

# Wisconsin's UNDERWATER HERITAGE

Vol. 19 No. 3

A publication of the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association

September 2009

## Clay Banks Project Update

by Dr. Richard Boyd, Russel Leitz and Danny Aerts

For the past four years, the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association has been investigating the maritime history of Clay Banks Township in Door County. This coastal area of Lake Michigan was once the site of several logging boomtowns where incredibly long wooden piers were built out into the lake to facilitate the shipping of local forest products. For three decades, these small ports were the most active commercial shipping centers in all of Door County. Along with this momentous maritime activity came numerous shipwrecks and marine mishaps, often precipitated by the shallow water and dangerous reefs in the vicinity. By 1900, these vibrant villages had shrunk to virtual "Ghost Ports," their associated shipwrecks forgotten, and their piers largely

destroyed by wind, waves, and ice. WUAA is attempting to define and record the position of these old piers, as well as locate and survey the various shipwrecks.

At this juncture, considerable research in archival materials, field interviews and exploratory dives have allowed WUAA to approximately relocate several of the sunken pier sites, as well as some of the reported shipwrecks. The exact positions of these docks now need to be authenticated by underwater observations and photography. The related shipwrecks must also to be precisely located, surveyed / mapped, and positively identified.

This article provides an update of the information on some of the shipwrecks and piers in the research area. The complete updated Project Synopsis and Field Manual will soon

be available on the WUAA website at [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org).

### Horn's Pier

This was the northern-most pier and shipping port in Clay Banks Township, situated in a sandy area surrounded by dense swamp-land. The shore-line indentation there was once



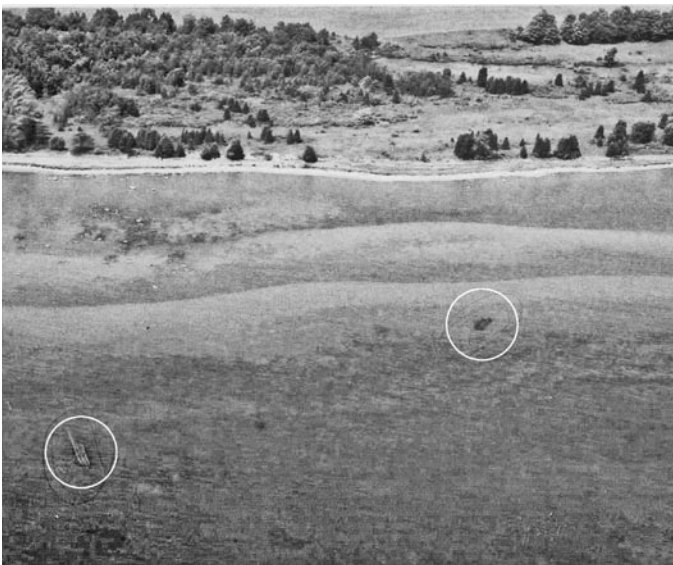
## Sinking of the *Kate Kelly*

by Dan Johnson

It's been 114 years since the tragic sinking of the schooner, *Kate Kelly* off of Wind Point Lighthouse in Racine, WI. On May 13, 1895, the *Kate Kelly*, captained by Hartley Hatch, met with a fierce late spring snowstorm, and eventually succumbed to the waves crashing upon her, tragically taking with her the captain and six crew members as she sunk to the bottom of Lake Michigan.

The *Kate Kelly* set sail from Alpena, Michigan on her way to Chicago, loaded with hemlock railroad ties for the Ed. E. Ayer Company. She was owned and commanded by Captain Hartley Hatch, a well seasoned captain, who had experience in salt-water sailing between Europe and Africa as well as in sailing whaleback steamers down the St. Lawrence River to Liverpool. Captain Hatch was married and had six children (Andrew,

*Aerial photo of Ida Bloom wreckage field.*



*continued on page 4*

*continued on page 7*

## Association News

### Action Meeting

An Action Planning meeting and social gathering will be held on Saturday, September 26, 2009 at Brendon's house in Marshall, WI. The meeting will begin at noon. The agenda will include the following items.

