

# Wisconsin's UNDERWATER HERITAGE

Vol. 16 No. 2

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June 2006

## Captain Krumer's Close Call On The *Reliable*

by Brendon Baillod

**1913** was a terrible year on the Lakes by any standard. The "Big Blow" of November 1913 ended the careers of many staunch vessels and caused tremendous damage to harbors and piers all around the Lakes. This great storm however, overshadowed a heart-rending disaster that befell a father and his two sons just off the Milwaukee Harbor entrance earlier that season. Perhaps it was providential that Captain William Krumer's career as master of the steamer *Reliable* came to an end in August of 1913, thereby sparing him the potential peril of being caught out in the rickety old vessel

during the monster tempest that was to follow.

Krumer's little craft was built at Detroit in 1880 as a scow schooner by Thomas Davis. She was owned for most of her life by Detroit parties including her builder and John S. Quin. She sailed out of Detroit for most of her career and had been rebuilt a number of times. Launched at 69.47 gross tons with a length of 87 feet and a beam of 21.9 feet, in 1886 she was enlarged to 83.54 gross tons by a lengthening to 91 feet and a widening to 23 feet. Finally, in 1890, she was refitted with a steam power plant to be used as a sand sucker at 97.07 gross

tons, 44 net tons.

In about 1910, at the ripe age of 30 years, the *Reliable* was brought to Lake Michigan to suction sand from the lake bottom for commercial use, and it was in this capacity that she met her end.

In July of 1913 the *Reliable* had been working the sand bottom south of Milwaukee when a stiff blow laid her on the beach. Unable to get up sufficient steam to make headway, she was hurled toward shore where she made a hard landfall. After several weeks in the shipyard she

*continued on page 4*

## Clay Banks Project

As discussed in the March issue of Wisconsin's Underwater Heritage, The WUAA is planning a survey project in the Clay Banks area of Lake Michigan. This article describes the site. More complete information can be found on the association website at [www.wuaa.org](http://www.wuaa.org), including the project synopsis, field reference manual, site survey form and reference map. Volunteers are needed to help in this project. Anyone interested in participating should review the materials on the website. Also contact either of the project coordinators – Hank Whipple at [whipple@voyager.net](mailto:whipple@voyager.net) or Dick Boyd at [techsupport@gmscuba.com](mailto:techsupport@gmscuba.com).

The exact number and location of old pier sites within Clay Banks township is unclear. Historic records refer to numerous docks and dock owners beginning about 1865 and continuing into the 20th century. Presumably many references involve the same structures which merely changed ownership, but good records of such transactions are lacking. Names such as Vader, Tufts, Horn, Fellner, Hitt, Davidson, Foster, Fellows, Roe, Swaty and Gilliland are just a few of the known

dock masters. One phase of this WUAA project will attempt to reconstruct the history and ownership lineage of these historic piers, which were located in three primary areas as follows:

*continued on page 5*

*Tufts Pier - Clay Banks, WIS. 1873*



## Association News

### Meteor Project

During the weekend of April 29-30 volunteers from WUAA and GLSPS worked on the museum ship *Meteor* in Superior. The *Meteor* is the last of the whaleback ships, which were built in Superior.

Most of the work involved scraping and painting walls and ceilings in 16 cabins fore and aft of the gallery, the accompanying hallway and one stairway. The worn out hall carpeting was also ripped up and the adhesive removed.

Marine specialist Joe Lombardi was there doing a survey on the shape of the vessel. A few individuals helped him by taking up grates in the engine room and digging along the outside of the stern end so he could determine the thickness of the hull. The *Meteor* has had fill put in around the entire vessel. Two hatches were also opened in the floor of the engine room, which lead into the ballast tanks, to determine if the hull was leaking there. It wasn't.

Thanks to Elmer Engman who on Saturday night furnished the meal for the group. Mr. Engman also gave a very interesting talk on the history of the whaleback ships and their designer, Alexander McDougall. Mr. Lombardi also gave a presentation on the *USS Massachusetts*, a battleship-turned-museum which he worked on. Ken Merryman then showed video clips taken by Gerry Eliason of the *Marquette*, a newly-found shipwreck in Lake Superior.

Also thanks to Al and Deb Jaques who allowed the WUAA members to sleep in their RV.

