

Wisconsin's UNDERWATER HERITAGE

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As has been our ongoing custom, we once again review current events which took place over the past 1-2 years within the disciplines of shipwreck discovery, exploration, and archeology. This issue covers occurrences within the Great Lakes region. The next issue will cover noteworthy incidents involving subaquatic archeology, geology or history throughout the world.

During the summer of 2002, the State of Michigan offered the diving community a "no questions asked" grace period for the return of artifacts illegally removed from shipwrecks. Officials from the Save Our Sunken Ships Program granted an amnesty window from June 1 to July 31 for the return of previously removed materials. The program was reasonably successful and a number of artifacts were repatriated. Like Wisconsin, Michigan has an antitheft law which protects shipwrecks in state waters from pilfering and provides stiff penalties for such activity.

For much of last year, the Michigan Historical Museum at Lansing featured a display on the famous Naubinway schooner, a Great Lakes trading vessel which

Shipwrecks in Review

by Dr. Richard Boyd

was found some years ago buried in a sand bank in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. This mysterious craft apparently beached in the 1840's in the mouth of a wilderness river where it was abandoned and eventually engulfed by a lake shore sand dune. The site was excavated in the 1990's by underwater archeologists from East Carolina University with the help of Pat Labadie from the Lake Superior Canal Museum. The ship's identity and the fate of the crew still remains unknown, but the vessel itself and much of its cargo survived to date in good shape. This included barrels of fish, salt, Chinese tea, tobacco and various ceramics.

On Lake Michigan itself, the most talked about event of the past two years surrounded the search for, and possible finding of, the lost steamer *Chicora*. One of the last true "ghost ships" yet to be discovered, the 209-foot steamer left Milwaukee on January 21, 1895 just as a savage snowstorm descended upon lower Lake Michigan. Most captains in the Milwaukee harbor had received advanced notice of this impending gale, but the *Chicora* had sailed just before the warning arrived, right into the "teeth of the storm". The vessel, with its 29-member crew plus a single passenger, was scheduled to arrive at St. Joseph at 12:30 pm, but did not show, and was never heard from again. No confirmed bodies or wreckage from it were ever found.

As reported in earlier reviews, members of the Southwest Michigan

Underwater Preserve hired noted wreck hunter Dave Trotter (Michigan Shipwreck Research Associates) to locate this vessel, which hopefully would be found within the boundaries of the Preserve. Several extensive searches were conducted, but the *Chicora* remained elusive and unfound. Undaunted, the group continued its research and enlisted help from several scientists within NOAA and the Coast Guard who developed advanced computer programs for search and recovery activities. These programs can predict "most likely" search areas based on whatever physical and environmental factors existed on the lake at the time of a vessel's disappearance. After considerable historical research into old weather records, the team was able to reconstruct the likely conditions existing on the lake on that fateful day in 1895. Using this data, they determined new boundaries for their search area.

Once again the group engaged Trotter to sonar these new regions, and shortly a deep water target was located. This shipwreck, located about 15 miles off Saugatuck, MI and almost 275-feet down, was examined with a drop camera and her features seemed consistent with those of the *Chicora*. In June of 2002, a team of TEK divers descended to the wreck in an attempt to confirm its identity. As is common with deep wrecks, much of the superstructure was



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Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association News

Spring Meeting

The Spring meeting of the Association was held on Saturday, April 12 at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc. The meeting was brought to order by president Russ Green. There were 16 members and 18 guests present.

Russel Leitz, secretary, read the minutes of the last meeting.

Tom Villand, treasurer, reported a balance of \$3354. \$100 was donated toward the posters for Historic Preservation Week. \$159 was spent on the *Meteor* cleanup trip. Newsletter expenses were \$616. There was an income of \$176 on T-shirts and \$110 on the Four Lakes book. There are 57 T-shirts and 261 books left.

A suggestion was made to send the newsletter to members by email.

Russel Leitz discussed the Baileys Harbor project for June 7-15. As many divers will stay at Hank Whipple's cabin as space allows.

