

Wisconsin's UNDERWATER HERITAGE

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September 2006

The Giant And The Pirate

by Dr. Richard Boyd

Over the past 150 years, Wisconsin has spawned its share of fascinating maritime characters. Intrepid lake captains, tireless commercial fishermen, courageous lighthouse keepers and industrious nautical entrepreneurs have all contributed to the State's maritime lore. The tales about some individuals have been reported, repeated and embellished so often that fact and fiction have become inseparably fused. As it happens, two such captivating personalities lived in, or regularly visited, Door County. Interestingly, recent research has disclosed that these two individuals were actually related! One person in point, Allen Bradley, was a Door County pioneer and a mountain of a man especially noted for his feats of prodigious strength. The other, Dan Seavey, a reputed sea-going scoundrel who frequented the County, was the only lake captain ever to be arrested for piracy.

Allen Bradley was born in New York State in 1818 and came to Door County in the 1850's, eventually settling on Rock Island. He was reportedly a huge man, well over six feet tall with chest, hands and feet so large that only homemade buckskin garments would fit them. Within his lifetime Bradley became a well-known Door County fixture, but he did not become truly famous until H. R. Holand's classic book, *Old Peninsula Days*, was published in 1921. Therein, Holand immor-

talized him in the chapter "The Giant of Hedgehog Harbor," which describes Bradley's role in the naming of that cove near Gills Rock. Hedgehog Harbor, of course, is the large bay situated between Table and Death's Door Bluffs at the tip of the Door Peninsula. The western portion of this inlet is named Garrett Bay, whereas the eastern section is called Gills Rock.

One spring day, probably in 1856, Bradley's friend, George Lovejoy, enlisted his aid in salvaging a stranded boat. Lovejoy had constructed a small sailboat (reputed to be the first built in the County) that had gone ashore near present-day Gills Rock during a fall storm. Thus Lovejoy and Bradley set off to recover the craft and bring it back to Rock Island. They got it afloat, only to discover that several holes had been gnawed through the hull by porcupines, and water was pouring in at a horrific rate! Only Bradley's great strength and perseverance prevented the vessel from sinking outright, and eventually the two men rendered the craft sufficiently seaworthy to return to the island.

Lovejoy later tried to pay Bradley for his help, but the big man refused any compensation and joked: "I like this Hedgehog Harbor of yours and believe that I shall settle here." During the summer, he did just that, building a cabin there and supporting his family by hunting, fishing and farming. Ever since, that area has been known as Hedgehog Harbor.

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Legendary Car Found In Lake Waubesa

by Rick Krueger

Ever since I got a Hummingbird 987c SI side scan sonar unit (and before that using my 3D Sonar) I've spent literally hundreds of hours searching all four Madison lakes for lost "treasures". Some of my searches have been for targets known to be in a general area, for example a canoe that sank in Lake Kegonsa. The owner knew he was out in the middle of the lake somewhere, just where though was the question. Other searches were made with no target in mind, just searching for something that looked out of place and investigating what it is. Finally, searches were done for known objects on a lake-by-lake basis. An example here is the reported sinking of an aluminum boat years ago in Lake Waubesa.

Three or four men were fishing in a 14-foot aluminum boat. The weather started to deteriorate so they headed back to Babcock landing. En route they started taking water in over the bow, so they

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Association News

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. All members are invited to attend.

Discussion will focus on plans for the Fall Conference. Other items include proposed changes to the bylaws, web site hosting, and the Clay Banks project.

For more information contact president Russ Leitz at 715-258-2935 or send an email to wuaa@mailbag.com.

Fall Conference - Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to help with registration at the Fall Conference, on Oct. 21. If you are interested in participating please contact Brendon Baillod at brendon@baillod.com

Clay Banks Project - Send In Reports

Dive survey work has begun at the Clay Banks area in Door County. As discussed in the June 2006 issue of *Wisconsin's Underwater Heritage*, this region was a busy shipping site for many years and is suspected to contain the remains of many piers and ships.

If you have been diving at the site please fill out a site survey report and send it to one of the coordinators. If you simply swam through part of the site, your report will be very simple. Just include your name, the date you were there and a brief description of the specific area you covered. Even if you did not see anything of interest, sending in a report will let others know which area still need a preliminary survey.