All in all it was a very enjoyable experience in spite of the cold, wet, windy weather.

### Sep. 16 Action Meeting

An action meeting will be held on Saturday, Sep. 16 at 9:00 a.m. in the third floor conference room of the State Historical Society in Madison. Discussion will mainly be on the Fall Conference. All members are invited to attend.

### May 20 Action Meeting

An action meeting was held on May 20, 2006, in Madison. Following is a summary of the meeting.

1) Brendon B. gave an update on this year's WUAA conference. The hotel conference room at the Four Points Sheraton in Milwaukee has been booked for Oct. 21. The list of presenters has not been finalized and is still open for discussion. Brendon mentioned that if anyone has any suggestions regarding a speaker they should contact him directly.

Conference flyers were distributed at Ghost Ships. An event notification also went out to an email distribution list. A late August mailing will target a larger audience. Brendon will set up and host a conference call later this summer to discuss the details of the conference further.

The group also agreed that we should continue to have a booth at future Ghost Ship events to increase public awareness in WUAA and get the word out on current projects.

### Wisconsin's Underwater Heritage

**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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2) Hank W. gave a brief update on the (potential) WUAA projects with Bob Birmingham. There was not too much to update other than he was waiting to hear back from Bob on the Brule River (fur trade artifacts) project. Regarding the Fish Weir (project) at Aztalan he noted that it would be difficult to determine the condition of the Weir at this time due to the siltiness and/or visibility of the Crawfish river.

3) There was some brief talk about the Clay Banks project. The information outlined in the yellow brochure (along with other supplemental material) should be updated. Brendon B. will follow up with Dick B. and Colin Z. to get the appropriate information out on the website.

4) Russel L. asked if WUAA should target two times during the year to hold normal (in-person) action planning meetings aside from the semi-annual meetings outlined in the bylaws. It was decided that one meeting will be prior to the dive season (May) and the other prior to the annual WUAA conference (Sep.). Any other meetings can be done via teleconference and/or an ad hoc meeting, if needed.

5) The group talked other project deadlines. Hank W. and Dick B. will continue to update on-going documentation for: a) waiver b) experience for working on projects c) medical background prior to performing work. Bylaw updates that Danny A. is working on should be updated by the next WUAA meeting in September. Brendon B. will be working with Colin Z. to get a number of updates made to the WUAA website including: a) removing non-WUAA dive regulations from site b) updating the next meeting time/location information c) additional project content for Clay Banks d) something about a WUAA speakers bureau

where inquiries can be made to the WUAA email account.

6) There was additional talk on developing a (generic) web form which could be used to gather information on possible wreck discoveries, project work, etc. It was recommended that we modify the form Dick B. made for the Clay Banks project.

7) Russel L. gave a brief update on some of the comments and results from the booth at the Ghost Ships event. He also gave a quick follow-up on the *Meteor* project from April 29-30.

### Mar. 11 Action Meeting

An action meeting was held on March 11, 2006, in Madison. Following is a summary of the meeting.

1) Russel L. gave a briefing on the *Meteor*. He stated that the project is scheduled for April 29 and 30 and that lodging will be available to those interested in participating. This will be a joint effort with members of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Preservation (GLSPS) group.

2) Hank W. and Dick B. gave an update on the Clay Banks project which included documents and materials gathered. Both have been doing independent research. Hank made a trip up to the area to conduct a initial scan of the site. GPS readings were taken of the shoreline and preliminary site maps were drawn up. A grid pattern was also established which included landmarks for locations and possible staging areas. Most of the work can be done in depths of 30 feet or less within a mile of the shoreline. Items of relevance will most likely be in 9-10 feet of water. Dick handed out a detailed survey document that he had compiled comprised of regional information, documented shipwrecks

and research suggestions. Project documentation (and/or field guide) will be made available at the Ghost Ships Festival (GSF) for further promotion. Russel suggested we might also use power pole numbers for marking locations. Members also discussed the idea of making project documentation (overview, methodology, maps, site survey reports, etc) available on the WUAA website for easy download access.

3) Brendon B. gave a brief update on the 2006 WUAA conference. He mentioned rates have doubled at the Comfort Suites where the conference was held last year. However, he conferred with Kimm S. who was negotiating with the Four Points Sheraton regarding GSF for 2007 and found we could book a much larger room for there at a lower rate. A vote was taken to go ahead and pay the amount from current WUAA funds to book the room. The date of the conference has been set for October 21.