Russ Green reported that brochures have been printed explaining the Maritime Trails. Coastal grant money is available to do surveys on the *Appomattox*, *Lumberman* and *Kate Kelley*.

Continued work on the *Meteor* was planned for our next meeting on September 27.

P.J. Creviere is about one-third of the way through getting the Pilot Island lighthouse log on computer.

Danny Aerts reported that there are steam engines of various sizes on the dredge barge *Gaillard*, located at Superior near the *Meteor*. Some of the steam engines may be available for restoration and display. The new owner is waiting for a permit from the Corps of Engineers to move it.

Dick Boyd is attempting to get a group together to do documentation on deep wrecks that individuals find but have no means of studying. Dick also reported that he has presented the Rock Lake slide show twice.

Cathy Green explained the developments taking place to create a shipwreck park at Bullhead Point in Sturgeon Bay.

In the morning, John Karl gave a very interesting presentation on celestial navigation. Karl discussed the history of navigation including the Portuguese use of latitude to navigate around Africa and the later development of the ability to measure longitude by the British. Karl also demonstrated how a sextant is used, along with a nautical almanac, clock and calculator, to determine a ship's position from the height of the sun and stars.

Following the business meeting we were also able to attend a presentation on Great Lakes fishing.

We would like to thank museum director and association member Bob O'Donnell for leading a behind the scenes tour of the expanded museum in the afternoon.

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, contact the secretary or write to the address below.

Send correspondence to:
WUAA
PO Box 6081
Madison, WI 53716

email: wuaa@mailbag.com
website: www.wuaa.org

President
Russ Green
Madison, 608-221-5909

Vice-President
Hank Whipple
Madison, 608-245-1222

Secretary
Russel Leitz
Waupaca, 715-258-2935

Treasurer
Tom Villand
Madison, 608-221-1996

Newsletter Editor
Danny Aerts
Middleton, 608-821-0048

Activities Coordinator
Cathy Klecker
Marshall, 608-655-3769

Website Manager
Colin Zylka
Waukesha, 262-524-0145

Directors
Richard Boyd
Delafield, 262-646-2092

Robert Korth
Gresham, 715-787-4444

Janet Defnet
Mukwonago, 262-363-9874

Help Wanted: Officers

Motivated people needed to fill several key leadership positions for a Wisconsin-based association. We are seeking organized, energetic people who have an interest in preservation of our State's submerged cultural resources by promoting the goals of this organization, which are as follows:

To promote research and education in underwater archeology in the Wisconsin area.

To provide training and information to perform underwater site surveys.

To publish results of sponsored projects to members and the general public.

To work in cooperation with organizations interested in underwater archeological resources.

To provide access to statewide information pertaining to underwater archeology.

To promote the conservation and in situ preservation of underwater archeological resources.

The positions are as follows:

President: The president shall preside over all membership meetings and Board meetings. The president shall be the chief executive officer of the Association, respon-

sible for day-to-day administration of the affairs of the Association and supervision of any employees or contractors. The president shall appoint all committee members who shall serve until the end of that president's term. The president is an ex-officio member of all committees.

The current President says that his duties have included the following: schedule and organize bi-monthly officer meetings; assist other officers in scheduling and organizing spring and fall association meetings; assist with finding speakers for events; write articles for the association newsletter.

Vice President: The vice president shall assume the duties of the president should that office become vacant and shall preside at meetings when the president is unable to attend. The vice president shall also chair the membership committee. The vice president shall maintain a current record of the names and addresses of members entitled to vote and shall send out notices of membership meetings.

Secretary/Treasurer: The secretary-treasurer shall maintain the official records of the Association as well as any archives. The secretary-treasurer shall record and

distribute the minutes of member meetings and Board meetings. The secretary-treasurer shall also maintain the financial statement for the semiannual meetings and shall be responsible for presentation of the budget to the semiannual meetings. The secretary-treasurer shall serve on the finance committee.

This position is currently held by two people, one serving as Secretary and one as Treasurer.

Term of Office: Two Years

Reward: The satisfaction of knowing that you are part of a group dedicated to preserving Wisconsin's past for our future generations.

