

# Wisconsin's UNDERWATER HERITAGE

Vol.16 No. 4

A publication of the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association

December 2006



## Loss Of The Crew And The Schooner *Ottawa*

by Jon Paul

*Editor's note: The Ottawa is one of the shipwrecks at the Clay Banks site, which the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association is currently investigating.*

One of the largest maritime disasters to happen south of the Sturgeon Bay Canal was that of the schooner *Ottawa* that stranded on April 13, 1911. The *Ottawa* had just been fitted out

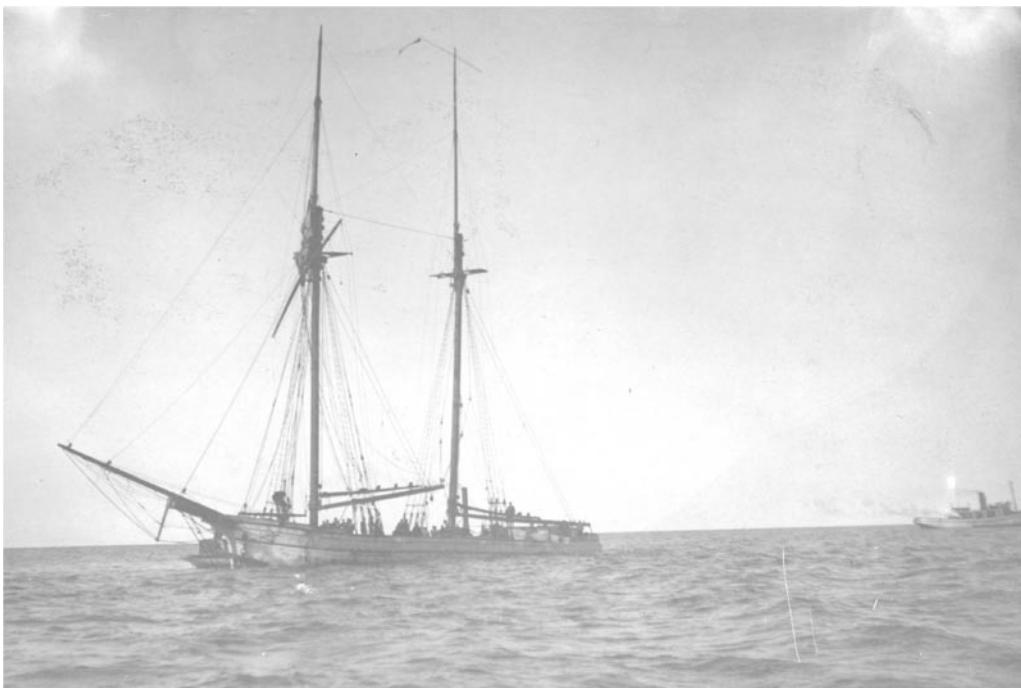
for the season in Chicago and went to Manistique, Michigan for a load of lumber. On her return trip she encountered an early spring southeaster that swept this side of Lake Michigan with gale force and created many blankets of fog. The *Ottawa* fetched up on Stoney Creek Reef just north of the creek and off of Captain Christian Braunsdorf's farm on the Door and Kewaunee county line.

The *Door County Advocate* quoted Captain Braunsdorf's account of the disaster in the April 20, 1911 edition.

"About five o'clock Thursday morning I was awakened by a storm, which forced open a door. Getting up, I went out to the barn to see if everything was all right and on my way glanced out on the lake and saw what I thought to be

the outlines of a vessel thru the hazy mist. She seemed to be headed out in the lake in a northeasterly direction. I got a range on the boat with a fence post and she appeared to be moving, though slowly. Suddenly the vessel disappeared, a bank of heavy fog having drifted in and shut her out of view. I rubbed my eyes to see if I was dreaming or awake. I went back to the house and thought no more of the vessel, which I supposed was all right. I went out on the farm to work about 9 o'clock. A little after ten o'clock my daughter came running and said there was lumber coming ashore. I quickly got a horse and putting the girl on

*The Ottawa on shore near Foscoro just south of Clay Banks a few days after the incident. In the picture you can see a barge Dohearty to the left of the bow and men aboard her. The tug on the right is the John Hunsader. Both vessels were from the Leathem & Smith Fleet. Photo from the Door County Maritime Museum & LPS.*



*continued on page 4*

## Association News

### Fall Business Meeting

The fall business meeting of the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology association was brought to order at 9:00 am by president Russel Leitz. There were 13 members present as well as 7 non-members. The meeting was held at the Four Points Sheraton hotel in Milwaukee on October 21, 2007.

