave Cooper of the State Historical Society in a continuing survey of waters on the Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservation. The survey is part of a larger study of cultural resources on the reservation by Cindy Stiles, regional state archeologist.

It is believed that the site of an early fur trading post lies beneath the waters of one of the lakes in the Flambeau chain. In addition to evidence of the site, the survey work also involved searching for 19th and early 20th century artifacts.

YAHARA RIVER FISH WEIR

Beginning last year, WUAA members have assisted in the documentation of an ancient fish weir on the Yahara River near Stoughton.

Dane County recently purchased a 126-acre tract that includes the fish weir site and land sites that contain archeological evidence of human habitation of the area during the Ice Age.

The county plans to preserve the site as an outdoor archeological laboratory, green space for county residents, wildlife habitat, and to provide recreational opportunities for fisherman and hikers. Additional work at the fish weir site is planned for this summer. For more info., contact Tom Villand at (608) 244-5681.

STURGEON BAY PROJECTS

In June, WUAA assisted the State Historical Society in a survey of the wreck of the *Adriatic*, a 200' schooner barge. This wreck lies adjacent to Bay Shipbuilding's Sturgeon Bay shipyard and required special permission from the company to dive on.

Also in June, the Association began another season of work on the shipwrecks at Bullhead Point near Sturgeon Bay. The site contains the wrecks of the former steamers *Oak Leaf*, *Ida Corning*, and *Empire State*. Work will continue during summer weekends. For more info., contact Danny Aerts at (608) 233-2066.

SHEBOYGAN AREA PROJECT

During Aug. 6-8, 1996, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin plans to survey the wreck of the *Chamberlain*, a bulk carrier lost on Lake Michigan in 1905.

The wreck is located near Sheboygan in 80 to 90 feet of water. The three-day project will require WUAA volunteers who are experienced in deep water diving and are will-

ing to share in the cost of a charter boat. The site was the subject of a reconnaissance project last summer which noted the ship's twin fire boxes and steeple compound engine are still on the site.

Space is limited on the project. For more info., contact Dave Cooper of the State Historical Society at (608) 264-6493 (e-mail: david.cooper@cmail.adp.wisc.edu).

RESEARCH DIVER WORKSHOP

Dave Cooper of the State Historical Society and WUAA Member Dick Boyd will again conduct an Archeological Research Diver Specialty Workshop at Pear Lake Resort on Sept. 21, 1996.

The one-day program is designed to provide recreational divers with a basic knowledge of the skills necessary to be an asset to underwater archeological survey projects.

WUAA members are needed to assist in the underwater portion of the workshop, and interested members should contact Dick Boyd at (414) 646-2092. For more information on the course, contact Greg Kent of Pearl Lake at (815) 389-1479. Pre-registration is required.

WUAA FALL MEETING

The 1996 Fall Meeting of the Association will be held at the West Point Dive Park on Saturday, Oct. 5, 1996. The meeting will be a combination business meeting and training workshop on a mock-up of a portion of the lower hull of a 19th century Great Lakes schooner.

West Point is located near Redgranite, Wis. and is operated by WUAA Member Craig Fink of Inland Seas Diving in Neenah. The dive park has a picnic area with facilities, a level sand beach, and dock. Its quarry has a maximum depth of 45 feet.

Admission to West Point is \$5 per day for divers and \$4 for non-diver. Overnight lodging is available nearby in Wautoma. For more a brochure or to volunteer to help build the lower hull mock-up, contact Inland Seas Diving at (414) 722-0051.

SHIPWRECKS CONFERENCE

Danny Aerts and Tom Villand will make a presentation on the WUAA's work on the wrecks in the Leathem & Smith Quarry site at the Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes Conference in Duluth, Minn. on Oct. 10-12, 1996.

The conference will be held at the Radisson Hotel and is being organized by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office in cooperation with the Gales of November Conference committee.

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Shipwrecks

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bell from the **Fitzgerald**. Operating from the **HMCS Comorant**, a diver using one-atmosphere Newtsuit recovered the bell from the ship's pilothouse.

The Newtsuit is a modern, high-tech version of the "diving armor" used many decades ago, but is highly maneuverable with thrusters and articulated arms and legs. The unit has a depth rating of over 1,000 feet.

The **Fitzgerald's** bell has now become the centerpiece of a memorial at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society's shipwreck museum at Whitefish Point, Mich. It was replaced by a replica inscribed with the names of those lost with the vessel.

Many of the relatives of the crew members sanctioned the project. However, many also proposed that the Canadian government declare the vessel a grave site and off-limits to future diving.

These proposed restrictions and the 1995 expedition were challenged by Fred Shannon. The Mt. Morris, Mich. businessman had also lead an expedition to the wreck of the **Fitzgerald** during the summer of 1994.

Shannon chartered the 16-foot mini-sub **Delta** from a California firm. Supported by the Purvis tug **Anglican Lady**, the sub made

a number of dives to the wreck where a body was reportedly found near the bow.