More complete information about the project can be found on the association website at www.wuaa.org, including the project synopsis, field reference manual, site survey form and reference map.

Volunteers are still needed to help in this project. Anyone interested in participating should review the materials on the website and contact either of the project coordinators – Hank Whipple at 608-245-1222 or whipple@voyager.net or Dick Boyd at techsupport@gmscuba.com.

Wisconsin's

Underwater Heritage

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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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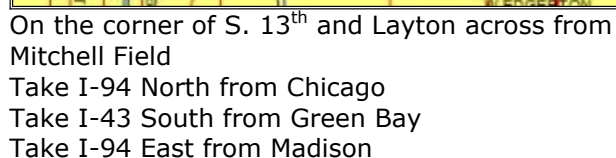
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The Giant And The Pirate

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Stories about Bradley's monumental strength are legion. One such tale describes an event at Ranney's Store on Washington Island where the proprietor thought it amusing to test the big man's power on a 415-pound barrel of flour. He challenged Bradley to lift the container and carry it directly home without stopping; if successful, the flour would be his to keep. Much to the merchant's dismay, but to the delight of local onlookers, Allen snatched up the barrel and toted it straightaway home, over three miles away!

Another account tells how Bradley once observed six men struggling to place a gigantic log into a crib being constructed for a dock. After numerous failures to insert the ponderous timber into the crib frame, the workmen decided to take a lunch break and develop a new "plan of attack." While they were eating, Bradley single-handedly hoisted the huge log and eased it into position within the framework. Lake Captain J. T. Wright related another story about Bradley when he lived in Dunkirk, NY. Wright claimed he once saw Allen unaided lift a 1100-pound anchor and carry it across a wide wharf!

Several stories depicting Bradley's potent feats even become subject matter for syndicated newspaper columns and cartoons, such as Ripley's Believe It or Not. Perhaps the most famous "Bradley Event" involved his thick, black, ropy beard. Up in Escanaba, MI, a local barman challenged Allen to lift another man by means of his dense "facial hair." Never one to recoil from a contest, Bradley enlisted the aid of Ransom Call, a burly, 250-pound lumberjack. Grasping Allen's beard with both hands, Call soon found his feet swinging clean off the floor. Bradley then carted him around the barroom

dangling from his beard until the lumberman could no longer maintain his grip! This particular event was revisited in a national cartoon printed in the Milwaukee Journal in 1958 (see adjacent illustration).

Bradley lived at Hedgehog Harbor for several years, and then moved to Washington Island. Following a stint in the Civil War, Allen resettled his family at the mouth of the Bark River, across Green Bay just south of Escanaba.

At Bark River, the Bradley's fished, hunted and maintained a way-station for travelers transiting the shore road from Menominee to Escanaba. The site of their homestead is now part of O. B. Fuller County Park where Bradley's wife, Nancy, was buried in 1870 in a cemetery at the river mouth. (Today, the exact location of that graveyard is unknown.) Many years later and afflicted with serious arthritis, Allen returned to Door County. He died penniless in 1885 in Sturgeon Bay and was buried in Potter's Field at Bayside Cemetery, a sad ending for the "Giant of Hedgehog Harbor." As occurred with his wife, the site of Bradley's grave is unmarked and lost to history.

Dan Seavey was a lake captain with a rather spotty reputation that has fomented and grown in recent years to the point where he

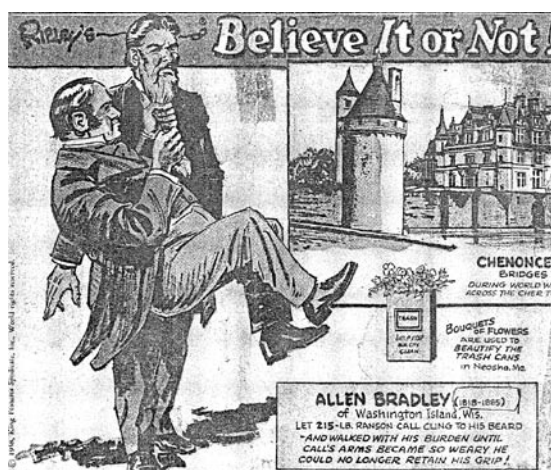
has become fodder for books and articles on "lake outlaws and ne'er-do-wells." His raucous personality and outrageous adventures earned him the nicknames "Roaring Dan" and "Dan the Pirate!" During the early decades of the 20th century, he became a feared and famous troublemaker in many ports around Lake Michigan, including those on the Door and Garden Peninsulas.

