

On Wednesday evening, July 16, 2008, six divers met in Cleveland's Flats near the old Diamond Jim's Steakhouse on the Cuyahoga River. The divers were Brian Royak, Steve Forster, John Norris, Mike Gowan, Chris Pearson, and Kevin Magee. They were there for Aqua Specialist's mid-week one-tank dive aboard the "Holiday." Captain Francine Pate piloted the "Holiday" down the river and out into Lake Erie while Captain Wayne Bratton and Miranda tended to the divers. Some ate their sub sandwiches, which were provided as part of the trip, while others waited until after the dive to eat their dinner. The dive was on the wreck of the "Mabel Wilson," a large 240'-long x 40'-wide four-masted schooner that was built in 1886. In May, 1906, while carrying a cargo of iron ore from Escanaba, MI, the "Wilson" sprang a leak while under tow as a consort behind a steamer across Lake Erie. The crew pumped while the steamer headed towards Cleveland. After casting the "Wilson" loose near the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, a tug attempted to take the ship under tow into the river. Unfortunately, due to stormy conditions, it was unable to secure the line when the "Wilson" suddenly sank. The tug and a lifesaving boat managed to save 7 of the crew, but one crewman drowned before he could be rescued. The wreck is in 35' of water off Edgewater Marina, and it was salvaged and cleared as a hazard to navigation with dynamite and wire dragging, leveling most of the ship and spreading its remains over a very large area.

After anchoring near the wreck, the divers geared up and entered the water. Although there was 5'-7' of visibility on the surface, conditions deteriorated to only 2'-3' of visibility on the bottom with dark conditions that required a good light to see. It was also discovered the anchor was about 100' from the wreck, requiring a reel and good navigation skills to find the wreck. Several divers eventually managed to do so, but some never found it. The bow points southeast and stands about 5' off the sand-mud bottom. Behind it is either the partial remains of a windlass or a fallen capstan. The low visibility and heavy zebra mussel encrustation made it difficult to determine exactly what this equipment was. The starboard side is collapsed but is easily followed and reveals the planking and frames of the hull. There is much debris collected up against the ship, including logs and at least one tire. A modern boater's Danforth anchor was found amidships with its chain hopelessly snarled under some large timbers of what appears to be a section of decking. After a very long swim northwest to the stern, the starboard side suddenly makes a sharp break and heads east. There is a fallen bitt resting in the notch of the break. At the end of the break is a large approx. 20'x20' square section of raised decking that has substantial sides sunken into the mud. This structure may have been the steering deck or cabin roof.

Lots of gobies were seen on the wreck, and several perch were also seen. The water temperature was a warm 75 deg F from top to bottom. Upon surfacing, it was discovered to be a lovely evening, and the divers were treated to using the "Holiday's" brand new ladder to easily board the boat. It is a great improvement over the original ladder, and no one had any trouble using it or suggestions for

improvement. The new ladder makes the "Holiday" an even more pleasant boat than it already is to dive off, especially on a warm Wednesday evening after work.

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On Saturday, July 19, 2008, David VanZandt and Kevin Magee dove the "Mabel Wilson" off Dave's boat the "Sea Dragon." Before the dive, they discovered a pale gray, 18"-long lamprey eel attached to the back of Dave's boat near the transom. Neither had ever seen a lamprey in the water before, and an attempt to catch it caused it to swim away. However, it soon returned and attached itself to Dave's right fin. After shooing it away, it again reattached itself to the boat, where it was last seen. It was a unique and unusual event to see this strange animal in the water.

The surface conditions were calm at less than 1' seas, and it was a hot and muggy 85 deg F. The "Sea Dragon" anchored at the northwest end of the wreck, which is the stern. Upon descending the anchor line, it was discovered the bottom conditions were much improved with 5' of visibility and bright ambient lighting. After exploring the stern, Dave and Kevin made their way down the starboard side and after some effort managed to free the previously mentioned Danforth anchor and return it to the boat. Because of the calm conditions, Jim Paskert, who remained on the boat, was able to watch the divers' bubbles as they moved around the wreck, creating an outline of its location with their bubbles.