Dear WUAA Members:

Can you picture yourself in one of the above positions? Our next officer elections will be held at the fall membership meeting. If you have an interest in any of the above offices, feel free to call any of our current officers for more information on what is involved. To be placed on the ballot, please submit your name to our President, Russ Green, no later than September 1, 2003. We need YOU!

Janet E. Defnet

WUAA Board of Directors

The Straits of Mackinac just before sinking, April 10, 2003. Photograph courtesy of Watermark Pictures.



Shipwrecks in Review

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missing, but the rest of the ship was in remarkable shape. Unfortunately, divers could not ascertain the identity of the vessel and there seemed some doubt that it was the *Chicora*. Further dives, additional research and ROV investigations now strongly indicate that the wreck is the 240-foot steamer *H.C. Ackeley* which foundered in November 1883, with the loss of six lives. The *Ackeley* was bound for Buffalo with a load of corn. Thus the ever-evasive *Chicora* remains undiscovered.

Michigan is planning to add a tenth underwater preserve to their already impressive group of protected areas. This unit would be in the northeast portion of Lake Huron north of Saginaw Bay off Iosco and Alcona counties, including famous Tawas Point. The *Goshawk*, a schooner-barge sunk in 50 feet of water near the point, is one of the region's most popular dive sites and would be the centerpiece of the preserve.

The continued low water in Lake Michigan has uncovered several more long-buried wrecks. Disclosed near Grand Haven, MI were the remnants of a 60-foot sailing craft thought to be of very early vintage. The vessel was examined by several historians who postulated that it was the *Vermont*, which was lost in 1863. Down at Muskegon, similar low-water conditions facilitated the discovery of another schooner. A local man and his family, swimming off their boat some miles north of the Muskegon pier, discovered a hulk in 5-10 feet of water. The remains were later investigated by Brendon Baillod of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Research Foundation who believed it to be the *Helen*, a 90-foot schooner which stranded in 1886, taking seven crew members to a watery grave.

An unfortunate turn of events has thwarted plans by Wisconsin divers to sink the old car ferry *Straits of Mackinac* off the Door County shoreline as a sport diving site. The Kewaunee marina where the vessel was being readied for sinking was sold last year and the new owners immediately placed a 30-day "eviction from the property" deadline on the vessel. Divers associated with the Tim Early Foundation from Illinois expressed interest in obtaining the ship and a deal was consummated. The historic 200-foot vessel was towed to Chicago and prepared for sinking as an artificial reef and recreational dive site. She was sunk approximately 8 miles northeast of Chicago in April. The Neptune Nimrods of Green Bay are now preparing the tug *Joseph Medill* to sink as a dive site off Algoma.

Another ship, in this case a 60-foot research vessel, has been designated to become an artificial reef off Muskegon, MI. The West Michigan Artificial Reef Society wants to sink the retired *R/V Cisco* in about 75-feet of water where it will become a diving site and ecological habitat. As with the *Straits of Mackinac*, considerable time and expense will be required to prep the vessel before it can be sent to its underwater resting place.

In the Apostle Island area of Lake Superior, the once highly-touted Superior Water Logged Lumber Company (SWLLC) has fallen on hard times. A decade ago, this enterprise, along with several competing companies, claimed that Wisconsin bottom lands harbored a huge supply of virgin-timber logs which could be salvaged and processed into ultra-fine lumber. A huge dispute over rights to these logs erupted among rival companies, local Native American landowners and various state and federal governmental agencies. In addition, the DNR and Army

Corps of Engineers became concerned over what impact such massive log salvaging might have on the underwater environment. As the controversies progressed, publicity was continuous, and the stock prices of these salvage companies soared. After considerable legal wrangling and public expense, salvage permits were issued and recovery operations began. Unfortunately, as predicted by many divers, the "endless supply" of virgin logs was more myth than reality. The salvage companies soon slipped into financial trouble and certain operations failed. Those that survived did so by trucking in logs from Canada or other states to supply their mills. In 2001, SWLLC petitioned the courts for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, facing \$500,000 in debts. Recently, after restructuring their debt, SWLLC reopened following a favorable ruling by a federal bankruptcy court. Thus the final chapter of this underwater saga has yet to be written