4) There was a discussion on doing genealogical research for interested family members (of ship owners, ship crew, etc) who contact us and wish to obtain any historical documentation we research. It was suggested that this could be done for a fee. Nothing concrete came from this discussion.

5) Hank W. gave a brief update on two possible projects with Bob Birmingham the first having to do with a fish weir on the Crawfish River which Hank and Bob will check out in the spring and the second having to do with the voyager trade route in northern Wisconsin. The Brule river was recommended because of the lack of commercial logging on it making it a much better candidate for finding relevant artifacts.

## Captain Krumer's Close Call On The Reliable

*continued from page 1*

was thought to be in good enough shape to resume her duties, and on August 16, 1913, Captain William Krumer boarded the old steamer at Racine for a day of sand harvesting, after which, he would bring his cargo to Milwaukee for use in building materials. As it was a sunny August day, the Captain brought along his two young sons, Erwin, age 12, and William Jr., age 4. The two young boys doubtless enjoyed the excitement of running down the decks and watching their father harvest sand through the vessel's long suction tube. Also aboard the vessel were Deckhand Albert Boggs, Fireman Joseph Gay and Engineer Edward Leonard. The little six man crew was kept busy as the Captain and Boggs piloted the vessel and ran the sand apparatus, while Gay and Leonard fired the boiler and kept up steam to power the propeller and the sand apparatus. It was the vessel's first voyage after being rebuilt.

The morning of the 16th was spent about two miles off the shore of Wind Point, suctioning sand from the bottom, which was then poured into the vessel's hold. This activity continued until about two o'clock when 60 cubic feet of wet sand was loaded and the wind and waves began to pick up. Captain Krumer then decided to head for Milwaukee to unload, dock his vessel and take the boys home. All seemed to be

going smoothly until about three o'clock when the vessel was a mile

or two from South Milwaukee. The *Reliable* began to labor more heavily than usual in the building seas, and when Captain Krumer went below to inspect the hold, he found that the sand cargo had become a sea of mud. He immediately ordered all hands to the pumps in order to keep the vessel's bow above the building waves. The men pumped furiously for over two hours, but the water continued to rise ever faster. Finally, at five o'clock, the Captain ordered the exhausted men to begin dumping the heavy, wet sand overboard by the bucketful. Still, the vessel settled lower in the water and her engines became less effective at keeping her moving toward port.

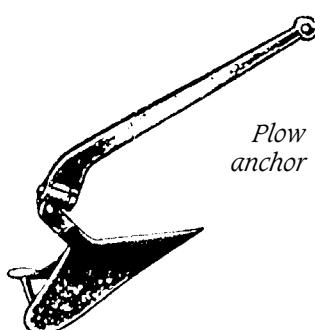
Conditions continued to deteriorate, and by six o'clock, the Captain ordered the lifeboats made ready in case the worst should happen. The men were exhausted and the Captain's two sons were terrified. Despite the *Reliable*'s worsening condition, the Captain stated his resolve to stay with the *Reliable* and refused to accept a position in the lifeboat. Fortunately for the *Reliable*'s crew, the big Goodrich Steamer *Chicago* was passing through the area on her way from Chicago to Milwaukee. Just after six o'clock, she overtook the *Reliable* about 200 yards out. The *Chicago*'s master, Captain Daniel J. McGarity clearly saw that the *Reliable* was in peril and trained his field glasses on the stricken vessel. He could see the frantic activity, but no request for help was made. He subsequently continued on toward the Milwaukee piers, which were now visible in the distance.

Amid the confusion, Captain Krumer looked up just long enough to see the *Chicago*'s massive stern

passing them by and promptly ordered Engineer Leonard to sound the steam whistle. Hearing the whistle, Captain McGarity of the *Chicago* immediately came about and raced toward the stricken steamer. As Captain McGarity neared the scene, he could see the crew of the sinking vessel putting off in the lifeboat. Three men and a boy leaped into the boat. On the deck, a man and another boy remained. The lad seemed to be trying to drag the man to the boat. Then the man gathered the little fellow in his arms and carrying him to the side, handed him down to one of the crew. It was twelve minutes after six and the *Reliable* was beginning to list heavily.