The first order of business was the Secretary's report given by Paul Laue. He updated the members on last years activities within the organization which included a recap of the 2005 Fall Business meeting and subsequent WUAA conference, a brief recount of the 2006 Meteor project that occurred in April and a summary of the group's current and ongoing projects.

Next, Steve Wagner gave the treasurer's report on the state of the organizations finances. He reported a balance of \$595.05 as of October

21 which included a 2005 balance of \$1859.32, expenses at \$2,853.27 and present income of \$1589.

Then, Danny Aerts outlined pending changes to the current WUAA bylaws. The changes to the bylaws were:

- 1) A mission statement was added.
- 2) Business meetings are reduced from two per year to one.
- 3) Correspondence by email has been included in several places.
- 4) The number of directors is changed from "two" to "two to three".
- 5) Officer titles and duties are clarified.
- 6) Ambiguity in wording that specifies dues and types of membership is removed.
- 7) Modifications were made to clarify that the board consist of officers and at-large directors.

After Danny completed the update a motion was made to accept the modifications to the bylaws. The motion was seconded and the measure passed by unanimous voice vote.

Some discussion then took place regarding the setting of a standard membership renewal date. Members thought it would make it a lot easier to manage memberships because renewal notices could go out in a more consistent manner instead of one-at-a-time. A motion was made to move forward with a "standard" date, however the actual details were deferred until the next action committee meeting. The motion was seconded and passed with all members in agreement.

Russel Leitz gave a brief recap of current organization projects which included a mention of the Clay Banks survey. Brendon Baillod then gave a short update on the work he

### ***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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continues to do with regards to transcribing Inland Lloyd's.

Russel then asked the group if there was any other order of business the group cared to discuss. Brendon made a motion to increase the organization's annual membership dues from \$15 to \$20. Members agreed this increase would take place as soon as the "standard membership renewal date" was voted on by the board. The motion was seconded and all members were in favor.

Paul L. agreed to take over the responsibility of checking the WUAA post office box more. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 am.

## Action Meeting in January

The next action planning meeting will be held on Saturday January 13, 2007 at Brendon's house in Marshall. Discussion will focus on membership dues and renewal, the WUAA web site and plans for the underwater survey workshop to be held during the Ghost Ships Festival in March. All members are invited to attend. For more information or for directions contact Brendon at [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com).

## Underwater Site Survey Workshop

WUAA will conduct a workshop on underwater site survey methods on March 24, 2007, in conjunction with the Ghost Ships Festival. For more information please check the WUAA web site at [wuaa.org](http://wuaa.org) or send an email to [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com).

## Summer 2007 Underwater Survey Projects - Volunteers Needed

The WUAA will conduct underwater site surveys in the Bailey's Harbor area the weekends of June 23-24 and June 30-July 1, 2007. Survey work may also be done at the Clay Banks sites. Volunteer divers are needed for measuring and sketching work. Underwater photographers are also needed to aid in the documentation. It would also be very helpful to have boats available to bring divers to the sites.

If you are interested in participating contact Russ Leitz at 715-258-2935 or send an email to [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com).

## Underwater Archeology and Maritime History Conference

The second annual Wisconsin Underwater Archeology and Maritime History Conference was held in Milwaukee on October 21, 2007.

Russel Leitz opened the conference by welcoming the attendees and giving a presentation on underwater survey equipment and techniques.

Keith Meverden gave a presentation on the schooner *Daniel Lyons*, which was surveyed by the State Historical Society in the summers of 2005 and 2006. The *Daniel Lyons* was built in Oswego, N.Y. in 1873 and sank off Door County in 1878.

Jean Hudson of the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee described the investigation of an elk skeleton and stone flute found in a lake in northwest Wisconsin. A thorough investigation revealed that the elk bones, while old (1400's), were not as old as the point (approximately 10,000 years old). Which leaves the mystery of why they were found next to each other. Other participants in the UW-Milwaukee investigation team were K. Kaufmann, P. Fantle and T. Revane.