Seavey, originally a New Englander, was a big, ruggedly handsome man with a powerful physique. He arrived in northern Wisconsin near Marinette in the late 1880's, where he married a local girl with whom he had two daughters. The family then moved to Milwaukee, where Dan fished, farmed and owned a local saloon near the waterfront. Enticed by the Alaskan Gold Rush of 1898 and encouraged by beer magnate Captain Frederick Pabst, Seavey disappeared into the gold fields for several years, essentially deserting his young family in the process. About 1900, he reappeared in Milwaukee, but never reconciled with his wife, and finally moved to Escanaba where he soon remarried.

Seavey owned a number of boats that he employed in a mercantile transport business, delivering and selling hay, grain, potatoes, apples and other general commodities. But it's been reported that from time to time these same boats transported contraband, poached meat, bootleg liquor and "ladies of the night." It seems that Dan had few qualms between making an honest or dishonest buck!

During his maritime ramblings, Seavey earned a well-deserved reputation as a brawler who seldom lost a fight. His pugilistic exploits became legendary in most lake ports and waterfront saloons. Perhaps his most

King Features Syndicate, Inc. 1958



famous fight occurred one winter day in 1904 at Frankfort, MI. Mitch Love, rumored to be a professional fighter, battled Dan on the ice of Frankfort Harbor, where a large circle drawn in the snow served as a makeshift ring. The contest, witnessed by some 200 betting fight fans, lasted over two hours until a bruised and battered Love was carted off by his dejected supporters.

Seavey's greatest claim to fame (or infamy) involved the theft of a small lake schooner, the *Nellie Johnson*. The story claims that he drank the schooner's captain, R. J. McCormick, and several crewmen into a stupor, after which Dan and two companions commandeered the vessel and headed to Chicago. After failing to sell the ship's cargo, they sailed the craft up to Frankfort and hid it up a local river, thereby avoiding the revenue cutter *Tuscarora* that had been sent out to locate and capture them.

Dan managed to remain under cover for some time, but eventually word of his whereabouts reached the federal agents. As the law moved in, Seavey moved out, escaping to sea in his small, personal schooner, the *Wanderer*. Unfortunately, his vessel was no match for the steamer *Tuscarora*, so Dan was soon overtaken, boarded and arrested for piracy. He was taken to Chicago for booking and arraignment, but here the story takes some interesting twists.

Seavey was not charged with piracy, then a death-penalty crime, but rather with "unauthorized removal of a vessel on which he had once been a seaman." This was a much lesser violation, punishable by ten years in jail, \$10,000 fine (or both), so Dan was released on bond. Later in July, all charges were apparently dropped, but it remains unclear why, and this matter is currently being researched. Various explanations have been offered over the

years as to how Dan "got off." One simply says that he had "friends on high places" including a very connected lawyer who got the charges dismissed. Another account suggests that Dan had once been part owner of the *Nellie Johnson* and that Captain McCormick was still indebted to him in some manner. Whatever the truth, from that time forward, Seavey held the formal title of "Dan the Pirate!"



Chicago, June 1908

Capt. Dan Seavey

Dan the Pirate was a very paradoxical character indeed. He reportedly liked youngsters and taught local boys to fish and sail. One famous Seavey story tells how some Escanaba boys had invented a spearing device that could be lowered from the dock to snatch apples from Dan's deck load. Seavey soon discovered the prank, and instead of chasing the rascals, gave them a sack of apples, along with a stern warning: "You can have all the apples you want, but never, never steal them!" This from a man known to pilfer anything that was not nailed down.

