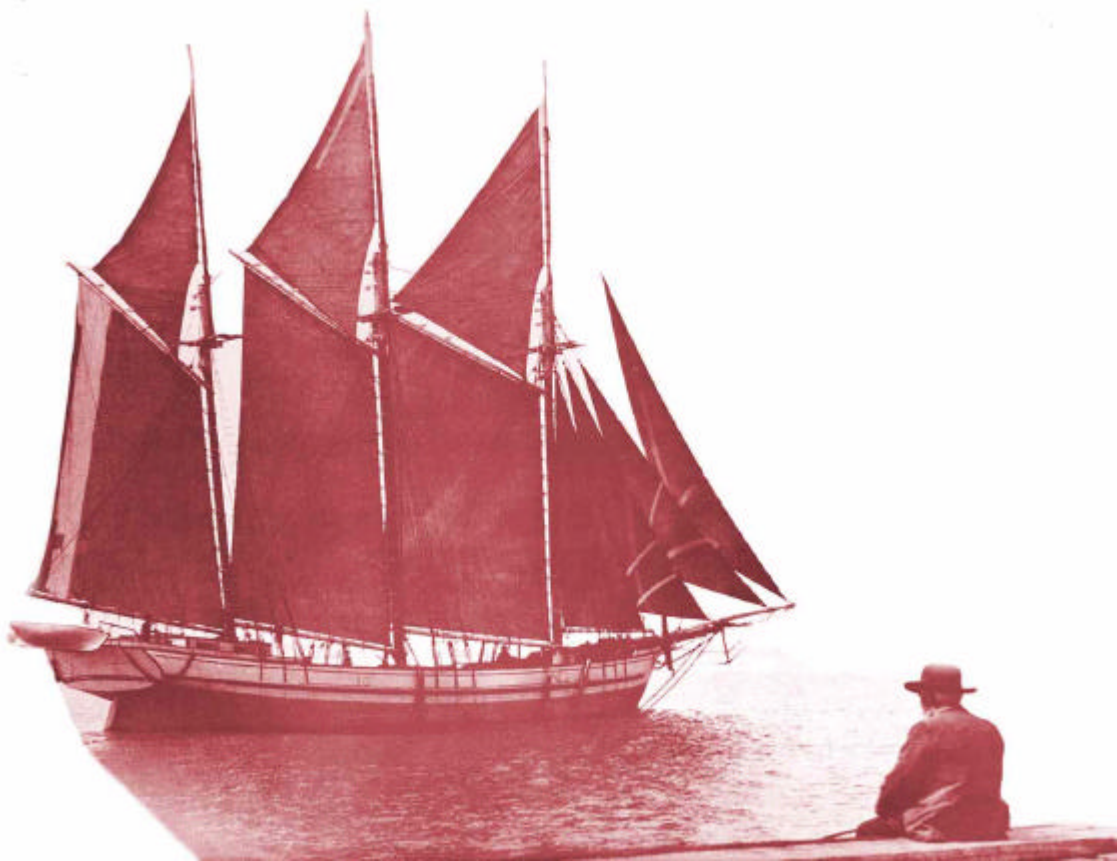


PRESERVING OUR MARINE HERITAGE





Preserving Our Marine Heritage

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the financial assistance of the Ontario Ministry of Culture

**Cover photo: *Burt Barnes and friend* - 96' x 24' x 7', 118 tons, built 1882
One of the last working schooners on the Great lakes,
foundered near Long Point Ontario Sept. 3, 1926**

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Preface

The Province of Ontario's maritime history is rich and dynamic. With shores bordered by four of the five Great Lakes and with major river systems connecting them as well as dissecting the interior, Ontario's waterways have played a major role in the development and prosperity of the province.

By 1893 the combined Great Lakes fleets of Canada and the United States reached its peak when 3,018 registered ships plied the lakes. With these ships came the development of the ports and industries they served, the building of canals and lighthouses and of course the evolution of a ship building industry which produced modifications and complete ship designs that were unique to the Great Lakes.

These same waters that proved so beneficial could also be dangerous. Very confining in some areas, fully exposed in others, and dotted with shoals and islands, Ontario's waterways have exacted a heavy toll from the men and ships that have sailed them. Of the tens of thousands of accidents that have occurred on the lakes, it is estimated that over 4,000 wrecks remain on the bottom today. These range from LaSalle's Griffon, which vanished in 1679 through to the now legendary 729' ore carrier Edmond Fitzgerald which sank in a violent November storm in 1975. It was a concern that these lost ships should be protected and their stories told that brought about the formation of Save Ontario Shipwrecks.