Final planning for fall conference- speakers, hotels, restaurants.

Update of the website, Adding capacity for membership renewal and sales of items.

Distribution of our association publicity flyer- by email and to dive shops.

There will be a cookout in the afternoon, following the meeting, starting at about 3 pm. All members are invited to attend. Contact us at [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com) for more information.

### Fall Conference

The 5th annual Wisconsin Underwater Archeology and Maritime History Conference will be held at the Discovery World Museum in Milwaukee on October 24, 2009. (See flyer on page 3).

In addition to the conference, a business meeting for the Association will be held starting at

All members are invited to attend the business meeting. The registration fee for the conference is \$15 and may be made in advance at the association website, [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org). Doors open at 9 am.

### Past Officers

The Association would like to thank two officers who recently stepped down from their positions. Steve Wagner was the Treasurer and Hank Whipple served as Vice President. We greatly appreciate their years of volunteer service.

## ***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 \$20. For membership information write to the postal or email address below.

**Mail correspondence to:**  
WUAA  
PO Box 6081  
Madison, WI 53716

**email:**  
[wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com)

**web site:**  
[www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org)

**President:**  
Brendon Baillod  
Marshall

**Treasurer:**  
Lee Hintz  
Oak Creek

**Secretary**  
Paul Laue  
Madison

**Newsletter Editor:**  
Danny Aerts  
Middleton

**Directors:**  
Richard Boyd  
Delafield

Danny Aerts  
Middleton

Janet Defnet  
Mukwonago



# 5th Annual Wisconsin Underwater Archeology & Maritime History Conference

Saturday, October 24, 2009, 10 AM – 8 PM  
Discovery World Museum – Milwaukee Harbor  
500 N Harbor Drive | Milwaukee, WI 53202 | 414-765-9966

The Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association (WUAA) is pleased to announce the 5th Annual Wisconsin Underwater Archeology and Maritime History Conference. This event will bring together Great Lakes archeologists, sport divers, marine historians, shipping buffs and hobbyists for a full day of seminars and workshops related to the Great Lakes maritime history and underwater archeology. This year's schedule will include presentations about new Great Lakes shipwreck discoveries, Wisconsin underwater archeology sites and WUAA's fieldwork.

The conference will be held on Saturday, October 24, 2009 at the Discovery World Museum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and is open to the public. For registration, directions, event schedule and lodging information, visit the WUAA website at [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org). Inquiries may be made to conference chairperson Brendon Bailod, [brendon@ship-wreck.com](mailto:brendon@ship-wreck.com).

We are pleased to partner with Discovery World for our conference. Their amazing facility includes a life size replica of the Great Lakes clipper schooner Challenge and many other interesting Great Lakes maritime displays.



## Hotels:

Milwaukee Wyndham Hotel – Milwaukee Airport  
4747 S. Howell Ave, Milwaukee, WI  
(414) 481-8000  
Radisson Milwaukee Airport, 6331 South 13<sup>th</sup> St.  
(800) 303-8002  
Baymont Inn, 7141 S. 13th Street  
(414) 762-2266

## Hotel Lunch & Dinner Options:

To be announced

## Map



On the Milwaukee Waterfront directly in the center of downtown

Take I-94 North from Chicago  
Take I-43 South from Green Bay  
Take I-94 East from Madison

## Clay Banks Project Update

*continued from page 3*

referred to as Sherman Bay. William Horn built a pier there in the late 1860s, which eventually extended 800 feet out into 18 feet of water. Unfortunately, in September of 1871, a forest fire, part of the same series of fires that culminated in the Great Peshtigo Fire, destroyed all the onshore facilities at this dock-age. Many of the important records for Clay Banks Township were lost in this fire, an important main reason why only scant information on these "Ghost Ports" has survived. However, the store, warehouses, and related structures were rebuilt and were operational by Christmas time 1871. Horn's Pier remained a main shipping point and steamer stop-over until the turn of the century, although the piers were seriously damaged by ice flows many times.