Brendon Bailod gave a presentation on Wisconsin's oldest shipwreck, the *Gallinipper*, which sank on July 7, 1851. She was built at Black River, Ohio in 1832 as the *Nancy Dousman*.

Jan Miller and Craig Rich from the Michigan Shipwreck Research Associates presented a video reenacting the saga of the iron steamer *Michigan* trapped in the ice of Lake Michigan for 38 days in 1885, before finally sinking. They also discussed their search for the sunken vessel, which they found in 270 feet of water off Holland, MI.

The presentations were followed by a roundtable discussion on best practices for responding to newly discovered historic shipwrecks. Panel members were Keith Meverden, Jerry Guyer, Brendon Bailod, Jan Miller and Craig Rich.

## Loss Of The Crew And The Schooner Ottawa

*continued from page 1*

his back told her to ride fast to our neighbors, Chan. Mackey, and telephone the life-saving station. She is a good rider and the old horse never was urged faster than he was this time, for the girl knew she was riding for the lives of the crew and vessel. I ran down to the shore with my sons Christian and Joe and we signaled the men on the vessel by waving our arms so they would know help had been sent for. Then the fog closed in around the boat and we couldn't see her any more. A big sea was rolling and as we only had a small skiff could do nothing. Pretty soon we saw an object coming ashore in the fog and as it got nearer the boys waded in and pulled it ashore. It was the *Ottawa's* yawl boat. We knew then that the crew were all lost if they tried to get ashore in that boat.

"My wife and Mrs. Mackey walked down the beach and a little while after they saw the body of one of the crew on the beach and pulled it out of the water. Then a second



*Hunsader*

and a third came ashore. By this time the life-savers came, as well as a number of farmers. The fourth body did not come ashore until 9 o'clock at night and the last one four or five hours later. We tramped the beach all night. My family did what they could and nobody could have done more. I think the yawl boat capsized in the big sea as soon as

the crew got into it. The wreck was half a mile from shore and the water so cold the men could not swim long in it."

The lifesavers deduced at the time that the accident had happened about 6 or 7 o'clock that morning and the crew had prepared for a long stay on the boat. The crew took out bedding and food out of the cabin and furled it in the main sail of the vessel. The yawl boat had a 6 hp engine in it, had one of the planks knocked out of it and repaired by placing a table cloth around it and strapping it into place. The men had there belongings in the boat and probably thought the schooner was going to go to pieces and fled the vessel prematurely. The vessel probably capsized and the men succumbed to the cold. The lifesavers said if the crew would have stayed on the vessel an hour longer they would have been saved easily.

The crew consisted of Captain Claus Weborg, First Mate Peter Buset, Frank Vanefin, Carl Nyquist and Victor Nordene. All of the crew with the exception of Peter Buset

*Mary Ellen Cook*



were from Marinette, Mr. Buset being from Norway. Mr. Buset was picked up in Chicago and it was his first trip on the Great Lakes. His sea bag was found by the lifesavers on the beach and in it first class master's papers for Ocean Sailing along with \$500 cash. He was going to send for his family in Norway as soon as he made enough money. The bodies of the crew were sent to Marinette except that of Mr. Buset who was buried in Sturgeon Bay, the money being sent to the family in Norway. The schooner *Mary Ellen*

*Cook* had wintered with the *Ottawa* in Chicago and had left about the same time. The Captains being good friends and seamen Frank Vanefin's of the *Ottawa* had a brother aboard the *Mary Ellen Cook* at the time.

The salvagers had tried to pump her out to no avail and she was stripped of her rigging and the wood cargo lightered to the barge *Dohearty* and then placed on the schooner *Mary Ellen Cook* for transport to Chicago. The vessel was valued at \$2,000 and was owned by the Roper Lumber Co. and Captain Weborg.

The cargo was valued at \$3,000. She was built at Grand Haven, Michigan in 1874 by R. W. Loutit and was 113 feet in length, 25 feet in beam and 7.5 feet depth of hold, 163.29 gross tons. She was said to have been the first vessel with wire rigging and to be the finest vessel of her time on the Great Lakes. ■

*Ottawa in port*



## From The Archives

*These stories were found by Russel Leitz during his search of the archives.*

### First Vessel to Visit

The first vessel which sailed to Ahnapee was the *Citizen* of Manitowoc. She made several trips here in 1851 and sailed regularly to this port during the season of 1852, bringing supplies to the settlers and carrying cargoes of ties, posts, wood, bark, etc., to the southern markets.