These sunken vessels are a direct connection to our maritime legacy. Ships long thought lost to the pages of history are being found on a regular basis, many in excellent condition, as if ready to continue their long delayed journeys. Today this lost fleet is being visited by thousands of divers every year, but unfortunately a price is being paid. Vandalism, carelessness and a lack of understanding, have all contributed to irreparable damage to these heritage sites. Once an artifact is removed or damage has been incurred, a piece of our history is forever lost.

Save Ontario Shipwrecks and its members are dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Ontario's maritime history. Through a variety of programs SOS promotes the education of divers and the general public in the importance of marine heritage conservation and the roles they can play in preserving it for future generations to enjoy, explore and study. We hope you find this brochure informative and it will encourage you to take up an active role in this fascinating field.

*Jim Hopkins
President
Save Ontario Shipwrecks*

What Ships went down?

On November 9, 1975, the 729-foot ore freighter *Edmund Fitzgerald* left Superior, Wisconsin and sailed down Lake Superior toward Toledo, Ohio. She was one of the big lakers that regularly delivered raw iron ore to the giant steel-making complexes at Detroit and Toledo. One of the largest vessels ever to sail the Great Lakes, she was believed to be invincible against the elements.

Her last journey began pleasantly enough, but at one o'clock, the following afternoon, icy rain began to fall as the ship passed Isle Royale. The wind rose stirring up ten-foot high waves. By 3:30 p.m., one of the worst gales of the century caught the ship with winds gusting up to 96 miles per hour. As the ship pitched and rolled in the winter seas, she began to list slightly and take on water. Captain Ernest McSorley decided to make a run for the calmer waters of Whitefish Bay at the eastern end of Lake Superior where the crew could ride out the storm and inspect the damage. At 4:30 p.m., he radioed the *Arthur M. Anderson*, another ore freighter that was sailing nearby. The storm blew away McSorley's radar antennae and he needed guidance into Whitefish Bay. First Mate Morgan Clark quickly agreed to help. By 7:15 p.m. a furious snow squall and 30-foot waves were pounding both ships. The *Anderson* was only nine miles from the *Fitzgerald* by now, and Clark decided to check how the other ship was doing. "We are holding our own," said McSorley. Those were his last words...

Only fifteen miles from the safety of Whitefish Bay, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank, taking all 29 crewmembers to the bottom of Lake Superior. It had happened quickly – one moment she was plowing through the high waves, and the next she vanished. News of the sinking made front-page headlines in most major newspapers. A year later, Canadian singer Gordon Lightfoot composed a song called *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*. The haunting ballad reached the top of the charts and it made many people aware just how treacherous sailing the Great Lakes can be.

However, the story of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* is not unique. She is the most recent shipwreck in a long line of marine disasters that have occurred on the Great Lakes and inland waterways of Ontario. Unpredictable weather, ignorance of the waters, collisions with other vessels, and fire were some of the hazards that led to the demise of thousands of sailing vessels over the last three hundred years.

Gales claimed the greatest number of ships. Storms often erupt on the Great Lakes without warning, and even with the benefits of marine radiotelephones and modern weather forecasting, navigators must be wary of the elements. Eleven years before the *Fitzgerald* disaster, the ore freighter *Daniel J. Morell* was torn in half during a vicious storm on Lake Huron and only one of the 29-crew members survived. The *Carl D. Bradley*, the largest freighter of its time, sank in Lake Michigan in November 1958. Only two of the 35-crew members were rescued.

The Great Storm of 1913 killed more sailors than any other in Great Lakes shipping history. Two hundred and thirty-five seamen drowned, ten ships sunk, (including an

elegant cruise ship called the *Harmonic*) and more than 20 others were driven ashore during six days of gales.

Things were much worse in the days when sailors were forced to weather storms in wooden brigantines, schooners and barques. In one 20-year period during 1878-1898, gales damaged nearly 6,000 ships. Most could be raised and salvaged, but more than 1,000 were lost.

Some sailors survived by being resourceful. When the barque *New Brunswick* sank during a fierce storm over Lake Erie, eight crewmembers clung to a makeshift raft. The survivors of the *Mayflower* clung to a coffin and drifted ashore!

Before the Canadian Hydrographic Service was established in 1904, the lakes were largely uncharted and many ships foundered on unknown shoals and sandbars. Parts of the St. Clair River, Lake Erie and Georgian Bay on Lake Huron were dubbed the “graveyards” of ships because of the number of sinkings that occurred in those waters.



