

# Wisconsin's UNDERWATER HERITAGE

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December 2003

## Schooner *Emeline*

by Hank Whipple

Myron Williams, a master ship builder, of the Town of Maysville, St. Clair County, Michigan was the builder-owner of the two-masted schooner *Emeline* which was constructed at Vicksburg, Michigan and enrolled as number 7492 at the United States Customs House in Detroit on October 6, 1862. She measured 83 feet long, had a beam of 22 feet, a depth of seven feet six inches and displaced 121.12 tons. She had no figurehead but her stern was round. G.M. Ganny was her first master.

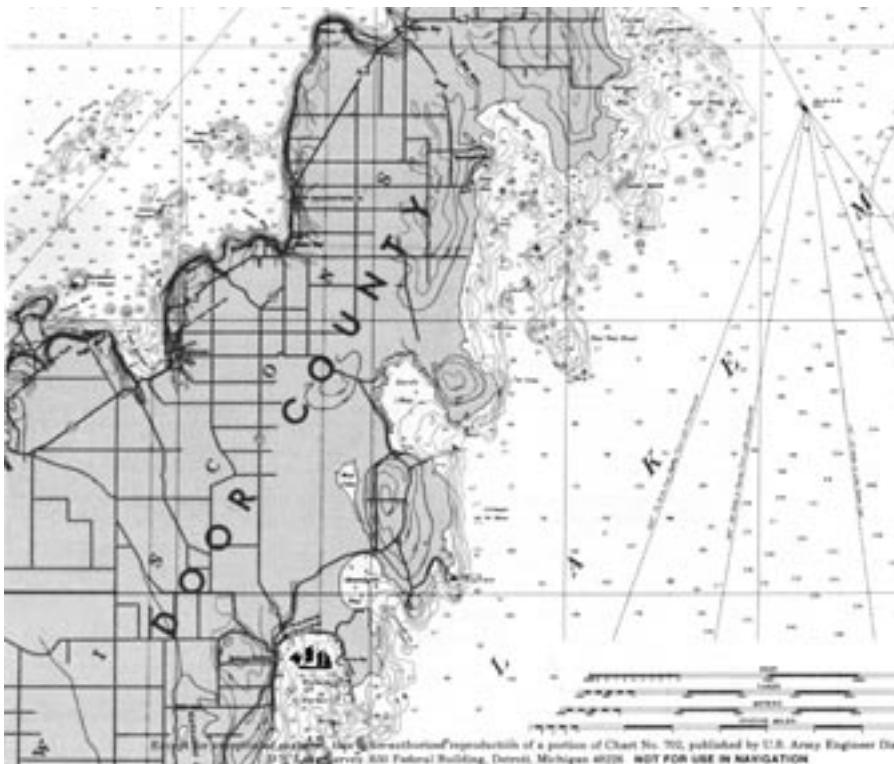
*The schooner Emeline sank in Bailey's Harbor, Door County, WI*

On April 16, 1863 she was sold to Edward Kanter. Her second master was N.W. Kirkland. A year later Kanter had her rebuilt into a three-master schooner, lengthened by 32 feet to 115 feet and increasing her tonnage to 169.76.

After a series of seven other owners, owner groups and owner-captain groups, Adam E. Abrahamson of Chicago became her final owner-captain. Abrahamson was a Scandinavian immigrant, had worked the lakes for years both

before the mast as a common sailor and in command positions, was considered a good captain and put his life savings of \$1,500 into the *Emeline* when he purchased her on March 13, 1896.

The *Emeline*'s fateful final voyage originated at Charlevoix, Michigan with a cargo of tan bark [tamarack bark] destined for the leather tanneries at Kenosha, Wisconsin. At 10 a.m. on August 8, 1896 she was twenty to twenty-five miles southeast of Bailey's Harbor, Wisconsin when her crew observed an approaching squall. The *Emeline* was lying-to under a storm topsail and a peak of the foresail. The sudden gale came from the northwest and its force was so great that it knocked the *Emeline* onto her beam end on the starboard side until her masts were nearly touching the water. The deck cargo all went by the boards and the vessel started to take on a great deal of water. As she started to right herself the momentum of the shifting water within her hull put her into a "death roll" which carried her one hundred and eighty degrees to her beam ends on her port side — a posture from which she never recovered as she completely filled with water. One sailor who was below in the forecastle, was thrown from his bunk and crawled on his



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## Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association News

### WUAA Fall Meeting

The Fall Meeting of the Association was held on September 27, 2003 on board the whaleback ship *Meteor*, in Superior.