During the same season (1852) a small trading vessel, the *Mary C. Platt* also stopped at this port several times to supply the pioneers with flour, sugar, tea, coffee and other articles of necessity which could not be obtained otherwise, except by a trip to Manitowoc on foot.

*(From the Ahnapee Record, July 31, 1873.)*

### Capt. Lloyd's Statement

The propeller *Joseph L. Hurd*, of Messrs. Leopold & Austrian's line, arrived here on Saturday morning from Lake Superior on her last trip of the season. As this is the steamer that is claimed to have run down the schooner *Magellan*, a *Sentinel* reporter called upon Capt. Thomas Lloyd for the purpose of ascertaining what he knew of the disaster, in the hope of bringing to light facts which might tend to clear up the mystery. The conversation was as follows:

Reporter— Are you aware, Captain, that you stand charged by some of the Chicago press and their Manitowoc correspondents with running down the schooner *Magellan*, on the night of Thursday, Nov. 8?

Capt. L— I was not aware of the fact until my arrival in port this morning and you can say that I most emphatically deny the charge.

Reporter— How came you to go into Manitowoc? Capt. L— expecting a nor'-wester I headed the steamer for the west shore, and made Two Rivers light along toward midnight. It was then storming heavily from northeast, and snowing some, but not sufficiently to prevent our seeing a vessel's lights. There were a number of vessels at anchor in the bay. As the steamer was making considerable water at times through her rudder casing, she having sustained a strain aft while lying upon the bottom in the Sault with a full cargo aboard, on the last trip, while having a loose wheel tightened, I concluded to run into Manitowoc and await a change in the weather. In order to get out of the swell I ran the steamer up the river through the bridges, and would have gone further had there been a sufficient depth of water.

Reporter— Did the *Hurd* have a collision or run through any wreckage that night? Capt. L— She did not.

Reporter— You are said to have informed the Company's agents, upon your arrival, that the *Hurd* had run through wreckage. Am I to understand that you deny having so informed them, and that you also deny that the steamer passed through the debris of a wreck?

Capt. L— No. We left Manitowoc at 10 o'clock Friday morning, having suffered a slight detention through getting upon bottom. Headed the steamer out into the lake about three miles before shaping her course for Milwaukee. Soon after getting her headed southward, we began passing the rubbish of a wreck — pieces of bulwarks, deck plank, an empty compass-box, etc — and told the mate that it looked as if a schooner

had gone to pieces. We finally came upon a piece of wreck which had the name "*Magellan*" painted upon it in black letters. I made out the name to be "*Maqnorlan*" or something like that; but the mate, cook and one of the others made it "*Magellan*". I did not then know of the wreck in the bay. Upon our way north on tis trip I informed Messrs. Truman & Morse of having run through the wreckage of a vessel.