A diver explores the *Sweepstakes*, one of the most popular shipwrecks in Fathom Five National Marine Park.

Photo: David Ostifichuck

In steamship days, exploding boilers were common. When the boiler on the tug *B.B Jones* exploded in 1871, seven of her crew who had been eating lunch were killed instantly. More often it was fire from the exploding boiler that claimed the ship.

Collisions were also frequent in the days before navigational instruments. One of the worst occurred on Lake Erie when the steamer *Atlantic*, the most luxurious passenger ship of the 1850's, collided with the *Ogdensburg*. Though the *Atlantic's* passenger list was lost, it is now thought that probably less than 200 people died.



Two Schooners are destroyed in a Lake Erie storm.

There are also ships that mysteriously vanished. Historians like to puzzle over the disappearance of the *Griffon*. Built in 1679 near Niagara Falls to pursue the fur trade for France, she was returning to her shipyard with a cargo of furs when she disappeared somewhere on Lake Huron. No one has yet found her remains. If the *Griffon* is ever discovered intact, her cargo of information about European shipbuilding techniques and the life of fur traders will be as valuable as the one that was lost.



A diver photographs some planks of a shipwreck near Tobermory, Ontario.

Photo: David Ostifichuck

No one really knows how many wrecks lie beneath the waters of the Great Lakes, but some estimates put the number at 4,000 in the Great Lakes and twice as many in the province's other waterways.

Shipwrecks are just one type of heritage site. There are submerged communities and infrastructure that are a result of waterways like the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Rideau Canal built during the civil war, and the many lakes that have been dammed over the past century. The complete lock system that once was used to bypass rapids and shallow waters along the St. Lawrence are very popular sites. The remains of submerged wooden and stone bridges, generating stations and weirs all require the same consideration.

Why were ships important to Ontario?

Before the days of air, rail and asphalt, water was the most efficient conduit to the hinterland of Ontario. The Great Lakes have served as a "highway" for trade and settlement from prehistoric times. During the 17th century, the fur traders traveled the lakes in search of furs to send back to Europe. For the first settlers of Ontario, ships were the source of essential supplies and news from Europe. Later, they were the only means of exporting fur, forestry and mineral products to Great Britain and Europe.

Hence, Ontario began her existence as a maritime province. As trade increased between Canada and Europe, so did the need for ships. In 1677, the French explorer La Salle initiated the development of a transportation system on the Great Lakes with the building of the *Frontenac*, a 10-ton barque, and three other vessels designed to further fur trade interests for France. Two years later, La Salle oversaw construction of the ill-fated *Griffon* at Cayuga Creek on the Niagara River. Between 1732 and 1745, seven sailing ships were built for Lake Ontario and Lake Superior.

The **War of 1812** spurred a surge in shipbuilding. The *St. Lawrence*, built in Kingston in 1814, was a three-decker first-rate ship with the mounting of 112 guns, and was larger than Horatio Nelson's famous *Victory*.



This typical schooner sailed Ontario's waterways during the late 19th century – the golden era of sailing vessels.

However, it was in the early years of the 19th century that Ontario's shipbuilding industry flourished. Kingston, St. Catharines and Brockville became the sites of major shipyards. Between 1849 and 1895, hundreds of full-rigged barques, sloops, brigantines and schooners, as well as hundreds of steam powered (both side paddlewheel and propeller driven) wooden vessels were built. In later years, larger iron and steel steam powered vessels were built on the Great Lakes and inland rivers to further Canadian trade interests with Europe and the United States.



Gliding like a ghost over a wreck in a Northern Ontario Lake, a diver studies the keelson and frames.

Photo: Ministry of Culture

Given this need for ships and the hazards that awaited them, it is not surprising that there were many accidents in Ontario's waterways.

Legacies of the deep

Archaeologists and historians believe that Ontario's waterways contain one of the richest resources of inland marine heritage in the world. Unlike the ocean, where salt, marine life and warm currents have destroyed many sites, the cold temperatures of Ontario's waterways provide a stable environment for wrecks, preserving many intact.

Two shipwrecks of great archaeological value are the *Hamilton* and the *Scourge*, armed merchant schooners that fought on Lake Ontario during the War of 1812. Discovered resting upright at the bottom of the lake in 1973, they had been almost perfectly preserved by the ice-cold waters and the way they sank in a sudden squall.