The business meeting was brought to order by secretary Russel Leitz in the engine room of the *Meteor* while members were applying a final coat of paint to the walls. A brief secretary report was given and treasurer Tom Villand reported a balance of \$3,363.

Russel Leitz reported that he will be meeting with Dorothy Nimmer, chairperson of the committee working on preparing an old original steamboat cabin for display at Winneconne, Wisconsin. It is two stories high and measures 17' by 44' - 54'. He will be finding out if and how WUAA may be of assistance.

Tom Villand reported that more on site work could be done on the Yahara River project.

Danny Aerts will be meeting this afternoon with the owner of the barge *Gaillard* dealing with steam engines that will be removed from the barge.

Members voted to accept the slate of officers recommended by the executive committee consisting of Russel Leitz president, Hank Whipple vice president and Paul (P. J.) Creviere secretary/treasurer. Congratulations to our new officers.

Russel Leitz asked for input on the direction the WUAA wishes to take with documentation of shipwrecks. Danny Aerts, Bob Korth and Russel Leitz volunteered to be members of a committee headed by Danny Aerts. Areas to be covered include:

1. Defining goals of projects.
2. Deciding who is the expected audience for the reports.
3. Format of reports.
4. In what form are we going to disperse reports?

In the evening Al Miller, author of *Tin Stackers: The History of the Pittsburgh Steamship Company*, gave a talk on Alexander McDougall, designer and builder of whalebacks including the *Christopher Columbus*.

### Thank You To Our Out-Going Officers

A big thank you goes to Russ Green for serving as president the past two years and Cathy Klecker as activities coordinator for the past four years. A special thanks to Tom Villand who served as president for six years, secretary for three years and treasurer for the last four years.

**Wisconsin's Underwater Heritage** is published quarterly by the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association, a nonprofit association of individuals and organizations interested in studying and preserving the underwater cultural resources and historical sites of Wisconsin.

In addition to publishing this newsletter, the Association also holds semiannual meetings

and provides support to members' research and publication projects. Annual membership dues are \$15. For membership information write to the postal or email address below.

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## Meteor Weekend

On the weekend of September 27 and 28, 2003 a team of WUAA-led volunteers worked on scraping and painting the *Meteor* museum ship in Superior. There were nine individuals present on Saturday and five on Sunday. On Saturday WUAA members Janet Defnet, Nancy Korth, Bob Korth, Danny Aerts, Tom Villand, Russel Leitz and GLSPS members Phil Kerber, Ken Merryman and Harold Rochat painted the final coat in the engine room and scraped and primed the galley. On Sunday the volunteers painted the final coat in the galley.

## WUAA Spring Meeting

The Spring Meeting of the Association will be held on April 17, 2004 at the library in LaCrosse. The business meeting will be followed by a talk by Hank Whipple on the history of water transportation in Wisconsin and the timber industry. Keep the date open. Details will be in the March newsletter.



Museum ship Meteor. photograph by Tom Villand.

Cleanup crew on the Meteor. photograph by Tom Villand.



## Schooner *Emeline*

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hands and knees out the companionway onto the deck just before the forecastle flooded. Captain Abrahamson and the three crew members quickly launched their yawl boat taking with them only the clothes they were wearing. When it became clear that she was not going to right herself, they pulled for Bailey's Harbor at 11 a.m. and gaining the safety of Bailey's Harbor in the late afternoon. The keeper of the Bailey's Harbor Life Saving Station observed the yawl boat as it was about to land. He took the four wet and hungry men into the station giving them food and dry clothing.

The *Detroit Free Press* of August 9 reported carried the following headline in its Marine section: THINKS THEY ARE ALL LOST. The Entire Crew of the Schooner *Emeline*. What had happened is that after the yawl boat had departed for Bailey's Harbor the schooner *Charles Foster* under the command of Captain Dicke had come across the abandoned *Emeline*. Dicke ran his vessel along the ship's side and observed no sign of life on board. When he reached Manitowoc, Wisconsin that evening, Dicke reported to the shipping authorities and the press his opinion that all of her crew had been lost.