In other dives, Shannon's group sighted personal affects such as shoes, sandals and a belt. The group also claimed to have found evidence providing some new insight into the sinking.

During the winter of 1994-95, Shannon went on the road with video tape of the wreck and promises of significant, new information. However, during the video's presentation at Manitowoc, no such data was given and the presentation was generally far more commercial than scientific.

In an attempt to prevent recovery of the **Fitzgerald's** bell and promote his own efforts to return to the wreck in 1995, Shannon filed a lawsuit in a Michigan state court.

The suit alleged the wreck was in Michigan not Canadian waters, and the recovery effort was an illegal publicity stunt. The lawsuit was eventually dismissed by a district court in Lansing which ruled Shannon's claims were unsupported.

CARL D. BRADLEY

With his efforts to dive **Fitzgerald** thwarted, Shannon re-routed his dives during the summer of 1995 to the wreck of the **Carl D. Bradley** which was lost off Beaver Island in Lake Michigan in 1958.

A certain degree of mystery still surround the sinking of the **Bradley**. The two sole survivors of the tragedy reported that the ship broke in two on the surface. U.S. Steel Corp., the ship's owner, claimed otherwise.

Controversy erupted when an \$8 million lawsuit was filed against the company citing owner negligence and unsafe vessel conditions as the cause of the wreck. Underwater inspection of the vessel was recommended.

A 10-day investigation was conducted in 1959 by the drill ship **Submarex** using an underwater television system. Based on the survey, it was reported that the ship's deck was cracked but the hull was intact.

Unfortunately, the survey was conducted by U.S. Steel and no impartial observer was present. In fact, the Marine Investigation Board did not hear about these dives until they were already over! Because of these circumstances, many individuals doubt the report to this day.

Thus the Shannon dives could shed some light on the situation. However, the actual results were largely uninformative. The underwater visibility near the **Bradley** was so bad that three dives had to be cancelled for safety's sake. Very little new information was gleaned from the two successful dives which yielded only 50 minutes of video tape.

— *To be Continued.*

WUAA Membership Application



As a private, non-profit organization, the Wisconsin Underwater Archeological Association presents an opportunity for both individuals and organizations to participate in and contribute to state efforts in underwater archeological research and preservation. Dues are \$15 per year.

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Telephone: Day _____ Evenings _____

I would like to be involved in the following activities:

Fieldwork & Research:

____ Archival research ____ Training in archeological methods
 ____ On-site work - shoreside ____ On-site work - underwater
 ____ Other: _____

Association Committees:

____ Newsletter ____ Projects
 ____ Training ____ Membership

Make \$15 check payable to "WUAA" and mail with this form to: Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association - P.O. Box 6081 - Madison, WI 53716

Duluth conference

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On Thursday, October 10, there will be presentations on the archeology and history of Great Lakes shipping, the archeology and history of inland waterways, the archeology and history of harbors and ports, and the management of underwater cultural resources in the Great Lakes region.

A Friday night banquet will feature a presentation on a major underwater archeological project. On Saturday, there will be a general session which will include a discussion of Minnesota's plan for underwater cultural resource management.

A tour of the Duluth-Superior harbor will follow in the late afternoon. For registration info., contact Michele Decker of the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office at (612) 296-5434.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Radisson Hotel for the conference at a rate of \$73 per night for single or double. Contact the hotel directly for reservations at (800) 333-3333 or (218) 727-8981.

Upcoming Maritime Events

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|------------|---|
| June 29 | Door County Maritime Museum Annual Meeting. Site: Palmer-Johnson Shipyard in Sturgeon Bay, Wis. For more info., contact DCMM, P.O. Box 246, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235; (414) 743-5958. |
| July 18-20 | Cobia Days sponsored by the Wisconsin Maritime Museum and featuring live entertainment and fish boil. For more info., contact WMC, 75 Maritime Dr., Manitowoc, WI 54220; (414) 684-0218. |
| Aug 3-4 | Sixth Annual Door County Maritime Museum Classic Wooden Boat Show featuring over 50 examples of classic boats, live entertainment and the SikaFlex "Quick & Dirty" boatbuilding contest. For more info., contact DCMM, P.O. Box 246, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235; (414) 743-5958. |
| Aug 6-8 | Survey of the Chamberlain Wreck in Lake Michigan. For more info., contact Dave Cooper of the State Historical Society at (608) 264-6493 (e-mail: david.cooper@ccmail.adp.wisc.edu). |
| Oct 5 | Fall Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association. Site: West Point Dive Park near Wautoma For more info., contact Craig Fink of Inland Seas Diving at (414) 722-0051 |
| Oct 10-12 | Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes, a conference sponsored by the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office in cooperation with the Gales of November Committee. Site: Radisson Hotel in Duluth, Minn. For more info., contact Michele Decker at (612) 296-5434. |

Wisconsin Underwater Archeological Association

Newsletter Office:
1406 Prospect Avenue
Wausau, WI 54403
715/842-1762

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For those interested in the study and preservation of Wisconsin's underwater history and cultural resources