Each wreck has its own distinct historical value. Many are underwater "museums" representing unique examples of a shipbuilder's craft or rare links with the social and political history associated with inland shipping and commerce. Thanks to these wrecks, historians have been able to piece together information on engineering, ship design, commerce, shipboard life and other important data that give clues to Ontario's growth and development, especially during the 19th century.

Often, shipwrecks are the only reliable source of information. Few records survive on how ships were built. However, a wrecked schooner from 1850 can show how shipwrights in a given town built ships for different conditions and freight. Since many goods had to be brought in, sometimes over great distances, material remains from shipwrecks are good indicators of the choices that 19th century consumers made and they give clues to the lifestyles led by our ancestors.

A boon to divers and tourism

With the invention of scuba gear, shipwrecks have become exciting attractions for recreational divers – offering a glimpse of the past and a sense of participation in the adventures and perils of maritime life. Divers can simply choose to “sightsee” on shipwrecks or they can study them. They can also appreciate the ecological value of shipwrecks that provide shelter for marine creatures.



The analysis of the hull of a ship can tell divers and archaeologists the origins and style of Great Lakes sailing vessels.

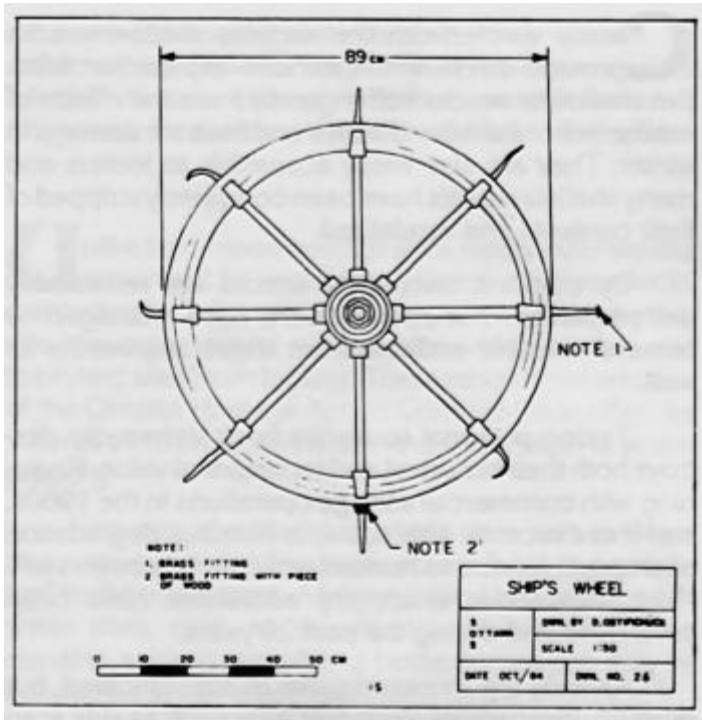
Photo: Ministry of Culture

The *George A. Marsh*, a three-masted schooner that sank in 1917, is one of the most popular shipwrecks in Ontario. She sits on the bottom of Lake Ontario in about 70 feet of water, looking very much as she did when she sank. Amazingly, her hull, deck rails, deadeyes and wheel are still intact. A lifeboat even sits on her deck along with tools, pottery and numerous other ships' artifacts.

Unfortunately, not all shipwrecks have been as lucky as the *George A. Marsh*.

Along with shipwrecks and their many artifacts on heritage sites, there are also artifacts that were once part of or on a ship, that have at one time or another fallen off, broken off or been purposely dropped over the side. As we dive along the bottom, you may have the awesome experience of coming upon an anchor from an old ship that once passed. Since there are no shipwrecks around, many people feel that these are theirs to keep, when actually; they belong to the province and are in themselves a heritage site. If these items

are removed for lawn ornaments, everyone has been stripped of the pleasure of their discovery. The bottoms become more barren and our minds will never be challenged to think of how such objects ever came to rest in that location. General consensus among the public prefers these items be left where they are as opposed to gathering them up to a more local offshore dive spot. Protection of these items is required where they sit. To achieve this, everyone needs to participate in preventing removal or if after the fact, help get them back to where they belong. SOS will assist in any way.



This is the ship's wheel from the *Lillie Parsons*, a 19th century schooner, which sank in a storm near Brockville.



Heritage conscious divers returned the anchor of the *Lillie Parsons* to the wreck site in 1986.