Upon his arrival at Bailey's Harbor and being unaware of his premature obituary, Abrahamson had the Life Saving Station keeper make arrangements for the tug *Sydney Smith* from Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin to attempt to salvage the *Emeline*. The tug docked at Bailey's Harbor that evening and departed in search of the derelict early the morning of August 9. On board the tug were Abrahamson and the *Emeline's* crew and members of the United States Life Saving Service's crew

from the Bailey's Harbor station. The station's surfboat was in tow. After six hours of searching, they located the wreck drifting and awash on her port side on her beam ends. The Life Savers made fast the booms and sails and put a towline from the tug which towed her into Bailey's Harbor and left her for the night. The next day, August 10, while off Anclam's Pier and when trying to lift her by her main mast in an attempt to get her upright, the tug broke off the mast which subsequently washed into shore. The schooner *Nancy Dell* also tried to right her but without success. The surfmen spent August 10, 11, 12, and 22 assisting in the salvaging of gear and trying to right her. The night of August 22 *Emeline* sank off the Anclam Pier in 21 feet of water, coming to rest on the sandy bottom in an upright position with her gunwales and two remaining masts protruding above the surface.

The *Emeline* was valued at \$1,200 and her cargo at \$800. But because of the underwriters of Lloyds Inland had given her as unsafe rating of Bl- she was uninsured and a total loss. The Brann brothers of Bailey's Harbor gave Abrahamson \$15 for the hulk which was enough for him to book train passage back to Chicago. The crew were less fortunate and had to totally fend for themselves. The Enrollment was surrendered by Abrahamson at the Chicago Customs House on August 18, 1896 listing the *Emeline* as "vessel lost". While back in Chicago, the now penniless Abrahamson related the tale of his ill-luck and misfortune to his friends. River men were sympathetic to his story and tried to get him a position as master of one of the schooners sailing from Chicago.

By January of 1897 because of the seas having severely worked the masts, the *Emeline* broke in two

but the heavy ice keep the sections together temporarily. Prior to her breaking up she was considered to be in fairly good condition with the Branns trying to decide if she was worth the cost of attempting to refloat her. Eventually the forward section remained off the Anclam Pier while the aft section worked its way about 600 feet northward coming to rest in 19 feet of water and "400 feet west of the Range" (the seaward line created by the Bailey's Harbor Range Lights). This location is N 45° 3.554" / W 87° 6.974". Her anchors were recovered on September 3, 1903 by Captain Thomas Isabell.

J.A.B. Thompkins of the United States Corps of Engineers visited the wreck site at the end of October of 1896. He opined that as long as her top hamper was above the water she should give adequate notice of her presence to passing ships. But once her masts were gone and she was no longer obviously visible, the United States Lighthouse Service began to consider the *Emeline* to be a hazard to navigation. She was then dynamited to create greater clearance for shipping.

Captain Abrahamson continued his sailing on the Great Lakes as was noted in the July 2, 1898 issue of the *Door County Advocate*: "The *Magdalena* is in charge of Captain Abrahamson who owned and lost the schooner *Emeline* (sic.) now sunk in Bailey's Harbor". □

### Bibliography

- Detroit Free Press*  
August 10, 1896
- Door County Advocate*  
May 15, 1873  
September 21, 1889  
August 15, 1896  
August 22, 1896  
September 5, 1896  
October 19, 1896  
October 31, 1896  
January 2, 1897  
January 9, 1897

## Stories From The Archives

*The following article was uncovered by Russel Leitz during his archival research.*

### Wooden vs Steel Ships

*Sturgeon Bay Advocate, August 9, 1917.*

Joseph R. Oldham, a veteran steam-boat man of Cleveland, in giving his opinion regarding the relative advantage of steel and wooden vessel construction for the new merchant marine, expressed himself as follows:

"At this particular time, however, it is not a question of preference, but an absolute matter of urgency. There should be no conflict regarding the peculiar merits of steel and wood construction. The latter can never again become the rival of metal vessels, as wooden fabrication is ill-adapted to modern proportions. The *Adriatic* of the old Collins line, it is true, was 340 feet in length, and she among her unfortunate sisters did fairly well. That length, however, is too great for a wooden freighter of today.