At story's end, it turns out that Bradley and Seavey were actually related. Bradley's granddaughter, Annie, moved from the Bark River fishing village to the Garden Peninsula, where she settled in the small logging camp of Little Harbor. She eventually met and married Dan Seavey, who at that time operated a sawmill at Gouley's Harbor across

the peninsula. Although this was Seavey's third marriage, the couple reportedly stayed together until 1928 when Annie died. Seavey retired from sailing in the late 1930's and reconciled his family indiscretions with the daughters from his first marriage. He also became very religious in his declining years and was often seen carrying a Bible about town. Roaring Dan eventually died at age 83 in Peshtigo, WI in 1949 and was buried next to his daughter, Josephine, in Forest Home Cemetery in Marinette, WI.

In retrospect, Seavey had two children and eight great grandchildren, whereas Bradley had five children and well over a dozen grandchildren. Therefore, it is highly likely that a number of descendants of these two interesting characters are alive today. Perhaps many of these individuals are blissfully unaware of their famous genealogy. Indeed, some residents of Wisconsin and Michigan have discovered their linkage to the "Giant and the Pirate." For example, the Malloy brothers, Dan, Patrick, James and Michael from the Upper Peninsula proudly acknowledged Dan Seavey as their great uncle by marriage. In fact, it was Dan Malloy of Manistique, MI that brought this curious relationship to the attention of this writer. Hopefully, other members of Bradley-Seavey ancestry will be come forth and be recognized in future years! ■

Selected References

Door County Advocate, 2 July 1908
Ibid., 19 February 1885.

H. R. Holand, "The Giant of Hedgehog Harbor," in *Old Peninsula Days* (Madison WI: Wisconsin House, LTD. 1925), 212-219.

Frederick Stonehouse, "Great Lakes Piracy," in *Great Lakes Crime* (Gwinn, MI: Avery Color Studies, Inc. 2004), 90-92.

Legendary Car Found In Lake Waubesa

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reasoned if they all went to the back of the boat the bow would stay high enough to keep the water out. Well, not too well thought out! As they moved to the back the bow did raise as hoped, only the back of the boat went below the surface, and everyone was now in the water with the boat sinking. All were rescued, none the worse for wear, but with damaged egos. So I started looking for this lost boat when time permitted.

Last summer I got a "hit" on the side scan sonar. Dropping my camera down I could see it was something worth a closer look (clarity was terrible, so it's hard to tell what some things actually are). I did a dive and there it was, a 14-foot Alumacraft with a license registration expiration of 1969. As required by state statute I notified the Dane County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wardens. The sheriff's dive team did a dive on the boat and found no traces of any bodies, but did recover a cooler with an eight pack of Kingsbury beer (actually a seven pack, one bottle was missing)! I decided to salvage the boat, with hopes it could be used for fishing

in areas where we wouldn't want or be able to take our bigger boats (i.e. the Wisconsin River in the winter walleye fishing). I notified the DCSO and DNR of my intentions, and they authorized its removal. The registration numbers couldn't be tracked, no records that far back on expired numbers. At this time I thought it was the boat I was looking for. However, retired Rec Patrol diver Bob Pavey informed me the boat I was looking for had Illinois registration. So, the search was back on ... With this in mind, I started the search again, and on the morning of July 28th, I got another "hit", the rest of the story follows.

Friday, July 28, 2006

I was running grid patterns with side scan sonar. The first hit on the car was in the early morning. I did not have a camera along so I marked location with GPS to check later. Came back late the same afternoon with my fishing buddy Mike Micahels, and using my underwater camera/monitor we discovered it was "something" of interest. So I planned on doing a dive to see what it actually was.

Saturday, July 29, 2006

I dove on the object in early morning with Mike in the boat and the object turned out to be an old car. The tail lights were still on the car, so I tried rubbing the lens on one to see if the year of the car was stamped on the lens. The lens (glass)

