

Wisconsin's UNDERWATER HERITAGE

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The Mysterious Disappearance of the Fishing Tug *Boss*

by Russel Leitz, Brendon Baillod and Danny Aerts

The *Boss* was a 19.7-ton steam-powered tug built in Saugatuck, MI and launched in September, 1881. She measured 45 feet in length, 3.5 feet in beam and 5 feet in depth and had enrollment number 3197.

As you will see, the *Boss* had a rather unusual demise. But before we get to that, it is interesting to note some things which makes the story of this vessel a bit confusing.

First, there is some confusion as to the name of the vessel. The name of the tug was initially spelled *Boss* in the Saugatuck newspaper. However, the name recorded on her first enrollment was probably *Bass* (the handwriting is ambiguous enough that it is impossible to be sure). *Bass* was the name used in the Merchant Vessels lists. However, in newspapers, the two names were often used interchangeably.

Secondly, another tug called the *Boss* was built and launched in the same year, 1881, at Fort Howard, WI. This vessel was slightly smaller than the Saugatuck vessel.

To add to the confusion, the official numbers of the two vessels were similar. The *Boss* built in Fort Howard was number 3191 and the *Boss* (aka *Bass*) built in Saugatuck was number 3197.

In filling out the wreck report for the vessel which this story is about, her captain clearly writes #3197, for the Saugatuck-built *Boss*.

The *Boss* was apparently a frail craft as it once foundered in the harbor, as told in this excerpt from the Lifesavers Service report of January, 1884.

*The keeper and crew of the Two Rivers Station, Lake Michigan, were called upon to save a small fishing-tug, the *Boss*, of Milwaukee, which, while lying at Two Rivers, at the opposite bank from the station, had during the previous night filled with water and was almost entirely submerged. The accident had been caused by the rough sea rolling in from the lake bursting the engine-room doors open. Her bow was aground while the stern hung in deep water, and she was in danger of sliding off and sinking in the channel. The station-crew first got her on an even keel and then bailed and pumped her out, a task which took three or four hours to accomplish, after which she was hauled afloat and removed to a safer berth.*

She was also not a particularly lucky vessel. One of her owners, Captain Jerome McBride of Montague, MI., fell overboard



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. Please see page 5 for more information.

from her near Escanaba and was drowned.

The disappearance of the *Boss* was described the January 22, 1885 issue of the *Door County Advocate*.

*A dispatch from Two Rivers dated Jan. 16, 1885, gives the following account of the mysterious disappearance of the tug *Boss*, a craft well known at this port.*

*The fishing tug *Boss*, of this city, which was securely moored at her dock here, last night, is found to be missing this morning. There are various theories as to her whereabouts. By many it is thought she has parted her lines and the wind being northwest has drifted out in the lake, but her owners seem to think differently. They see no way in which she could have broken loose and think she must have been*

continued on page 4

Association News

Action Committee Meeting

An action committee meeting was held on Saturday January 13, 2007 at Brendon's house in Marshall. The brought to order by president Russel Leitz. There were 9 members present.

The first item of business was to agree on a standard renewal date for membership dues. The change from individual, monthly renewal dates to standardized dates was passed at the Fall business meeting of the Association, with the details of implementation to be established by the executive committee. Details of the new renewal dates are discussed in a separate subsection of Association News, on page 3. A motion was made to accept the new terms, all members were in favor.

A suggestion was made that we place a statement on the new membership and/or renewal form asking the individual whether or

not they wish to receive their copy of Underwater Heritage in digital or paper copy. Nothing was decided at this time.

The second item of business dealt with getting a status update of when the WUAA website would be moved over to Brendon's hosting provider. Brendon informed the group that he will take care of the conversion over the next couple of months.

Next, the group talked about the previous and upcoming WUAA conference. The question was asked as to why we had such low turnout, especially from members. It was suggested that we look for a project site near a large population (i.e. Milwaukee) where it would be easier for (or more likely for) members to assist. This would also make it possible for some media outlet (i.e. newspaper) to cover the project which would bring more visibility to others about our organization. A possible project would be the Milwaukee Fireboat (FD #17).

Brendon will work with Jerry Guyer, Bill Prince and Kimm Stabelfeldt about putting together the project. Brendon will notify the board with any updates as they unfold.

Russel mentioned that the Bailey's Harbor project will be held the weekends of June 23rd and June 30th.

Finally, Danny gave an update on the status of the Underwater Survey workshop to be held at the 2007 Ghost Ships Festival. He passed out a handout of the details to the group along with a tentative outline of the class. The group reviewed and commented on the outline. A motion was made to charge a \$30 fee for the workshop. This would include a free membership to any new members who attended the workshop. The motion was seconded and all members were in favor. A suggestion was made to make sure we have some sort of "take-home" materials for each attendee such as a packet containing class materials, etc.