"We shall never again build, and so finish, such splendid ships, the pride of the seas, as we did in the 50's and 60's. We can, however, still build excellent pine vessels of moderate dimensions. These we have no option but to build, if our allies and the smaller nations of Europe are to be rescued from starvation next year, for we know not what delays may develop, through demands of our iron workers and marine-engine constructors.

"Besides, steel was never so largely in demand, for hundreds of commodities, as well as for ships, as it is today. We must get ships of any and all kinds, provided they are sea-worthy and fairly efficient

carriers. But of course it will be understood that no flimsy construction or equipment can endure a winter trade across the North Atlantic.

"But to leave a free course or open field for steel and wood, suppose it were arranged and agreed upon that all ships above 300 feet in length should be of steel and all below 300 feet should be of wood; would not that settle the physical or mechanical element of the controversy?

"A good wooden ship, however, is not without her own peculiar merits. She can resist the impact of collision or of torpedoes or mines, and resist the strains set up by vibration, better than steel construction. She can be built away from steel works, if forests are adjacent. She is the better grain or tea carrier, because of absence of sweat. For medium and small dimensions the pine ship is cheaper than steel. Moreover, wood-

en construction tends to facilitate repairs of hull and outfit at small seaports where steel fabrication does not exist.

"The wooden steamers, however, merit more favorable register tonnage and measurement, as they seldom carry double their numerical net register in deadweight tons, while steel vessels carry a deadweight of three and one-half times their numerical net register tons — sometimes more."

*Janet Defnet working in the engine room of the Meteor. photograph by Tom Villand.*



## Ghost Ships Festival

Ghost Ships 2004 will be held on: Friday evening, March 5 and Saturday March 6, 2004 at: Four Points by Sheraton - Milwaukee Airport in Milwaukee

Many different presenters will be scheduled for a variety of films, seminars, classes and talks, in addition to forty exhibitors and huge raffle drawings. Please check their web site for complete details, including the latest schedule of presentations: [www.ghost-ships.org](http://www.ghost-ships.org)

Rooms are available at the Four Points by Sheraton — Milwaukee Airport in Milwaukee. All Festival room reservations must be in by February 15, 2004 to be guaranteed.

Be sure to mention that you are with the Ghost Ships Festival to receive the Festival Discount. Do not use the Sheraton online reservation system or the Sheraton national 1-800 number to make reservations, or you will not be able to get the Festival Discount. For reservations contact:

Four Points by Sheraton — Milwaukee Airport  
4747 South Howell Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
phone: 414-481-8000  
Fax: 414-481-8065

The Four Points by Sheraton - Milwaukee Airport is located on the West side of South Howell Avenue just north of Mitchell Field and is easily accessed from I-94. Parking is available in the hotel lot at no cost.

Tickets for the 2004 Ghost Ships Festival may be ordered using the form on their website. Please fill in all necessary fields. You may choose to pay by check or by PayPal. When your payment is received, you will receive a confirmation email. Tickets

ordered online can be picked up the day of the Festival at the Will-Call desk. The following prices apply to tickets ordered before the festival:

- 1 - 5 tickets: \$20/ea.
- 6 - 10 tickets: \$18/ea.
- 11 - 20: \$15/ea.

Tickets will be \$25 at the door.

## Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival

The Ford Seahorses Scuba Diving Club Invites You to join them for the 26th Annual Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival on: Saturday, February 21, 2004 at:

Oakland Community College  
Orchard Ridge Campus  
27055 Orchard Lake Rd.  
Bldg J Tirrell Hall  
Farmington Hills, Michigan.

This year's festival has a new format, new pricing and a new location. There will be multiple repeating presentations on dive topics

from recreational through technical and many exhibits. One ticket price will admit you to all shows. \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door.

Whether your interest lies in shipwrecks, diving or history, or you just have a fascination with the underwater world, this year's festival promises to fulfill your interests.

Visit their web page for more information:  
[www.shipwreckfestival.org](http://www.shipwreckfestival.org)



*Bob Korth at work in the engine room of the Meteor. photograph by Tom Villand.*

## Scholarship Opportunity

A \$1000 scholarship is available for a female diver, enrolled in a graduate or undergraduate program in underwater archeology. This scholarship, the Cecelia Connelly Memorial Scholarship, is being offered through the Women Divers Hall of Fame, Inc., which provides educational and financial support for individuals of all ages who wish to pursue higher education & training, further their career goals and seek out opportunities in the marine and diving-related industries.