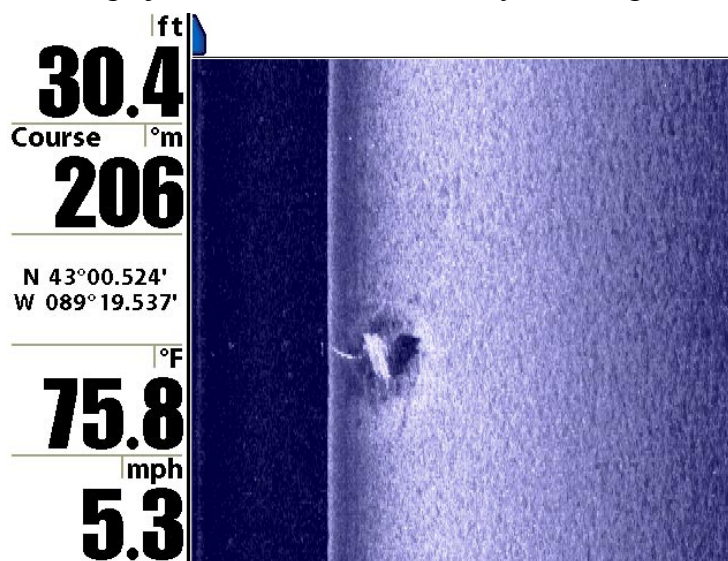
came off in my hand, so I decided to hold onto it to help identify the year and make of the car. I then saw the license plate with an expiration date of 1961. My first thought of was Stolz and Wick since I knew they had disappeared around that time. I removed the license plate so it could be checked with DMV. The car was upside down and all windows were intact and one door wasn't completely shut. I was unable to see inside the car since it was full of silt. Back on the boat I contacted the DCSO and Sgt. Ritter called me back. He contacted Rick Steinhauer who verified the plate was from the missing car. Jeff Nelson & Sgt. Ritter went to the site to check it out. They were unable to locate the car so plans were made for me to meet them there at 1:00 pm the next afternoon to show them where it was.

Sunday, July 30, 2006

DCSO changed the time to 11:00 am but did not contact me about the change until 10:38 am. Mike and I headed out and met them there. By this time they had located the car and had two divers down. Jeff and I went down together after the first two divers were back in the boat. At this point the DCSO had planned on searching the car, doing the investigation and recovery. This was the last time I dove on the car.

At some point a decision was made to have the project turned over to the Madison Police Department (MPD). A press conference was scheduled for Tuesday, August 1, 2006 to release the information. I was requested by MPD not to talk to the press until after the press conference, which I agreed to. However, on Monday, July 31, 2006 I received a phone call at work from Channel 3 TV news. Someone had leaked the story to them and they wanted to do

Scan image of 1950 Ford in Lake Waubesa. by Rick Krueger.



an interview. I declined as per MPD's request but did verify with them that the information they had was correct (I had found the car in Waubesa, the date of the find, license expiration date, etc).

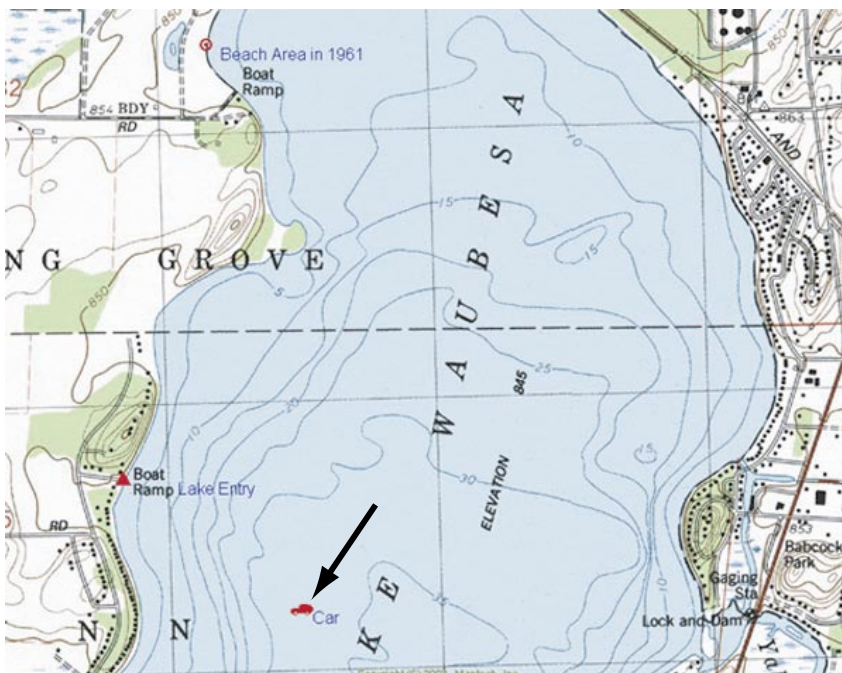
Tuesday, August 1, 2006

Mike (he handles things above water while I dive) and I took off work and went to Lake Farm Park where a command center was being setup. We went out with the DCSO and helped set things up on the barge with my boat. I made sure I wasn't on shore at the time of the press conference.