Also in the Apostles, a rather unique act of artifact repatriation occurred in June of 2001. Divers from Wisconsin and Minnesota, representing several shipwreck preservation groups, spearheaded a project by Wisconsin's Underwater Archeology Program to replace the boiler taken in 1961 from the wreck of the schooner *Pretoria*. Using the LCT *Outer Island* (World War II Landing Craft), the divers returned the 15,000-pound boiler to the 300-foot schooner which was one of "Davidson's Goliaths", a group of huge vessels which were built of wood after steel had become the material of choice for shipbuilding. The *Pretoria* was lost in a fall storm in 1905 while being towed by the steamer *Venezuela* after the line parted and the schooner was forced to seek shelter among the islands. The vessel managed to successfully anchor off Outer Island, but the fierce storm steadily pounded the hull to pieces, eventually sinking it in 55

feet of water and taking five of the 10-man crew to a murky death.

The retrieved boiler had sat for 40 years in Ed Erickson's boatyard in Bayfield where it had become a conversation piece. Recently several divers and local historians tried to convince Erickson to return the boiler to its marine "home"; finally he consented, but died unexpectedly in March of 2001 before the project could commence. Ed's grandson, Robbie, now captain of the *Outer Island*, later agreed to complete the project and so the boiler finally finished its return journey in June, 2001. As an interesting sidebar, the *Outer Island* was also the work platform in the 1970's for the Keweenaw Current Project which investigated this now famous Gulf Stream-like current of Lake Superior. A research team from the University of Wisconsin and the U.S. Coast Guard Oceanographic Office, with a diving team headed by this writer, set the deepest current measuring devices ever placed in the Great Lakes (1,100 feet), using a combination of diving and mechanical techniques.

In the summer of 2001, the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society (GLSHS), based at Whitefish Point on Lake Superior, announced the discovery of another long-sought "ghost ship", the *A.A. Parker*. This 247-foot wooden steamer was headed out of Lake Superior in September of 1903, while being pounded by a serious southwest gale. The ship had sprung a nasty leak off the Keweenaw Peninsula and was trying to make the shelter of Whitefish Bay, but it soon became apparent that she'd never get there. In desperation, the captain turned around and headed toward the harbor at Grand Marais, MI. The local Lifesaving Service was alerted and headed out to the stricken *Parker*, now four miles offshore. Upon reaching the steamer, it became obvious to all that she could plunge

underwater at any moment, so the crew abandoned ship to the relative safety of the surf-boat and *Parker's* yawl. This rescue came just in time; the steamer suddenly sank bow-first. After a futile struggle to reach shore, the lifeboats themselves were rescued by two tugboats.

The *Parker* has been the focus of numerous wreck-hunting expeditions over the last 30 years. All attempts to pinpoint the hulk have been thwarted by the rough bottom topography and precipitous drop-offs in that area which hamper the use of scanning sonars. Nonetheless, the *Parker* has finally been located at diveable depths on this tortured bottom, her hull broken into several pieces. Pictures of the wreck and associated maritime artifacts were shown on the Society's web site.

After finding the long-lost *Parker* last year, GLSHS has begun refitting the sonar equipment on their research vessel. The group is installing the latest in high-resolution, digital sonar with dual frequency channels. They hope this new technology will allow them to locate some of the last of Lake Superior's famous "ghost ships" such as the *Cyprus*, *Clemson*, *Cerisoles* and *Inkermann*.

In another high-tech operation in 2001, the GLSHS provided a unique service to passengers on the cruise ship *Le Levant*. Using several divers, a robotic camera system, and a plasma television screen, the GLSHS presented a "virtual dive" on the sunken steamer *Vienna*, located in 146 feet of water just off Whitefish Point. This vessel was lost in 1892 after a collision in fog and its intact hull has been a popular dive site since the 1980's. The *Le Levant's* "virtual divers" enjoyed their visit to the wreck in the relative warmth and safety of the ship's passenger lounge.