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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Mukwonago

Changes in Association Dues and Renewal Date

Changes in Association dues and renewal dates were passed at the fall business meeting. WUAA annual dues are now \$20 per year. All memberships will now renew on October 1. Previously, each member had an individual renewal date, based on the date they first joined. The standardized renewal date will streamline bookkeeping and membership renewal notification.

Therefore, normal membership dues will be \$20 and will last until October 1. However, if someone joins the association within 6 months of October 1, their dues will be \$10, but they will have to renew on October 1. This means that anyone joining after April 1 would be charged \$10 for membership dues, but membership would only be good until October 1.

The procedure for notifying members when their membership is due has also been revised. An email notification will be sent by the Treasurer to all members prior to October 1. Anyone who has not responded by November would then receive a postcard in the mail. A postcard will be designed and about 500 will be printed up.

Volunteers Needed for Summer 2007 Underwater Survey Projects

The Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association will conduct underwater site surveys in the Harbor of Bailey's Harbor on Saturday and Sunday, June 23 and 24 and on Saturday and Sunday, June 30 and July 1, 2007. WUAA will document a side piece found by Hank Whipple plus gather additional information on the wrecks in the nearby cove.

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.

For further information on the shipwrecks in Bailey's Harbor and WUAA survey projects in the area see the articles in the following issues of *Wisconsin's Underwater Heritage*:

March 2004

December 2003

May 1998

If you are interested in participating in the projects this summer contact Russel Leitz at rleitz@sbcglobal.net or call 715-258-2935.

Action Meeting in March

The next action planning meeting will be held on Saturday March 10, 2007 in the third floor meeting room of the Wisconsin Historical Society in downtown Madison. It will start at 9:00 am. All members are invited to attend. For more information or for directions contact Russ at wuaa@mailbag.com.

Rewards Offered for Shipwrecks

The Neptune's Nimrods Dive club is offering rewards for the discovery of two shipwrecks, the F.J. King and the John Evenson. See pages 6 and 7 for details.

The Mysterious Disappearance of the Fishing Tug *Boss*

continued from page 1

cast adrift. Several crews of fishermen are at present out in their boats searching for her. But owing to the blinding snow storm which is prevailing here now, they will be unable to do much. The tug is owned by Allie & Landonde, of this city and valued at \$2500.

The search for the tug continued, limited by the winter weather conditions. It was surmised that the vessel foundered in deep water after being loaded down with ice due to the windy, cold conditions on the lake.

By February the search for the vessel was given up. The owners had to abandon two hundred fishing nets they had in the lake, as it was too hazardous to recover them without a steamer.

The vessel enrollment was surrendered on June 30, 1885.

However, the following year there was a glimmer of hope for the owners, as reported in the July 1, 1886 issue of the *Door County Advocate*.

The fishing tug Boss, owned by Allie & Lafond, disappeared from her wharf at Two Rivers in the beginning of last winter. It was supposed that she had broken loose and drifted into the lake, where she became covered with ice and sank. We learned from the Chronicle that the Boss is by some persons believed to have been stolen and taken to Snow Island. Her owners left for the island on Monday of last week to investigate the matter and recover their property if it is still afloat.

Unfortunately this lead did not pan out. After sailing up to Lake Superior, the owners were unable to find any trace of the missing *Boss* and they returned empty handed.

Strangely enough, the *Boss* was found eventually. In May of 1887, two wreckers found a sunken craft while dragging the bottom of the lake four miles south of Two Rivers. The craft proved to be the *Boss*. The newspaper reported that the tug was lying in 20 feet of water and that plans would be made to raise it.

Selected References

Door County Advocate

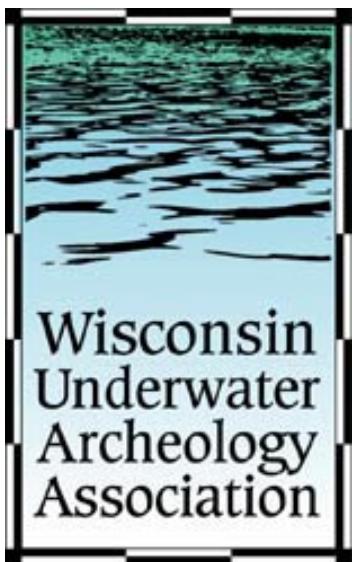
- 22 Jan., 1885
- 29 Jan., 1885
- 5 Feb., 1885
- 1 July, 1886
- 8 July, 1886
- 29 May, 1897

Built on the Banks of the Kalamazoo by Kit Lane.

USLSS Jan. 6 1884.

Wreck report of the Boss, vessel number 3197.