Wednesday, August 2, 2006

Channel 3 called again with a request for an interview. At this point I agreed so I could get some publicity for the side scan sonar. The interview went well, Angela Bettis did a very good job. After the interview was broadcast I emailed Angela to let her know she'd done a very good job with keeping the facts straight. The next day she responded, saying in the last 24 hours the interview was the most watched on their website.

Location of Wick and Stolz car.



In the meantime it was finally decided that the DCSO would handle the body and property recovery and MPD would handle the forensics. Plans were also continued in the possibility of them salvaging the car. I spoke with the dive team on the salvage operations and a final plan was decided upon. During this week a salvage expert was hired to do a dive on the car and evaluate the possibility of it's removal. His recommendation was to leave the car there, since there was an 80% chance the car would fall apart during recovery. He also advised there were no bodies in the car. Since the car was full of silt you couldn't even see inside, so how he made this determination confuses me. He was wrong on both accounts.

The sheriff's divers spent a lot of time removing the silt from in and around the car. Some bone fragments were found outside the vehicle. More dives were made until finally the door that wasn't closed completely could be pried open. Jeff Nelson expected it would take a lot of effort to pry open, instead it opened easily. They continued silt removal until they finally found the

skulls and skeletal remains of both men. Some property was also recovered including both wallets.

Wednesday, August 9, 2006

I took off work early and went to Waubesa to watch the car's removal. By the time I got out onto the water the car was already out of the water and was being secured to a barge. The lift bags weren't able to pull the car from the muck (approximately 3000 lbs of lift) so two cranes (one on each barge) were used to finish the removal.

The car was removed from the lake by the sheriff's dive team and hauled away on a flat bed. It was taken to an MPD secure area where their forensic team processed the car. The afternoon of the recovery I was called again by Channel 3 news, requesting a second interview. I declined, as I had accomplished my goal "promoting" the side scan sonar in the earlier interview. I spoke with one family member at the landing. He had gone out dragging the bottom with then under-sheriff Jack Leslie and another person when they could get a boat out right after the two disappeared. He was surprised they didn't find the car at that point, as he thought they'd went over that area.

Sunday, August 20th, 2006

Larry Stolz from Wyoming called to thank me for finding his brother and Wicks. We spoke for a while and if he comes down to Madison to pick-up his brothers' remains we agreed to meet in person. ■

Editor's Note

The story of the disappearance of Wick and Stolz is in the book *Our Four Lakes, Their Legends, Sites and Secrets*, published by the Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association.

Coming Events

- Sep. 16, 2006 **Wisconsin Underwater Archeology Association Action Committee Meeting.** 9:00 am at the State Historical Society, Madison. For information check the WUAA web site at www.wuaa.org or email wuaa@mailbag.com.
- Sep. 16, 2006 **McDougall's Dream - Dinner and Silent Auction.** On board the *Meteor* in Superior. For information contact Superior Public Museums at 715-394-5712 or email info@SuperiorPublicMuseums.org.
- Sep. 21-23, 2006 **Association For Great Lakes Maritime History - Meeting and Conference.** In Alpena, MI. For information contact Pat Labadie at 989-356-8805.
- Oct. 21, 2006 **Wisconsin Underwater Archeology and Maritime History Conference.** Four Points Sheraton, Milwaukee. For information check the WUAA web site at www.wuaa.org or email wuaa@mailbag.com.
- Nov. 3-4 2006 **Gales of November,** Duluth, MN. For more information see www.lsmma.com.
- Nov. 4 2006 **Shipwrecks and Scuba Show,** Sandusky, OH. For more information call 419-732-1728.
- Mar. 23-24 2007 **Ghost Ships Festival,** Milwaukee, WI. For more information go to their web site at www.ghost-ships.org.

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