Here's a follow-up on an interesting event mentioned in our last

review: Divers on the Keweenaw Peninsula (Lake Superior) have now raised a 17-ton boulder of nearly pure copper which was discovered underwater some years ago near Eagle River. As many diver-geologists know, the Keweenaw area contains vast amounts of native copper and silver which was formed hundreds of millions of years ago before earth possessed an oxygen atmosphere. Minus oxygen, typical ores do not form, leaving the metal deposits in nearly pure form. For years, divers have found nuggets of these metals on the lake bottom.

This huge trophy, measuring 19-feet long, 8-feet wide, and 18-inches thick was raised with the use of a crane and barge courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The giant specimen has found a home at the new A. E. Seaman Mineral Museum located at the Quincy Mine Complex. The Seaman Museum, boasting one of the country's finest mineral collections, was located for decades on the campus of Michigan Technological University at Houghton, MI. Last year it was moved to the Quincy Mine facility to better serve the many tourists who visit both the museum and the mine each year.

This review has chronicled efforts in Ohio to establish a wreck preserve off Kelley's Island in Lake Erie where a number of stone fleet wrecks repose. Last year's plans to formalize the preserve hit a serious snag when local community support for the project waned. Several key citizen-backers unexpectedly died and the supporting administration of Kelley's Island changed. In addition, baseless rumors apparently warned that the preserve might curtail certain property rights, as well as hamper fishing and boating activities. Without strong local support, the State of Ohio was reluctant to move forward ... so for now the preserve would seem to be on hold. ■

Historic Preservation and Archeology Week 2003 Highlights Wisconsin's Shipwrecks

Wisconsin celebrated National Historic Preservation and Archaeology Week 2003 from May 3-11. The Wisconsin Historical Society's (WHS) Division of Historic Preservation organized the weeklong celebration, created in 1971 to spotlight grassroots preservation efforts around the country. The annual event has grown into a celebration observed from small towns to big cities, with a range of events including tours, reenactments, special exhibits and demonstrations. This year Wisconsin shared the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 2003 theme, "Cities, Suburbs and Countryside." During this week, many local and regional events took place promoting historic and prehistoric places for the purposes of instilling community pride, promoting heritage tourism and showcasing the social and economic benefits of historic preservation.

Wisconsin's archeology poster for this year's celebration featured an underwater image of the propeller from the steamer *Frank O'Connor* lying off Door County. The caption: "Preserving the Ships that Built the Cities" emphasizes the important role the maritime sphere played in the development of Wisconsin and the upper Midwest. Wisconsin Historical Society underwater archeologists Russ and Cathy Green further stressed this concept by giving a series of talks highlighting the state's shipwrecks. Presentations given at public libraries in south central Wisconsin communities reached over 650 people, many of whom were hearing about the state's rich maritime cultural resources for the first time.

Outreach and education continues to be an important element in WHS efforts to protect and preserve the state's shipwrecks. The WHS's Maritime Preservation and Archeology Program (Underwater Archeology) gave 44 multimedia presentations, workshops, and classroom lessons to over 7,000 people last year. Special thanks go out to WUAA member and WHS board member Hank Whipple who contributed to this number by giving presentations on different aspects of Great Lakes maritime history to groups around the state.

There are many knowledgeable and talented WUAA members out there! You too can help preserve Wisconsin's shipwrecks by educating your families, friends and communities about your special maritime interest. Conversely, maybe you don't enjoy public speaking but are active in a dive club, church group, Girl Scout troop or service organization that would be interested in a program on Wisconsin's Great Lakes shipwrecks and underwater archeology. Contact the Maritime Preservation and Archeology Program (608-221-5909) to set up a time to speak to your group. Keep in mind that summer is the busiest time for the office; therefore, the colder months are often the best time to schedule a presentation.

New Historical Society Web Sites

An important component of the Wisconsin's Maritime Trails initiative, the new www.maritimetrails.org web site is now on line. The site serves as a unified "maritime resource" information point for Wisconsin residents and visitors, featuring a statewide database of maritime attractions and approximately 700 historic shipwrecks. The searchable databases include contact

information, hyperlinks, and driving directions for historic maritime venues, as well as historic data and images for many of Wisconsin's shipwrecks. A new Maritime Trails brochure has also been produced.