### Shipwreck At Horn's Pier

The schooner *Sea Bird*, loaded with wheat, sprung a leak and was forced to anchor in 18 feet of water off Horn's Pier in October 1875. A

storm caused her to drag anchor and crash onto a nearby rocky ledge where she went to pieces. Local residents of Horn's Pier Village pilfered most of the wheat for winter staples, causing an interesting legal dispute. Equipment from the wreck was salvaged later that fall.

Divers discovered an unidentified wreck just north of the site of Horn's Pier in the 1960s, but its location is not widely known. Local residents living on South Lake Michigan Drive near the Sturgeon Bay Township line have reported ship debris washing ashore there for many years. The wreck lies in shallow water just north of the conspicuous reef point that juts out from the rocky shore.

### Rumored Pier

Various historical reports mention a pier about one half mile south of Horn's Pier, which would be about where Salona Road meets the lake. Old charts indicate a possible pier in this bay at road's end, or perhaps at the mouth of the small, unnamed creek south of that junction. Interviews with local residents in April 2006 also indicated that submerged structures might be present offshore.

### Roberts' Dock

George Roberts once owned considerable acreage in Clay Banks Township where he operated a sawmill, boarding house and shipping dock near the mouth of Woodard's Creek. That stream, which then had two outlets into the lake, was dammed to provide power for the sawmill. Today only the northern outlet of the creek exists, and no sign of the dock or sawmill remain, although remnants of the dam can still be seen. The dock was likely located where Mt. Lookout Road meets Lake Michigan Drive, but there is no onshore

evidence for this. One report suggests that the dock might have been located slightly further south on Lake Michigan Drive by a few hundred feet, just off the small point on the Sensenbrenner shore property. This spot is marked by a conspicuous carved wooden fish along the roadside.

### Mt. Lookout Wreck

An unidentified wreck in about 18 feet of water was discovered in 1967 by Dick Boyd, Gary Means and Jack Engerson offshore at the junction of Mt. Lookout and South Lake Michigan Drive. Significant wooden wreckage and ship's hardware were scattered across the rocky bottom. The vessel's anchor, chain and capstan were present; the capstan was raised and sold that year. Doug Weimer reports that about 100 feet of chain and the ship's rudder were raised in the 1970s. He also reports that a large, overlooked piece of wreckage exists inshore from the main wreck site. In 2006, Jim Baye relocated the wreck and measured the main body at 87 feet long by 20 feet wide resting on a sand & gravel bottom in 12 feet of water. Directly east of the vessel is a large debris field, consisting of chain, large metal wheels, a pump, davit and other materials. The wreckage is visible from the air.

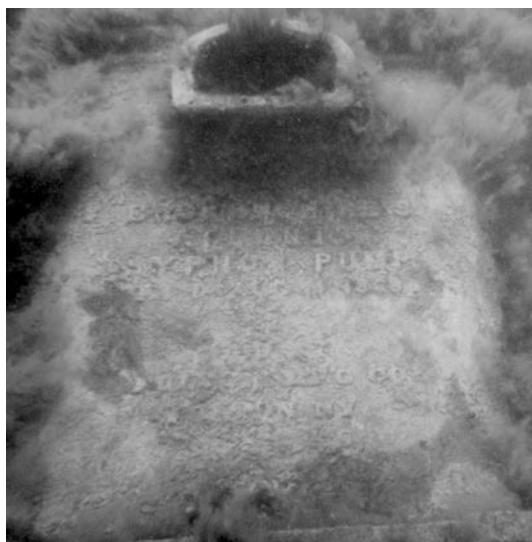
This derelict is likely the scow *Ida Bloom*, which was taking on cargo from Roberts' Dock by means of rafts in November 1879. A storm blew up and the craft attempted to set sail, but was driven onto rocks in 9 feet of water. Several attempts at salvage were made, but the vessel went to pieces by the following spring.

### Rumored Pier

Records indicate that James Tufts, a major landowner and businessman in the area, once had a pier "north of Clay Banks," but no definitive

*Photo of pump housing on wreckage near the mouth of Bear Creek.*

*Photo by Jim Baye.*



location has been found. However, a chart from 1877 shows a small dock or shore facility at a spot along South Lake Michigan Drive marked by a prominent geological feature. A few hundred yards directly west of the road, an ice age recessional beach forms a high wooded ridge that has been bisected by a stream, forming a V-shaped cut through the crest. A lone summer home is perched on the northern crest of this cut. At the shoreline, today no evidence of any pier or other structure exists.