This scholarship was named after Cecelia Connelly, who after raising 10 children decided she would finally like to take up scuba diving. She became an exceptional instructor and was inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame in 2001, in company with noted scientists such as Eugenie Clark and Sylvia Earle. Underwater archeology was a passion for her and her family and her friends decided this would be a fitting way to remember her.

The application deadline for all scholarships is November 15, 2003. For information, applications and eligibility requirements visit [www.wdhof.org](http://www.wdhof.org) or go directly to: <http://www.wdhof.org/scholarship.html>.

In addition to the Cecelia Connelly scholarship, the WDHOF is currently offering five additional scholarships ranging in value from \$250 to \$2500. They are the Hillary Viders Scholarship, Hugh Fletcher Memorial Scholarship, ISAM Scholarship, Lifeguard Systems Scholarship and the Women Divers Hall of Fame Scholarship. Information on all of them may also be accessed at <http://www.wdhof.org/scholarship.html>.

## New Books

Great Lakes Shipwrecks Research Foundation, Inc. announces the release of a new book: *Haunted Lake Superior Ghostly Tales and Legends from the Mystical Inland Sea* by Hugh E. Bishop.

A third great book in the Haunted Lakes series. This book delves into the legends and spooky tales that churn from the depths of Lake Superior. Lighthouses, ships, haunted houses and the original legends that have fascinated storytellers for years. Many new sightings and tellings are included in this latest volume from the author of *The Night the Fitz Went Down*.

Hugh Bishop has interviewed scores of folks who swear they've encountered spirits of the lake region. This is another "true history" of the other influences of the Great Lake.

204 pages, illustrated, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2," softcover. Price is \$14.95 plus \$2.00 shipping.

Great Lakes Shipwrecks Research Foundation, Inc. also announces an out of print has been republished: *Wreck Ashore United States Life-Saving Service on the Great Lakes* by Frederick Stonehouse.

Stormy shipwrecks and catastrophic gales, and the heroes who gave so much to save the mariners. This highly acclaimed book is the only complete record of the Great Lakes lifesavers. The lifesavers were always there, rescue on their minds. An important addition to the Great Lakes record.

224 pages, illustrated with historic black-and-white pictures, 8 1/2" x 11", softcover. Price is \$19.95 plus \$2.00 shipping.

Mail orders to:  
Great Lakes Shipwreck Research Foundation, Inc.  
7844 St. Anne Ct.  
Wauwatosa, WI 53213

Send credit card orders to Kimm A. Stabelfeldt at 262-317-2360.

Visit their web site see their complete collection of books:  
<http://www.ghost-ships.org/store.asp>

## Production of The Christmas Schooner

The Skylight Opera Theatre will present the Milwaukee premiere of The Christmas Schooner from Nov. 28 to Dec. 21, 2003.

Based on the book by John Reeger. Music and lyrics are by Julie Shannon.

Performances are at the Cabot Theatre, Broadway Theatre Center, 158 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Box Office (414) 291-7800, [www.skylightopera.com](http://www.skylightopera.com)

A critically acclaimed holiday musical based on turn-of-the-century shipping captains who braved the deadly winter weather of Lake Michigan to deliver Christmas trees to homesick German-American families. See the WUAA website for more details:

[www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org)

## Coming Events

February 21, 2004

**Great Lakes Shipwreck Festival.** Farmington Hills, MI. Sponsored by the Ford Seahorses Dive Club. For information check their website, [www.ghost-ships.org](http://www.ghost-ships.org).

March 5-6, 2004

**Ghost Ships Festival.** Milwaukee, WI. Sponsored by the Great Lakes Shipwreck Research For information check their website, [www.ghost-ships.org](http://www.ghost-ships.org).

April 17, 2004

**Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Spring Meeting.** LaCrosse, WI. For information contact Russ Leitz at 715-258-2935 or [rleitz@vbe.com](mailto:rleitz@vbe.com).

April 23-25, 2004

**Our World Underwater.** Donald Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, IL. For information check their web site at [www.ourworldunderwater.com](http://www.ourworldunderwater.com) or send email to [info@ourworldunderwater.com](mailto:info@ourworldunderwater.com)

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