

On Saturday, July 27, Greg Ondus, Ken Marshall, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee went diving with Osprey Charters aboard the "Horizon" in Dunkirk, NY. Joining them were Dean Ziegler (Bay Area Divers), Mike King, and Pete Deegan. Ann Stephenson also tagged along for the ride. She, Greg, Mike, and Pete had all dove the "Betty Hedger" and "Passaic" on a morning trip on Osprey out of Barcelona, NY.

The trip was to the "St. James," a.k.a. "Schooner X," a two-masted schooner that sank in 1870 with a cargo of wheat. There were no survivors, so her story is unknown. However, she must have sank very slowly because it is one of the best preserved wrecks in Lake Erie. The wreck lies in 160' of water off Long Point, and the deck is at 150'. She stands 10' off the bottom at the bow and stern, but the bottom comes to within a few feet of her gunwales amidships due to the drifting action of the silt. Both masts are still standing, her cargo hatches are still in place, her cabin is intact, and the wreck features the only known figurehead in Lake Erie.

The weather allowed for a enjoyable two-hour trip to the site from Dunkirk. Seas were 1' or less, the sky was hazy but clear, and the air temperature was hot at about 85 deg F but with a nice breeze blowing out of the west. After suiting up and entering the water, the surface temperature was found to be 75 deg F, and surface viz was decent at about 15'. Upon descending the thermocline was found at about 50' depth, and the bottom temperature was found to be chilly at 40 deg F. Bottom conditions were dark, and lights were needed. However, the viz was good at approximately 50' or better, and later in the dive it was found that things could be seen dimly without a light once one's eyes adjusted.

The mooring line is attached to the starboard anchor on the bow. The port anchor is also present, and both are the classic wooden stock/metal fluke design seen on pirate ships in the movies. A windlass lies between the two anchors, and the bow sprint is intact. Underneath the bow sprint can be seen the decorative scrolled rams head design of the figurehead. Bracing chains are present underneath and connect between the hull and various points along the bow sprint. Moving aft along the deck, the forward mast can be seen standing with a fife rail around it. Belaying pins are in place, and deadeyes can be seen along the railings. The second aft mast, which was once vertical but was discovered last fall to have fallen to a 60 deg angle, was seen to have fallen even further to a 45 deg angle. It has almost completely destroyed the fife rail around it on the aft port side, which is the direction the mast is leaning. Gravity is slowly winning the battle. A capstan stands in the middle of the ship. One curious feature that could not be identified is what appears to be a vertical sign post-like object attached to the port side railing next to the forward mast.

Near the bow is the first of three cargo hatches. The forward one's cover was discovered to have collapsed since last fall. It appears the weight of silt and zebra mussels may have finally been too much. The hatch is now diagonally

tilted down into the mostly silt-filled hull below the hatch. The second middle hatch appears to be much as it was before, although there may be a few more holes and missing boards on the forward portion of the hatch cover. The final hatch at the stern has obviously been slid back by about 2', again exposing the silt-filled interior. This may have been due to a diver's recent actions.

At the stern is the cabin with several companionways around its perimeter. It is possible to look into the cabin, which is also silt filled, through missing boards along the cabin's sides. Yet another change discovered since last fall is that the port side of the cabin has collapsed somewhat. This again appears to be due to the weight of silt and zebra mussels on the roof. It is a shame to see the wreck slowly aging and collapsing over time. Behind the cabin is the ship's wheel, which is half buried in 2'-3' of silt in the middle of the large aft deck. The stern of the ship is squared off and easily visible down to the rudder, which is turned towards starboard. The underside shape of the hull can be partly seen, and the port davit for the yawl boat can be seen sticking straight back from the corner of the transom. The starboard one was once present, but it was discovered to be missing last fall. The yawl boat has never been found, and the crew may have taken it during the sinking but never successfully reached shore.

Bottom time was 20 minutes, and total run time was 48 minutes. Maximum depth was 155'. Overall, it was a great trip, and Jim Herbert, with Roger's able assistance, made a fast trip back to Dunkirk in time to do a sunset cruise after all the divers quickly unloaded their gear and made room for the next customers.