### **Glenham Shipwreck**

In October 1873, the scow *Glenham* had loaded bark at Clay Banks Pier and set sail, but she went aground about one mile north of there.

George Roberts, whose dock and sawmill would have been only a short distance further north, rescued the crew. The *Glenham* went to pieces at this site, but its remains have never been found.

*Aerial photo of unidentified wreckage near the mouth of Bear Creek.  
Photo by Jim Baye.*



### **Clay Banks Pier**

Clay Banks Pier, the oldest dock in the area, was built in 1866 by Brown & Gilliland and was operated by Hitt & Davidson to ship the wood products generated by their sawmill. This lumber company was founded by Chauncey H. Hitt, who settled in the area in the late 1850s. The facility was steadily improved, and the final length of the dock was about 1600 feet, extending out into 19 feet of water. Over the years, ownership of the dock changed hands many times, resulting in various name changes, but the pier did a steady business until the late 1880s when it began an inevitable decline into obscurity.

The location of this pier was a few hundred feet south of the mouth of Bear Creek. Today the site is located directly behind the prominent red barn that sits near the shoreline.

### **Tufts Pier**

In 1871, James Tufts bought the shoreline acreage north of the mouth of Bear Creek at Clay Banks where he built an impressively long pier with a nearby sawmill facility. Tufts had reportedly bought another pier north of this area, but its exact location is not known. Tuft's Pier was eventually 1800 feet long, extending into 16 feet of water from the northern edge of Bear Creek. Since this pier was only a few hundred feet north from the main Clay Banks Pier, these two facilities comprised the major shipping center for the entire region for some years.

The exact location of Tufts Pier is at the very northern edge of Bear Creek behind the home of Dick Hitt, descendant of the original Hitt family that pioneered Clay Banks. Several large fragments of Tufts Pier still project out of the creek bank where it enters Lake Michigan.

### **Shipwrecks At Clay Banks**

Because Clay Banks and Tufts Piers were so close together and so lengthy, together they experienced an enormous amount of commercial activity over a 30-year period. During this time, at least four complete loss shipwrecks occurred at these docks. Moreover, many more minor "marine mishaps" occurred here, which resulted in additional property loss and vessel damage. Today the remnants of those craft that were "totaled" in the vicinity are scattered across a large area of rock & gravel bottom in fairly shallow water. The major wrecks were:

*Granite State:* In October 1881, the steambarge *Granite State* ran aground at Clay Banks with a load of cedar ties during a nasty storm. A tug released her, but the grounding had produced a serious leak, so an attempt was made to land the vessel at the pier (probably Tufts). Unfortunately, the craft hit the nearby reef and sank in about 10 feet of water. Various unsuccessful salvage attempts were made, but prevailing storms soon broke the vessel apart. Most of the ship's hardware and propulsion equipment were eventually removed.

Large sections of what is probably the *Granite State* can be seen from the air, lying about 1000 feet offshore on a gravel bottom. Diver Jim Baye measured the section at about 100 feet long and 21 feet wide. He also noted other vessel and dock remnants strewn about the area.

*Sea Star:* Capt. C. L. Fellows, a prominent citizen of this area, and owner of several piers at various times, also owned this small scow. On November 1886, she was being loaded at Clay Banks Pier when a heavy sea caused her to strike the dock so violently that both the vessel and dock were heavily damaged.

*continued on page 6*

## Milwaukee County Shipwreck Sites

*continued from page 5*

The scow became separated from the dock by about 150 feet, thereby stranding the captain and a crewman aboard, who were finally rescued by the Lifesaving Service from Sturgeon Bay. At storm's end, the bottom had been pounded out of the scow and she was subsequently abandoned.

*S. L. Noble:* This schooner was the earliest victim of the shoal waters near Clay Banks Pier. In November 1868, the vessel was loading at Clay Banks, when a gale from the south-east whipped up. The scow pounded on the rock shelf so heavily that her bottom was destroyed and she was abandoned the next day. Reports indicate that the *Noble* was docked in less than 10 feet of water when the accident occurred.

