

On Sunday afternoon, August 19, 2007, fifteen divers gathered at Osprey Charters in Barcelona, NY, for a unique opportunity to dive a brand new 'virgin' shipwreck. Earlier in the summer Captain Jim Herbert and sidescan expert Garry Kozak found the wreck, but it was not dove at the time of its discovery. From the sidescan images, it appeared to be a sailing vessel in 75' of water in Lake Erie and was dubbed "Target 2." This was the first trip to investigate the wreck, and the divers included Greg Ondus, Jack Papes, Tom Wilson, Vlada Dekina, Mike Chrisopulos, Pat Wolfe, Jim Moseley, Kelly Vay, Mike Zepko, Rick Hallstrom, Mike Bluth, Jim Jones, Jimmy Herbert, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. The weather was overcast, but the seas were calm at 1', and the air temperature was a pleasant 75 deg F. The "Southwind" headed out to the wreck, and upon reaching it, Pat and Jimmy descended to hook it. The photographers and then the rest of the divers quickly followed. The thermocline was at 60', and unfortunately a low 3'-5' of visibility enveloped the wreck. Towards the end of the dive when diver activities ceased the water cleared to about 5'-8' of visibility. Since the wreck was so close to the thermocline, the bottom temperature was a warm 52 deg F. The surface water temperature was 70-75 deg F.

The wreck was found to be a small sailing vessel with its bow pointing west. The bowsprit is missing, but the knightheads between which it would have rested are present. The bow stands about 5' high off the bottom and is quite rounded. Because of its very rounded shape, some mistook it for the stern in the low visibility. The railing is completely intact around the entire perimeter of the wreck except for two walk-through cuts in the railing opposite each other near the bow. On the starboard side of the bow was found an anchor hanging from the railing with one fluke pointed inward over the railing and the other pointed away from the ship. The shank points straight down, and the stock lies parallel up against the hull. Close examination of the anchor's stock showed it is made of wood in an unusual square shape. Mounted on the railing immediately aft of the anchor and before the walk-through are what appear to be two or three deadeyes.

There is no decking to be found anywhere on the wreck. The hull appears to be completely empty of cargo but is otherwise intact with no signs of damage or collapse. Curiously, there are no signs of the windlass, pawl bitt, or a tow bitt at the bow. There are also no signs of masts, booms, gaffs, or other rigging. A centerboard box stands in the middle of the wreck, but no centerboard winch was found. There are three deck beams that cross the wreck aft of the centerboard box, and another deck beam points diagonally upwards off the starboard side of the wreck close to the stern. A single-barreled, large diameter pump sticks up behind the third deck beam. It leans to the starboard side with linkages visible inside, but its handle is missing.

The transom is missing, and the stern lies low to the bottom. Some of the ceiling planking can be seen inside the hull in the shape of the underside of the ship. The rudderpost sticks up at the center and is mostly buried in the silt with only a small portion of the rudder visible. It appears unusually short and ends abruptly

just above the rudder. Examining the top of the rudderpost did not reveal whether it was tiller or wheel steered. The entire wreck has nets snagged on it in various places, but most are decayed with one large rope running into the bottom off the bow on the starboard side.

The entire ship is quite small and measures only 70'-75' in length. The beam was estimated at about 20'. Due to its small size, the pump's style, and the placement of the forward deadeyes, it was almost certainly a two-masted schooner of mid-1800's construction. It appears to have had its masts pulled and to have been salvaged due to all the missing equipment. One mystery is why they would have gone to extremes to remove even the windlass but leave an anchor hanging on the railing. It could have also been a barge, but there are no signs of a tow post or any other way to pull the vessel. It is also a mystery why they would have had an anchor on the ship but no way to raise it without a windlass. Perhaps the best explanation for the missing rigging, equipment, deck and cargo is that it was purposely scuttled, although this wouldn't answer why the single anchor was left on the wreck. Perhaps the anchor is an anomaly and not part of the original wreck. Overall, it was an interesting dive that raises many more questions than were anticipated beforehand.

For photos and a sketch of this new wreck, please see Jack Papes' web site at the following address.

http://www.n2junkie.com/unknown_schooner_2007.htm