Also look for www.wisconsinshipwrecks.org, a redesigned version of the popular WHS/Sea Grant collaborative Web site "Wisconsin Great Lakes Shipwrecks." In addition to a great new look the site will be updated with more shipwreck profiles and features.

Don't forget to check out "Notes From the Field" this summer to find out what's happening with WHS field projects. Notes From the Field can be found at www.maritimetrails.org under the "participate" link, or at www.wisconsinhistory.org/shipwrecks/notes.

Year of Water

2003 is the Year of Water in Wisconsin. This is the year for appreciating Wisconsin's liquid assets - including more than 15,000 lakes, 13,500 miles of rivers and streams and a plentiful supply of groundwater. The designation is meant to foster an increased awareness of the importance of water in our lives and understanding of how it affects the quality of life in our state.

The Year of Water in Wisconsin coincides with the international Year of Freshwater, a project of the United Nations.

Bailey's Harbor Project June 7-15

We are set to go. Fifteen people are planning on participating with a maximum of nine on any one day. We have been able to furnish lodging at Hank's cabin for those who need it. Thank you Hank. Now all we need is for the weather to cooperate.

Fall Meeting and Meteor Cleanup

The fall meeting of the Association will be held in Superior on Saturday, September 27. The meeting will be held in conjunction with a cleanup project on the museum ship Meteor. For more information contact Russ Green at 608-221-5909 or rtgreen@whs.wisc.edu.

DNR Boat Ramp Signs

The DNR is presently ordering the shipwreck proximity boat ramp signs which will be posted at approximately 60 ramps state wide. The signs will have both the WHS & DNR logos.

Shipwreck Diver Site Considerations

The title to historic shipwrecks in Wisconsin's waters is in the State of Wisconsin and held in trust for the benefit and enjoyment of the entire public. One of the specific benefits of the public trust is the ability of recreational divers to visit, explore and enjoy Wisconsin's many shipwreck sites. The Historical Society of Wisconsin, for your convenience, has identified and published historic information about many of these sites and some of them have had mooring buoys installed.

Causing any damage to or the removal of anything from any historic wreck site not only diminishes the enjoyment of future users of the site but also constitutes a crime that can result in fines, imprisonment and the forfeiture of your diving gear, boat, trailer and vehicle.

Please follow these Zero Impact Diving precautions.

Use the Divers Down flag for the entire dive.

During a boat dive, fly the Alpha flag on federal waters, the Divers

Down flag on sole state waters and both flags on joint federal/state waters (i.e. the Great Lakes).

At those sites that have Historical Society mooring buoys, only one boat at a time should tie up to any particular buoy.

Use a buoy only in fair weather and moderate winds.

Do not anchor within 200 feet of a buoy.

Upon departure, if other boats are at the wreck site, after starting your engine, remain in neutral and drift well clear of the dive zone before engaging your engine. Then depart slowly from the site and away from any other vessels.

Exercise buoyancy control, avoid contact with any part of the wreck.

Preserve the dive site. Do not remove anything. Take only pictures, leave only bubbles.

Ascend and descend along appropriate lines.

Sinking of the Straits of Mackinac, April 10, 2003. Photograph courtesy of Watermark Pictures.



Coming Events

- June 7-15, 2003 **Door County Shipwreck Survey.** WUAA will be mapping various sites in the Bailey's Harbor area. For details contact Russ Leitz, 715-258-2935 or rleitz@vbe.com.
- September 18-20, 2003 **Annual Meeting of the Association for Great Lakes Maritime History.** Vermillion, OH. Check their web site at www.aglmh.org.
- September 27, 2003 **Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Fall Meeting and cleanup project on the *Meteor*.** Superior, WI. For information contact Russ Green at 608-221-5909 or rtgreen@wisc.edu.

**Wisconsin Underwater
Archeological Association**
P.O. Box 6081
Madison, WI 53716



Wisconsin
Underwater
Archeology
Association

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