*Roving Star:* This vessel was built in Door County at Egg Harbor in 1881, and then lost at Clay Banks in October 1892. Like other vessels just described, this scow was taking on wood cargo at Clay Banks (exactly at which pier is not known) when an evening storm caused her to strike bottom so hard that she actually broke in two! The craft was a complete loss. Chris Braunsdorf, a major landowner in Clay Banks Township, owned it at the time.

### Foscoro Pier

This dock was the southern most facility in our study area, located exactly at the Door and Kewaunee County line. This pier (1,000 ft) was the primary shipping point for products generated by the saw and grist mills on Stoney Creek. Originally built by three men named Foster, Coe and Rowe (thus FOS-CO-RO) in 1870, it was bought out by Captain C. L. Fellows in 1872, who held many of the "timber rights" in the area.

### Shipwrecks At Foscoro

Just north of the mouth of Stoney Creek, the shoal waters jut abruptly outward to form a very shallow, anvil-shaped reef where 20 feet of water depth suddenly becomes only two feet! This shoal, known as Stoney Creek Reef, has claimed a number of vessels and has given many more a "close call." Local residents report that boating accidents still occur there today. Surprisingly, most of these wrecks in the area have never been found and the Stoney Creek Reef has never been fully explored by divers. Recently the remains of one of these wrecks was reported by Bob Ryan, a local resident on Clar-Lin Road. He has buoyed several sections of wreckage along with a possible anchor in shallow water off his beach property. The wreck is likely to be one of the following vessels:

*Reciprocity:* This old lumber schooner, which carried wood products throughout the area for several decades, became waterlogged down near Twin Rivers Point (Rawley Point). Finally forced to anchor off Stoney Creek, the craft broke free and went onto Stoney Creek Reef, subsequently going to pieces during the winter of 1881.

*LePetite:* Another old lumber schooner, this vessel was forced to alter course run and run "before the storm" across Lake Michigan, to seek shelter in the Ship Canal at Sturgeon Bay. She finally went to anchor below Algoma and called for assistance from a tug and the Lifesaving Service due to a now serious leak. A tug took the schooner in tow and headed for the Canal, plowing into an increasingly violent storm. Finally the gale became so intense that the schooner had to be let free, consequently going onto a reef near Clay Banks (probably Stoney Creek Reef or slightly north of there). Within a few days, the

vessel disintegrated in the turbulent weather during the fall of 1903.

Several other wrecks occurred in the area, but need to be located and further investigated:

*Unnamed Tug:* Capt. C. L. Fellows, owner and operator of Foscoro Pier for many years, purchased the hull of the tug *Tillinghast*, which he rebuilt and launched in fall of 1893. The great storm of October 1893 swept the area, breaking the tug free from her anchorage and smashing her on the rocky bottom. It became a total loss. The vessel had been anchored off the point, probably just south of the pier.

*Unknown Wreck:* At the lower section of La Salle County Park, there was once a popular public swimming area known as Braunsdorf Beach. This spot was the shoreline just north the parking lot, now occupied by private cottages. Directly off this beach a line of reefs rise rapidly from 12 – 20 feet of water to 5 or less. Local residents report seeing partially buried wreckage projecting from the gravel shoal along the drop-off. This wreck has not been positively located or identified.

*John Evenson:* The tug *John Evenson*, has been sought by numerous wreck hunters for years without success, despite excellent information depicting its sinking off Foscoro in less than 100 feet of water in 1895.

WUAA has now gathered sufficient information to reasonably pinpoint a number of the pier sites that once were the commercial centers of Door County's forgotten "Ghost Ports." We still need to confirm several of these sites so that exact GPS numbers can be published to record the historical positions of these lost villages. The numerous shipwrecks associated with these docks also need to be located, surveyed, mapped, and identified for the historical record. ■



## Sinking of the *Kate Kelly*

*continued from page 1*

Fred, Nell, twins Ethel and Effie, and Dora) with his wife, Helen. They resided in Chicago.