Photo: David Ostifichuck

The dangers to Ontario's marine heritage

Clearly visible from the surface, shallow wrecks provide divers with extended exploration time. But shallower wrecks suffer greatly from the effects of nature – from wind and waves and from ice damage in winter. They are also easily accessible to looters who have vandalized and completely stripped many shallow wrecks of their contents.

By contrast, deepwater wrecks are remarkably well preserved, but many divers have managed to remove valuable artifacts from these shipwrecks as well.

Taking personal souvenirs from shipwrecks destroys both their historical and recreational value. Beginning with commercial salvage operations in the 1960s, and more recently with souvenir hunting, degradation of shipwrecks due to human activities has been swift. Most accessible shipwrecks have been severely looted during the past 30 years.

As well, the increasing use of sophisticated, but relatively inexpensive electronic gear such as side scan sonar and other instruments, has improved the chances for divers to find what they are looking for. You will not find a Spanish galleon loaded with gold at the bottom of any of the Great Lakes, (most ships traveling Ontario's waterways carried items such as lumber, coal, iron and wheat) but these waters do contain some very collectible artifacts. The growing heritage consciousness of Canadians has actually contributed to the loss of heritage shipwreck sites as divers greedily exploit the flourishing antiquarian market for deadeyes, ships wheels, anchors, capstan parts and portholes.

An example of greed: when the wreck of the little steamer *Midland* was discovered in Lake Ontario (with her cabins and superstructure still intact), she was reduced to a pile of boards spread across the lakebed in a single afternoon!

Valuable information is lost when people remove artifacts from heritage sites. The place an item was first located can sometimes tell a historian why the ship sank. It may also provide insight into what life was actually like a century ago – information that cannot be found elsewhere. Stripping ships can damage their historical value, and the value of the artifacts they contain. As collectors of Canadian heritage, we have to ask ourselves whether these artifacts are more valuable as rusty trophies or for the story they can tell if left in their place.

The law

Unlike land-based heritage sites, underwater wrecks are invisible, except to divers, and provincial authorities lack the personnel to police divers at every site. However, several statutes exist which can be used to protect sites from looting. These range from

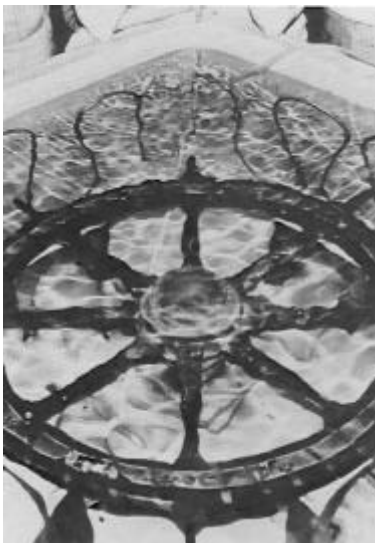
sections of the Ontario Heritage Act, to Criminal Code offences such as theft, break and enter, and possession of stolen property.

Removal of artifacts, in whole or in part, is illegal and persons committing such acts are liable to prosecution and punishment. Archaeological study of underwater sites, such as shipwrecks, pre-historic Indian remains, sunken aircraft and bottle dumps can only be conducted under a license issued by the Province.

With the recently defeated and controversial Bill 13 behind us, many people still feel that the law needs more teeth to protect our heritage. A major review and update of the Ontario Heritage Act is underway. Late in 2002, Bill 179 was passed which amended the Heritage Act to specifically include Marine Heritage sites. It also very clearly states that removing or disturbing in any way (silt included) is strictly illegal. New regulations are forthcoming that will outline penalties for anyone found in violation. The full impact of this can be researched on the SOS website.

The challenge to conserve

Raised artifacts pose difficult conservation problems. Cold water and low oxygen levels at great depths protect wood and metal from extensive decomposition. Ships and artifacts survived for centuries in Ontario's cold waters because they stabilize with their environment. Raised to the surface, a centuries-old artifact can rot away in a few months because exposure to air accelerates the decomposition process.



The *Breadalbane's* wheel: spent 15 years in a cooled, nitrogenated, water bath waiting for conservation technology for a composite item.

Photo: David Ostifichuck

Very few institutions can properly treat artifacts removed from the water and there are not enough museums in Ontario to care for and display every underwater artifact. Conservation is also very expensive. A good example of the expense involved is that of the *HMS Breadalbane's* wheel (a ship that foundered in the Arctic while searching for the lost Franklin expedition). Several artifacts were retrieved by Dr. Joe MacInnis during

an expedition and dive to the wreck in April 1983. These included the ship's wheel, a pulley block from the mizzen mast's trestle tree, a piece of copper hull sheeting from the port bow, and a wooden disk with a square hole in the centre. These objects arrived at the Park's conservation laboratories in Ottawa in May 1983.