Captain McGarity could see tons of sand covering the upper deck where the crew had been trying to dump it overboard, and the sand appeared to be contributing to the vessel's extreme list. Within a minute, the man remaining on the vessel ordered the lifeboat away and at 6:15 PM, the vessel went over. Captain Krumer was last seen for a single moment standing near the deckhouse. He waved his hand and then disappeared as a big wave hid the foundering boat from view. The next instant the boilers exploded with such force that Captain McGarity nearly lost his footing several hundred yards away. A huge tidal wave swept shoreward, nearly swamping the little yawl containing the Captain's sons and the crew. Only frantic efforts on the part of the crew righted it, and a few moments later the *Chicago* hove alongside and threw a line.

The two boys, weeping frantically over the fate of their father who they supposed was lost, were drawn aboard the big steamer and taken to



## Clay Banks Project

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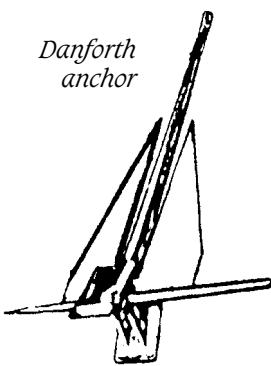
staterooms. Hours had passed and the sun began to set as the *Chicago* searched the debris field described as "matchwood." Believing Captain Krumer was lost, the Captain of the *Chicago* was about to give orders to get underway when he spied some motion about 100 yards from where the *Reliable* had gone down. It was Captain Krumer, waving his arms mechanically and trying to shout above the roaring waves.

In a few minutes the *Chicago*'s crew had plucked the Captain from the floating beams to which he clung. He was exhausted and close to giving up when he was taken aboard, having been badly bruised and battered when struck by pieces of wreckage after the explosion. Captain Krumer was barely conscious when brought aboard the *Chicago* and was given stimulants to revive him, after which, he was reunited with his greatly relieved children.

The *Chicago* proceeded hurriedly to Milwaukee where Captain Krumer was taken for medical attention. After recovering overnight, the battered Captain told his story to reporters.

"I did not think there was a chance for me to escape when the steamer *Reliable* sank after its boilers blew up outside the Milwaukee

Harbor Saturday night," said Captain William Krumer on Sunday afternoon while resting from his perilous experience.



"As soon as the boat started to list heavily, I thought it would sink and ordered my two boys and the crew to get in the lifeboat. It was a few minutes later that the ship turned turtle and the water which flooded the boiler room caused it to explode. The shock threw me about 15 feet into the water. I was probably stunned for several minutes for I do not remember anything that happened. When I came to I was resting on a small board which kept me floating until the *Chicago* came to my rescue."

The *Reliable* exploded and went to the bottom two and a half miles south of the Milwaukee Harbor entrance. Despite her well-known foundering point and close proximity to Milwaukee Harbor, her remains have never been found. She has been the subject of a number of searches, but her resting place continues to remain a mystery. □

### References:

- Milwaukee Sentinel* – August 16 & 17, 1913
- Polks Marine Directory* – 1884
- Blue Book of American Shipping* – 1903
- Herman Runge Wrecklist
- Lake Michigan Dive Chart – Paul Ackerman
- Herman Runge Vessel Index Card File
- Encyclopedia of American Shipwrecks* – Bruce Berman
- US Vessel Enrollment Certificates – Port of Detroit
- Walter Hirthe Wrecklist

### THE FOSCORO AREA

This is the southernmost area of the survey, located on County U about 5 miles north of Algoma. Foscoro was a "lumber town" situated near the mouth of prominent Stoney Creek, located just north of the intersection of Kennedy Road and County U. The village had a sawmill, telegraph station, post office and several stores. Stoney Creek was dammed to facilitate logging operations, a large sawmill was built across the stream, and a pier was constructed 1,000 feet out into the lake to ship lumber products. In later years, several tugs operated from this pier, steaming out to assist sailing vessels wishing to enter the Sturgeon Bay Ship canal. Notably, several interesting shipwrecks occurred in this area, including the Goodrich Line steamer *Carolina* which stranded there in 1917. Today nothing remains of this small settlement.