Andrew Hatch traveled by train to Racine in order to identify the wreckage of the *Kate Kelly*. Numerous searches of the wreck-age failed to turn up any remains of the captain, including an extensive underwater search in June of 1895 by diver John Harms of the Gillen Tug Company. John, who was from Racine, was a young and eager diver and who also served on the Racine Lifesaving Station, donned his hard-hat and suit and swept the wreck-

*Hartley Hatch's great-granddaughter and her husband in front of a display for the Kate Kelly. Note: the artifacts were recovered legally and are on display in a museum.*



age from bow to stern, only to find the hull was well broken up but no body was found. It was reported that directly after the sinking that some of the crew's bodies were seen floating in the water, but nothing that resembled that of Captain Hartley Hatch.

After such a tragedy, the Hatch family suffered a great financial hardship. Hartley's son, Fred, had to go to work at the age of 13 in order to help his mother support the family. Ethel passed away early in life. Effie, who was a court reporter for the Chicago Juvenile Court, went to live with her sister Nell and family. Captain Hatch was well known around the Great Lakes as a seasoned captain and inventor. He installed a two-cylinder steam

engine on his schooner to help raise and lower the cargo. They used to have competitions on how fast they could load and unload cargo and he won many of them. The steam engine also had a propeller so that he could get in and out of the harbors without the assistance of a tug. The steam engine was manufactured by Robert Tarrant of Chicago, Illinois, who also manufactured marine and stationary engines, propeller wheels, castings and general machinery. Captain Hatch was also the Vice President of the Seaman's Association of Chicago.

Fast forward 86 years to 1981, the year that Captain Dan Johnson, Sam Mareci and Terry Koper, avid shipwreck hunters, dis-

covered the shipwreck *Kate Kelly*. After three years researching the history of the *Kate Kelly* and its ill-fated journey, along with many long weekends spent on Lake Michigan searching, they successfully located the wreck laying just east of Wind Point Lighthouse in Racine. The manifest of the ship stated she was carrying hemlock railroad ties, however, over 40 lead ingots weighing approximately 75 pounds each were found all over the wreck site, including a trail of them which lead to the location of the ship's wheel and worm gear steering apparatus. These ingots which apparently were thrown overboard by the crew to help lighten the load, lifted the ship off of the north shoal, banged it back down on the next wave and ripped the ship's rudder and steering system off the ship, opened up the stern, and allowed water to fill the cargo holds. Four men were spotted fiercely pumping at the bilge. One man was noted caught in the rigging before the ship sank south of the north shoal in 54 feet of water.

Note: The Lighthouse keeper recorded in his annual report that the schooner was stuck on the north shoal for approximately 30 minutes and then released and drifted south and sank.

For over 25 years after his discovery, Dan Johnson was in search of the families of the crew of the *Kate Kelly*, especially those of Captain Hartley Hatch. His search finally ended when he found one of the great-grandchildren of Captain Hatch. The family had known that Hartley had died while on a ship on Lake Michigan, but what they didn't know was when the ship sank, why, and that he was the Captain and owned the ship itself! ■

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



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

## Coming Events

- September 12, 2009     **McDougall's Dream Dinner and Silent Auction**, on board the *SS Meteor* Whaleback Ship Museum, Superior, WI. For information check the Superior Public Museum web site at [www.superiorpublicmuseums.org](http://www.superiorpublicmuseums.org).
- September 17-19, 2009     **Association for Great Lakes Maritime History Annual Meeting**, in Bay City, MI. For more information visit their web site at [www.aglmh.net](http://www.aglmh.net).
- September 26, 2009     **Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Action Meeting**, at Brendon Baillod's house in Marshall, WI. For further information check the WUAA web site at [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org) or email [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com).
- October 24, 2009     **Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association and Maritime History Conference**, at Discovery World in Milwaukee, WI. For further information check the WUAA web site at [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org) or email [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com).
- November 6-7, 2009     **Gales of November**, in Duluth, MN. For information check the Lake Superior Marine Museum Association web site at [www.lsmma.org](http://www.lsmma.org).