Until a few years ago the ship's wheel had been stored in refrigerated, nitrogenated water. This object is a composite artifact made of wood (various types) and metal (copper alloys and iron). The combination of wood and metal in a waterlogged artifact has always been a conservation "headache" since no proven treatment for this type of wet composite artifact is yet available. After 15 years of waiting for the conservation research community to develop an appropriate treatment, The Parks Canada conservators decided to go ahead and use the safest treatment known at the time. In 1998, the soaking of the wheel in an aqueous treatment solution of corrosion inhibitor and consolidant was started. After soaking for 3 years the wheel was placed in a walk-in freezer to slowly non-vacuum freeze-dry. At present the drying has been completed and the object awaits a final cleaning and consolidation

There are at least 2 years and over 150 person hours left in the conservation, to excavate the encrusted areas in the gear box and apply protective coatings to the entire artifact. The costs to date for this one artifact are:

Person/hours	\$32,000
Liquid nitrogen	\$11,250
Chilling devices	\$15,000
Other supplies and equipment	\$1,500
TOTAL	\$59,750

This proves that it is far better to leave artifacts on the site to be viewed by divers for hundreds of years than expose them to the air where they would disintegrate quickly, or worse, be locked up and hidden away for tens of years at the expense to all. Eventually, this artifact will be sent back to the northern region where it was found for possible display.

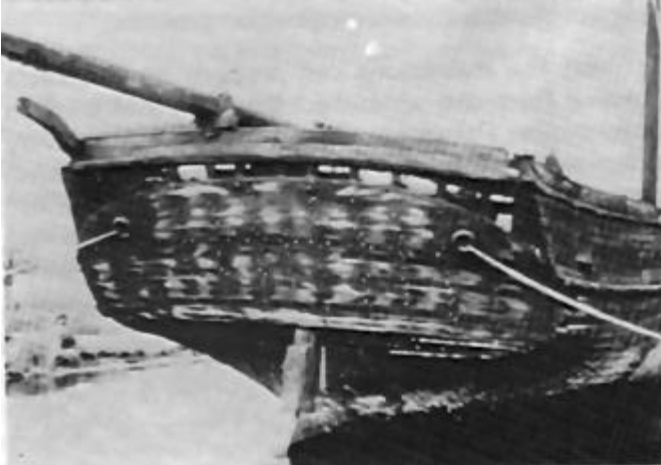


The *Breadalbane's* wheel in 2002: just out of the freeze drying phase, it awaits the laborious final cleaning and consolidation.

Photo: Parks Canada

While many artifacts have been turned into worthless junk, there have been far greater tragedies with raised wrecks. The 37-metre laker *Alvin Clark*, which sank in a storm in Lake Michigan in 1864, was raised in 1969 with great fanfare and not much thought

about future care. It was rotting in a parking lot in 1989 for lack of preservation funds. The property eventually changed hands and the deteriorating hull became a hazard to public safety. It was eventually bulldozed flat and hauled away to a dump. The *Alvin Clark* is simply no more due to lack of foresight.



Sunk in 1864, raised in 1969, the *Alvin Clark* was rotting in a parking lot and eventually bulldozed!

There was also an attempt to raise the steamer *E.L. Hackley*, which proved to be too securely stuck in a clay lake bottom. The shipwreck was cut in half by the lifting cables and only the rudder and stern rail came to the surface. This crude salvage attempt severely damaged the remaining hull.

Archaeologists and many divers are aware of the endless struggle for funding and are wary of raising entire shipwrecks. Many believe that knowledge of shipwrecks can be obtained by studying them in an underwater environment.

Who is working to save Ontario's marine heritage?

In Ontario, the principal responsibility for the protection, preservation and study of underwater sites falls under the Ministry of Culture which has an Underwater Archaeological Section (Marine Heritage Unit) to conduct professional studies, promote marine heritage and coordinate conservation efforts.

Other marine heritage-oriented groups include The Ontario Marine Heritage Committee, which was formed in 1975 to research various topics related to Great Lakes maritime history, and Shipwreck Preservation and Research (SPAR), which is a group of divers, and historians who seek to increase the public's understanding of Ontario's marine heritage.

As well, the Conservation Division of the Canadian Parks Service (Parks Canada) has saved thousands of marine relics through its wet organic materials laboratory.

What about divers?

