

On Saturday, August 31, seven intrepid AquaMasters went diving in Kingston, Ontario. The previous day everyone had driven the long 9-10 hour drive from Cleveland, OH. Everyone arrived safely between 6 PM and midnight with only a few minor incidents and delays along the way, not bad considering it was Labor Day weekend. The divers were Mark Miller, Ted Green, Rita Montorsi, George Balas, Jacques Girouard, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. The group was also joined by Mark's wife Amy, who stayed on shore and scouted out the night's activities.

Kingston is on the eastern end of Lake Ontario near the head of the St. Lawrence River. The general area is called the Thousand Islands region because of the many islands - large and small - that dot this end of the lake. The diving was done with Northern Tech Divers on the boat "Ashley Dawn," captained by Wayne Plumb, who proved to be an excellent and very accommodating captain. Also joining us for the first day of diving was Canadian Gary Gillian, who filled out the boat to eight people.

The first dive was on the "City of Sheboygan," a three-masted schooner that sank off Amherst Island in a fierce storm in 1915. This wreck is normally exposed directly to the lake's weather, but the day proved to be unusually calm at 1' seas and pleasant 70-75 deg F air temperatures, so the 15-mile run to this wreck was made. Upon arriving, it was discovered that two other dive boats were already on the site, but we tied up behind them as is the normal custom in Kingston, which is a popular diving destination. While suiting up, two more boats showed up, and by the time we left the mooring, a total of seven boats were counted. Despite all this activity and the many divers in the water, everyone cooperated. Most of the divers exhibited good diving skills, too, and the wreck was not silted out.

The wreck lies upright in 95' of water with the mooring at the bow, which points NW. The hull is intact and stands upright high off the bottom with the deck at about 80'. A large windlass, some chain, and an unusual small mushroom-like capstan are at the bow on a small forecastle. The bowsprit is broken off and missing. On the deck on the starboard side is a donkey boiler with its smokestack pointing upwards. As was the custom on sailing ships, the boiler is standing upright on its end rather than laying down on its side. Nearby is the stub of the first mast surrounded by a broken fife rail, and behind it is the centerboard winch followed by several cargo openings. The decking and railing are mostly intact along the port side of the ship with occasional planks missing, but the starboard side's decking is broken up because the masts have fallen lengthwise along this side. Visible was a jumble of masts, booms, broken boards, blocks, deadeyes, and occasional broken dishes. The rear mast is partially standing up to a 20' height off the deck, and one mast is lying diagonally upwards on the deck resting on its bracing platform.

The stern cabin is missing with its floor collapsed, but the raised walkarounds on the sides are in place. The sterncastle behind the cabin is intact with the transom missing at the extreme end, allowing one to swim through beneath the sterncastle's deck. At the rear the rudder can be viewed mostly exposed with the graceful underside shape of the hull visible. On top of the sterncastle's deck can be seen one lifeboat davit standing and the remains of the steering gear with the wheel missing. The bottom conditions were excellent with about 60'-80' of visibility and a warm 51-52 deg F temperature. The thermocline was at 60' with 71-72 deg F water and 15' of visibility above it.

After the dive the seas were mirror flat, allowing for an easy run to the next wreck. The second dive was made on the "Comet," a side paddlewheeler that sank at the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 after colliding with a schooner. It lies in 75' of water with the mooring at the stern, which points E. The most remarkable feature of this wreck are the fully intact side paddlewheels amidships on both sides. They stand about 20'-25' off the bottom and are very impressive and beautiful to view. Inboard next to each paddlewheel stands a walking beam engine, and both engines tower 30' off the bottom. Each engine's mechanisms and details are visible and easily inspected. Each engine has a horizontal walking beam at the top connected to a vertical piston on the forward end. This piston is run by a boiler that is visible immediately underneath the deck. Each side's boiler runs lengthwise and connects to one large firebox towards the bow. The wreck can be penetrated beneath the deck to view the boilers and firebox. On top of the firebox are the smokestack bases, one on each side, which penetrate the deck and stand 5'-8' high. The remaining smokestack pipe for the starboard side can be seen lying on the bottom nearby.

This wreck is comparable to the "Atlantic," a side paddlewheeler in Lake Erie, but the wreck is smaller in length (175' vs. 265'), has two small walking beam engines offset to each side vs. one large engine in the center, has no hogging arches, is shallower (75' vs. 150'), and is in much better shape with much less silting. On the "Comet" the deck chines around each paddlewheel are partially intact, and the decking forward and aft is visible. Both ends are collapsed down, but this is especially apparent at the bow. The sides of the wreck are collapsed and mostly under the mud, but the interior can still be viewed as a jumble of boards and debris. A collection of dishes and cups are on display at the stern along with a fallen door. Also visible is the rudder, which is half exposed and attached to a tall standing rudder post. Part of the transom structure is also attached to the post, and the whole assembly stands high off the bottom and tilted to the port side.