### THE CLAY BANKS AREA

This area lies two miles north of Foscoro where County U meets Midway Road. Clay Banks was named for the high hills facing the Lake Michigan shoreline which were conspicuous landmarks for passing ships. These bluffs are, in fact, uplifted recessional beaches left over from the last Ice Age. The hamlet of Clay Banks once had a huge sawmill, at least six businesses, three schools, a telegraph terminal and four post offices. During the 1870's, Clay Banks shipped more material than any other Door County port. Today, a few buildings and cottages are located here, but no obvious parts of the town are left.

Nonetheless, the area has high potential to yield a number of new,

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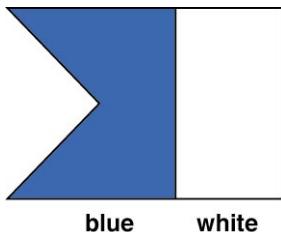
# Diving, Wrecks & Safety

by Hank Whipple

## Dive Flags

With diving and boating season fast approaching, here are some words of advice on displaying the dive flag.

On the Great Lakes and other federal waters, your dive boat while engaged in diving is required to identify itself and its activity. At night, this is done by displaying three, 360° lights in a vertical line where they can best be seen. These lights are red, white and red. For daylight operations a rigid color code flag "A" is flown. This alpha flag is a navigational signal indicating the vessel's restricted maneuverability and does not pertain to the diver. The flag is a white and blue, swallow-tail flag at least one meter high and visible from any angle.



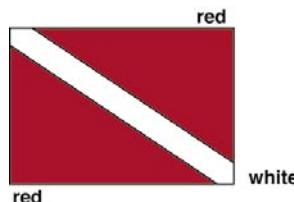
blue white

Divers have adopted a red flag with a white diagonal stripe. Wisconsin law requires the use of this flag to identify the diver in the water more than 150 feet from shore. This is to mark the diver's location not the dive boat per se. The "diver down" flag must be red, 12 inches high and 15 inches long with a diagonal 3-inch wide white stripe. It must be high enough above the water to be clearly apparent at a distance of 100 yards. Wisconsin, unlike federal rules, does not require that the dive boat be marked. At night on sole state waters, the boat's white anchor light would be used.

Except in the case of an emer-

gency, a Wisconsin diver may not surface outside a 50-foot radius from the diver down flag.

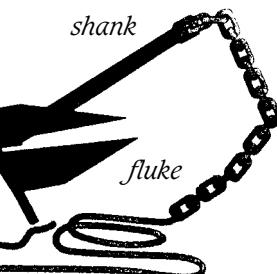
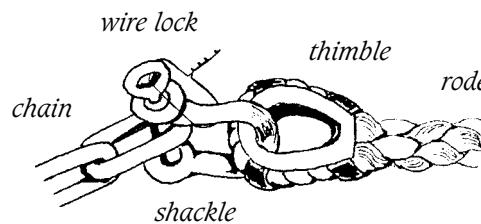
A motor boat is prohibited from operating within 100 feet of a diver down flag or a swimmer unless the boat is part of the diving operation. Consequently, the prudent diver when operating more than 50 feet from the dive boat should tow a diver down flag and surface within 50 feet of the flag.



white

## Anchoring

One of the most frustrating and dangerous boat diving experiences is to surface a substantial distance from shore and have your boat no where in sight. This situation occurred one summer on Lake Mendota while I was on a Coast Guard Auxiliary boating safety patrol. The boat was found adrift, empty and about one-half mile from where it had been originally anchored and the dive commenced. The boat's anchor rode (line) was too short to allow the anchor to adequately grab into the bottom and hold the boat fast in place. The wind had come up and the anchor hop-scotched along the bottom until the water was deep enough to keep the dangling anchor off the bottom, thereby permitting the boat to drift off.



One solution to this situation is to always have at least one person remain in the boat. However, as we all know, this is not always possible. The best solution whether the boat remains occupied or not is to have adequate ground tackle (anchor and chain) and rode.

The best type of anchor to use is either a Danforth or a plow. These are light weight and have great holding power when properly set. There should be at least 6 feet of strong, galvanized chain shackled at one end to the anchor and at the other to the rode. The rode should be of sufficient length to create a scope (length of rode to depth of water) of 7 to 1. One should always anchor by the bow of your boat.