(CAT. No. 363.)	49	
WRECK REPORT.		
1. Date, (hour of day, day of week, day of month, year.)	During the night of Thursday June 15/85	
2. Nationality, rig, and full name of vessel, (wood or iron.)	Amer. Rig. <i>Boss</i> (wood)	
3. Tonnage.	9 7/100	
4. Age.	4 years	
5. Port where registered.	Milwaukee	
6. Official number.	3197	
7. Name and residence of master.	Nilson Allie Two Rivers	
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		



Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Workshop:

Documentation and Survey Methods for Shipwreck Sites

Date: Saturday, March 24, 2007

Time: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Location: Four Points Sheraton
Milwaukee, WI

(during the Ghost Ships Festival)

Objective:

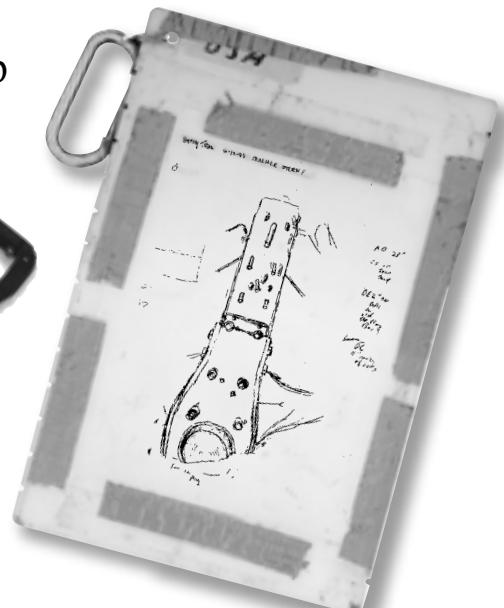
This workshop will provide a basic understanding of how an underwater site is surveyed, mapped and interpreted using manual methods. The class will cover survey objectives and the use of trilateration, offsets and sketches to generate preliminary maps of underwater sites. The workshop will include hands-on practice using the tools and techniques covered in the discussion.

Cost: The fee for the workshop is \$30 per person. The fee includes a membership in the WUAA and handout materials.

For further information go to the 2007 Workshop page of the WUAA website: www.wuaa.org

To register, fill out and submit the registration form on the website and mail in the fee.

You may also contact
Danny Aerts at 608-821-0048.



WANTED

GPS OR LORAN

1:00 P.M.
WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER 21, 1886
THE SCHOONER
F.J. KING
WENT TO THE
BOTTOM OF
LAKE MICHIGAN.
FIVE MILES OFF NORTH BAY,
DOOR COUNTY,
IN 25 FATHOMS OF WATER



CAPT.
Wm A. SANDERSON,
KEEPER OF THE
CANA ISL. LIGHT
WAS LAST TO SEE THE
SHIPS TOPMASTS.

WILL YOU BE THE FIRST ONE
TO SEE THIS MISSING SHIP
AFTER 120 YEARS LOST?

F. J. KING

\$1,000.00 REWARD



THIS IS NOT A JOKE! YOU WILL RECEIVE \$1,000.00 CASH
AFTER VERIFICATION OF FIND BY THE CLUB SHIPWRECK COMMITTEE.
FOR MORE INFORMATION CHECK OUT
WEB SITE: www.neptunesnimrods.org

WANTED

GPS OR LORAN

J. EVENSON
PROPELLER STEAM TUG
OFFICIAL NO# 76523
SIZE: 54X14X7
BUILT IN
MILWAUKEE 1884
LOSS: JUNE 5, 1895

JOHN EVENSON

\$ 5 0 0 . 0 0
REWARD

**SUNK IN A COLLISION WITH
STEAMER I. WATSON STEVENSON.
GOT TANGLED IN THE LINE AND
WAS DRAWN ACROSS THE BIG
SHIP'S BOW. SHE ROLLED OVER
AND SANK BETWEEN ALGOMA AND
STURGEON BAY, CLOSE TO
CLAY BANKS, WI.**

**NEPTUNE'S
NIMRODS**
GREEN BAY, WI
EXPLORERS of the
UNDERWATER WORLD

This is not a joke!! You will receive \$500.00 cash after verification of find by the Club Shipwreck Committee. For more information check our web site:
www.neptunesnimrods.org

**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

Mar. 10, 2007	Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Action Committee Meeting. 9:00 am at the SHS in Madison. For more information check the WUAA web site at www.wuaa.org or email wuaa@mailbag.com .
Mar. 24, 2007	Documentation and Survey Methods for Shipwreck Sites - WUAA Workshop. 10:00 am - 12:00 noon. At Ghost Ships Festival in Milwaukee. For information and registration go to the WUAA web site at http://www.wuaa.org .
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 .
May 5, 2007	Beneath The Inland Seas , Holland, MI. Sponsored by the Michigan Shipwreck Research Associates. For information go to their web site at www.michiganshipwrecks.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 or email wuaa@mailbag.com .