Alarmed that our marine heritage resources are in danger, a growing number of divers have opted to study and help preserve shipwrecks instead of looting them. They are teaching new divers to have a different outlook on our underwater treasure as well.



SOS Volunteers believe in preserving shipwrecks, not looting them.

Photo: Jonnah Libman



Members of the Sault Ste. Marie SOS Chapter practice underwater archaeological techniques during a NAS Level 1 course instructed by the Ministry of Culture.

The work of SOS

Save Ontario Shipwrecks (SOS), was formed in 1981 to help educate the diving community to help protect Ontario's marine heritage. Consisting of sport divers and amateur marine archaeologists, SOS is a non-profit volunteer organization with several hundred members and many local chapters across the province, with some in the USA.

Local chapters undertake projects that appeal to their membership, benefit the local diving community and promote the conservation efforts of SOS. Volunteers perform many underwater archaeological activities including shipwreck research, surveying of submerged resources, public information and education, seminars, archival studies and pictorial collections.

These activities get support and encouragement by the Marine Heritage Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Culture. The Ministry provides funding, expertise and on-site support to SOS members. It also provides courses in underwater archaeology – complete with pool and open water exercises using the curriculum of the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS), which is recognized around the world.



A diver from SOS Ottawa returns some artifacts (removed years ago) to the *Lillie Parsons*.

Photo: David Ostifichuck

In return, SOS members assist the unit by collecting archaeological data and writing about their findings.

A major task facing SOS is to stop the stripping of shipwrecks by sport divers and others. All levels of SOS have a very important role to play in getting the conservation message across to the divers of the Province. At the provincial level, SOS lobbies the various diver-training agencies to include shipwreck conservation in all diver training courses. The provincial level of SOS also develops and distributes educational support material to assist in delivering this message.

SOS has been deploying mooring buoys to aid divers and commercial charter operators to visit the site by not using anchors which quickly dismantle fragile century old relics. As well, plaques have been installed on many heritage sites (both on land and in the water) to help educate people about the history of the site.

Education has helped. SOS members have found that if divers understand the heritage value of shipwrecks, they are less likely to damage and remove artifacts from them.

SOS chapter projects

SOS volunteers have been involved in several interesting projects. A few years ago, the Toronto chapter made local divers aware of the value of the *Sligo*, a wooden sailing ship built in 1874 in St. Catharines. The *Sligo*, which capsized in a storm in 1918 on Lake Ontario, had been half-stripped by divers, but the Toronto chapter thought that if the local diving community could become familiar with *Sligo* while she was still relatively intact, a thief would face great resentment from fellow divers and stand a much greater risk of prosecution.

Nowadays, divers who have located artifacts around the *Sligo* have begun placing them back on the ship where others can enjoy them. If a few things like coral look out of place, it is because some divers have brought items from their basements and attics to jazz up the site!

The Ottawa chapter has spent much time studying the *Lillie Parsons*, a 19th century schooner that plied the Great Lakes from Chicago to Brockville. She was on her way to Brockville with a load of coal when she sank during a storm in 1877. Over a three-year period, 53 divers and non-divers assisted with a project that has resulted in considerable knowledge of the Great Lakes shipbuilding industry.

SOS members have put educational plaques on shipwrecks and created interpretive trails on wrecks to help divers enjoy their explorations. In addition, some chapters have begun working in collaboration with the Ministry's Marine Heritage Unit on studying some prehistoric sites near Gananoque. The divers have discovered the remains of pots dating back to 300 B.C., which offers clues to the lifestyles of the prehistoric peoples who once lived there.

Preserve Our Wrecks (POW)

At the same time Save Ontario Shipwrecks was formed, sport divers from around Kingston became concerned with the removal of artifacts from the many fine wrecks in the Kingston and Bay of Quinte region. To deal with the situation, they formed an organization called Preserve Our Wrecks (POW) and launched an intensive campaign against wreck stripping. This campaign was so successful that wreck stripping in the area has virtually ceased. Kingston's charter boat operators, dive store retailers and scuba instructors all actively promote conservation, and discourage the destruction of heritage and recreational resources.