When you select your spot to anchor, always look around and be sure that there is plenty of room for the boat to swing without hitting some other boat or object. Don't throw the anchor and rode overboard as it may get fouled and fail to properly function. Rather, lower the anchor until it hits the bottom, then reverse the power, slowly backing up while adequate rode is played out to give you a 7 to 1 scope. Be certain that the bitter end of the rode (the boat end) has been adequately secured to the boat. When enough rode has been paid out, put the engine in neutral and pull on the rode to see if the anchor is holding. If not, repeat the process. If holding, shut off the engine.

# Clay Banks Project

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## 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. Causing any damage to or removing anything from any historic wreck site diminishes the enjoyment of future users and also constitutes a crime that can result in fines, imprisonment and the forfeiture of your diving gear, boat 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 sites that have 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.

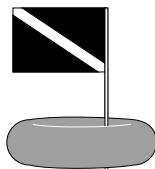
Do not anchor within 200 feet of a buoy.

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 and away from any other vessels.

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

Preserve the dive site. Do not remove anything.

Use lines for ascent and descent.



undiscovered wrecks, although they will undoubtedly be broken and scattered. A group of divers started to explore these bottom lands in 1965, spurred by some "leads" turned up by "Happy Jack" Engerson who had a dive shop in Egg Harbor during the 1960's. During those dives, they discovered at least two wrecks, some machinery, railroad wheels and a large kedge anchor which was raised and sold. These artifacts were found on a rock shelf off the mouth of Schuyler's Creek. Surprisingly, the divers never returned to investigate these wrecks further.

The Clay Banks "town pier" at the mouth of Bear Creek, owned by Hitt & Davidson Lumber Company, was the longest in the County at 1,600 feet. In the 1870's, the Hitt & Davidson sawmill was producing up to 100,000 shingles per day along with tons of lumber. North of town was Tuft's Pier, and north of there at the edge of the township, was Horn's Pier (end of Horn's Pier Road). Tuft's Pier, located near the mouth of Schuyler's Creek, was also an extremely active shipping point.

Over the years, these docks sometimes changed ownership, but their positions stayed pretty much the same. On occasion, they were damaged or destroyed by violent storms or fire, but were promptly rebuilt. Much maritime activity, including many shipwrecks, occurred in this area, but few historical investigations have been conducted here by maritime historians or divers. The basic WUAA search plan is simple: Locate the underwater cribbing or pilings left from the old piers, and several wrecks will

likely be found nearby.

## HORN'S PIER AREA

At the time of the Civil War, W. H. Horn built a long pier at the north-east edge of Clay Banks Township. This spot soon became a popular shipping center for wood products. A small village quickly developed, eventually sporting 15 buildings, including a large dance hall. The dock and warehouse burned in 1871, but were soon rebuilt and continued to be a major shipping point. In the 1870's, a tremendous quantity of cedar posts, railroad ties and telegraph poles left this port, but by 1900 little remained of the once thriving community located at the end of Horn's Pier Road. Today the site is merely a clearing in a wooded area near the lake front. Over the years, W.H. Horn also had part ownership in several other piers in the Clay Banks area. ■



## Coming Events

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Jun. 10, 2006 | <b>Lake Michigan Lighthouse Tour.</b> Rawley's Bay, WI. For details see <a href="http://www.boatnerd.com">www.boatnerd.com</a> .   |
| Sep. 19, 2006 | <b>Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Action Committee Meeting.</b> 9:00 am at the State Historical Society, Madison. For information check the WUAA web site at <a href="http://www.wuaa.org">www.wuaa.org</a> or email <a href="mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com">wuaa@mailbag.com</a> . |
| Oct. 21, 2006 | <b>Wisconsin Underwater Archeology and Maritime History Conference.</b> Four Points Sheraton, Milwaukee. For information check the WUAA web site at <a href="http://www.wuaa.org">www.wuaa.org</a> or email <a href="mailto:wuaa@mailbag.com">wuaa@mailbag.com</a> .                       |
| Nov. 3-4 2006 | <b>Gales of November,</b> Duluth, MN. For more information see <a href="http://www.lsmma.com">www.lsmma.com</a> .  |
| Nov. 4 2006   | <b>Shipwrecks and Scuba Show,</b> Sandusky, OH. For more information call 419-732-1728.  |

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