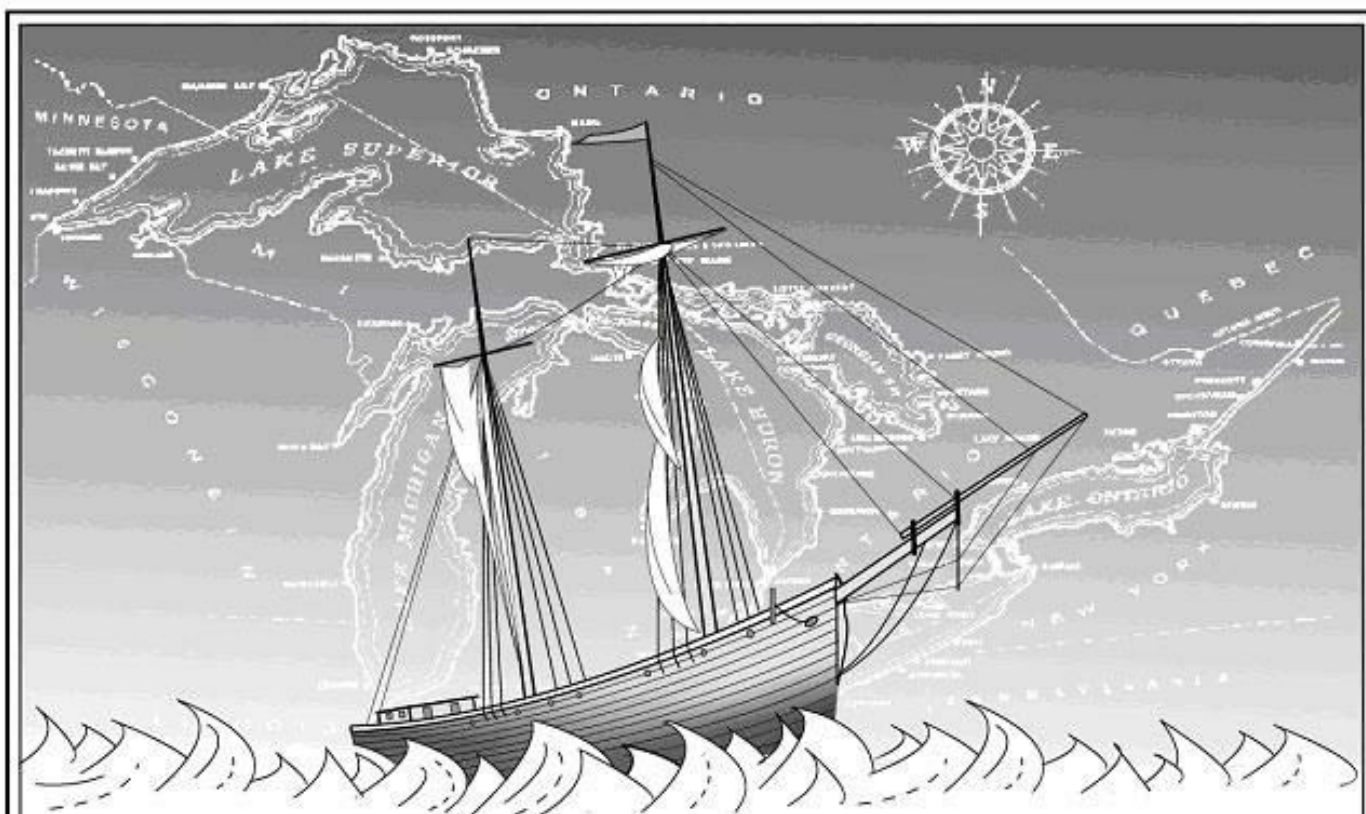
Reporter— How far from Manitowoc was it that you passed the debris, and how did you have the wind? Capt. L— It was between four and five miles south of a direct line from Manitowoc piers and from three to four miles from land. The wind outside the point was north.

Having obtained all the information desired, the reporter withdrew and Capt. Lloyd again resumed his duties about the steamer. If the schooner *Magellan* was run down, as claimed, the *Hurd* was certainly not the boat that did it, as Capt. Lloyd answered every question put to him with a freedom and candor that bespoke the truth. Nothing was concealed.

The fact that none of the debris of the wrecked schooner came ashore in the bay, but was driven up the lake, supports the *Sentinel's* theory that the *Magellan* got upon the outer end of Two Rivers Point and rolled over or capsized at her anchors, probably off the point.— Milwaukee *Sentinel* Nov.26.

*(From the Manitowoc Pilot, November 29, 1877.)*





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## Coming Events

- Jan. 13, 2007 **Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Action Committee Meeting.** 9:00 am at Brendon's in Marshall. For information check the WUAA web site at [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org) or email [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com).
- Feb. 9-11, 2007 **Our World Underwater - Rosemont, IL.** For information check their web site at [www.OurWorldUnderwater.com](http://www.OurWorldUnderwater.com)
- Feb. 27, 2007 **Dive Into The Past - Twin Cities Shipwreck-Scuba Show.** In Mounds View, MN. Sponsored by Great Lakes Shipwreck Preservation Society. For information check their web site at [http://www.glsp.org/dive-past/dive\\_into\\_past.htm](http://www.glsp.org/dive-past/dive_into_past.htm).
- Mar. 23-24 2007 **Ghost Ships Festival,** Milwaukee, WI. Sponsored by the Great Lakes Shipwreck Research Foundation. For information go to their web site at [www.ghost-ships.org](http://www.ghost-ships.org).
- Jun. 23-24 2007 **Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Summer Field Project.** In Door County.
- Jun. 30 - Jul. 1 2007 Volunteers needed. For information check the WUAA web site at [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org) or email [wuaa@mailbag.com](mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com).

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