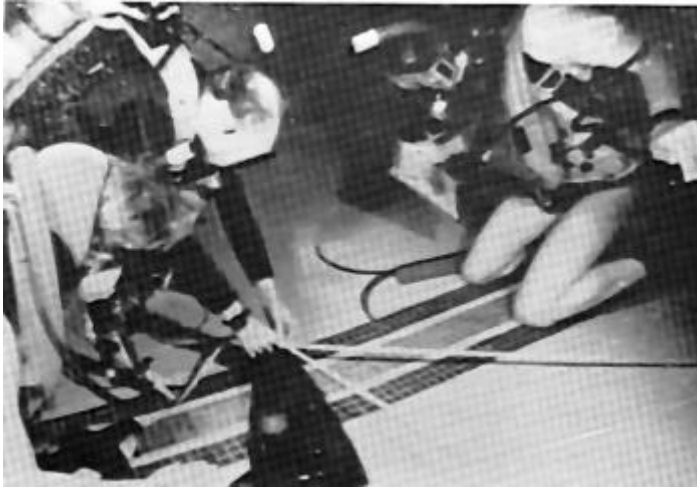
The rail and deadeyes of the *Annie Falconer* are clearly visible. Members of Preserve Our Wrecks (POW) studied this Confederation schooner.

POW members spent the summer of 1981 studying the wreck of the *Annie Falconer*, an 1867 schooner that had sunk in a storm in 1904. They measured the vessel, took photographs and catalogued artifacts with the help of archaeologists from the Ministry's Marine Heritage Unit. The artifacts were left for others to enjoy while exploring this unique ship from Confederation days.

Why are archaeologists and divers working together?

Shipwrecks pose a special problem to many archaeologists because of their inaccessibility. This has led to a special relationship between recreational diving

groups like SOS and professional archaeologists. Divers have the time and experience to go underwater and obtain information for the archaeologists. The archaeologist therefore can use the skills of the diver to record and interpret a shipwreck.



During a pool exercise, a marine archaeologist shows some recreational divers how to map artifact distributions.

Photo: Ministry of Culture

There are only a few professionals qualified to study marine heritage resources (the Marine Heritage Unit employs only one marine archaeologist). Clearly, the professional community will never be able to research Ontario's shipwrecks alone. They need the assistance of the diving community. As for divers, they often lack the historical background to interpret correctly their discoveries, and can learn a great deal from marine archaeologists.

As a result, the Marine Heritage Unit of the Ministry of Culture provides divers with the necessary knowledge, training and skills to carry out projects. In return, the diving community gathers valuable archaeological data for the Unit.

Thus, Ontario is one of the few areas in North America where an amateur is encouraged to practice marine archaeology – clearly a beneficial relationship for all parties.



Picking up some historical tidbits: a diver learns about a shipwreck thanks to SOS's Plaque Program.

What can you do?

You might wonder how you can help discover and preserve our marine heritage. You could learn how to scuba dive and join organizations such as SOS where you would have the chance to take part in underwater archaeological activities. You can also exert pressure on divers who are not heritage-minded – and tell them not to remove artifacts (which decompose quickly when introduced to air) or remove stray lost anchors.

If you are already a diver, you should take an NAS (Nautical Archaeological Society) Level 1 course through SOS that will help you appreciate the heritage sites even more by explaining wooden ship building, archaeological principles, underwater mapping and measuring techniques. If you wish, further courses are offered using the NAS worldwide recognized curriculum. Usually every year, the NAS Level 2 lecture series is given in Ottawa where you may also visit storage vaults of conserved artifacts and learn to research sites using the National Archive.

Should you visit a shipwreck or heritage site, please do not disturb the site (including silt which preserves items) or remove artifacts for souvenirs. Bring back only photographs or memories, so that others may enjoy the site as well.

Even if diving is not for you, you can still help marine heritage organizations. Every dive team needs a well-trained shore support group to keep all the records collected by the divers, take photographs, do library research and help write reports. As well, you can help with water transport, project management, event planning, graphics design, authoring, and history research.

Whatever you decide to do, you should lobby for protection of your marine heritage. Once an artifact is removed from a heritage site, it is gone forever and the loss alters the archaeological information that the site had to offer to say nothing of your diving pleasure. *Everyone* has an obligation to ensure that someone who wants a rusty lawn ornament will not deprive future generations of his or her marine heritage.

To learn more about SOS

For further information on Save Ontario Shipwrecks, other marine heritage organizations or marine conservation in general, please contact SOS through our website, where you can get Chapter and Board contact names, numbers and our corporate mailing address:

www.SaveOntarioShipwrecks.on.ca

To make a difference and help SOS spread the word; consider becoming an SOS member where you can:

“Dive To Preserve”

Membership is very inexpensive and you will get a very unique insight and opportunities to dive and promote through projects, seminars, courses and newsletters. Visit the membership section of our website to learn more.