The bow's decking is more intact and has two square hatch openings, a unique circular hatch opening, a winch lying fallen on its side with its under-deck support structure still attached, and a windlass, which also had its under-deck structure still attached. The extreme bow has a sharp pole pointing upwards. Many details of the deck, the structure underneath, and various miscellaneous pieces

and parts are visible all around the wreck. Water conditions were similar to the previous wreck except the thermocline was at 50', the bottom temperature was slightly warmer at 55 deg F, and visibility was somewhat poorer at about 40'-50'. However, we were the only boat on this wreck during the whole afternoon, making for a relaxing and enjoyable time.

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On Sunday, September 1, KB, who had been on another Northern Tech dive boat the previous afternoon, joined the group to replace Gary. The morning's weather, however, was much rougher and windier than the previous day. Even near-shore wrecks were experiencing 3'-4' seas, so instead of heading out into the lake, the dive boat headed behind Amherst Island to dive the protected wreck of the "William Jamieson," a two-masted schooner that sank in 70' of water in 1923 after opening her seams during a storm after 45 years of service. Just to make the day more interesting, on the way to the site the boat's engine quite running, requiring a tow by another dive boat to be able to make it to the dive site. There was already another dive boat there, so the three boats tied off to each other. Later, before leaving, a total of five boats were counted on the mooring.

The wreck lies with the mooring at the bow, which points S. The wreck stands about 5'-8' off the bottom with the sides intact. The bow is smashed from its collision with the bottom, opening up the chain locker for viewing. There is a windlass that is lifted up and tilted as a result of this damage, and a nice block was seen hanging from the windlass. A hand pump is behind the windlass, and strangely, there is a linkage running from it to the centerboard winch behind it. Nearby is a small mushroom-like capstan very similar to the one seen on the "City of Sheboygan." On the starboard side is the fallen donkey boiler, and it's possible that the boiler ran the winch, windlass, capstan, and/or pump. On the port side lying diagonally across the deck is a fallen mast with its bracing platform resting on the deck near the bow. The four main boards of this platform point upwards to form a spike-like appearance to this part.

The deck is damaged and only partly intact. Seen at regular intervals were hatch frames, parts of the centerboard, some center posts, some mast parts, and other debris. At the stern the cabin is missing, but there is a nice swim through under the deck to the cavity left by the cabin. Another hand pump is on the deck before the cabin, and a blue pitcher was perched on top of it. A broken crock pot was found perched on the railing on the starboard side. The steering gear was visible at the stern, and the half-buried rudder and underside of the stern were viewable.

Several large schools of perch were seen traveling around the wreck, making for a unique distraction since none of the other wrecks had any significant fish life. There were also many large gobies, something not seen on any other wreck except the "City of Sheboygan," which had a few small ones. Visibility on the

wreck was relatively poor at 20'-30', and the many divers caused the silt to be stirred up. However, there was a small current that carried the silt away within a few minutes if something was disturbed. Bottom temperature was a warm 53 deg F, and the thermocline was at 64', just 5' off the bottom.

While the divers were below, Captain Wayne worked on the engine and had it running just fine by the time we surfaced. Therefore, we were able to make our way without further difficulty to the next dive site. The weather also calmed significantly to just 1'-2' seas, making a popular near-shore site possible that had previously been too rough to dive. This was the wreck of the "Munson," a dredge that sank in 1890 in 105' of water after springing a leak while under tow. Upon arriving there was one boat and several divers in the water, so we carefully hooked up to the mooring and allowed the other boat to tie up behind us. Upon gearing up and descending, the thermocline was passed at 60', and fantastic 80'-100' visibility was encountered with 50 deg F water on the bottom.

The "Munson" is a small wreck but absolutely packed with stuff to see. Many dives could be spent exploring it. It is a two-tiered dredge, and it lies with the shovel end (bow) pointing N. The shovel bucket and crane lie on the bottom, and the crane's base is attached to the end of the top tier, which stands 20'-25' off the bottom. The top tier has two large rectangular openings that allow chain and cabling to run from the crane to the tier beneath. Behind the crane is a small device resembling a barbecue and was probably used as a small forge to heat metal to be worked. The top tier is loaded with a collection of dishes, glasses, bottles, silverware, and many other items all laid out for viewing. At the stern is a single large pole standing upright that was lowered into the bottom to keep the dredge in position while working.

The bottom tier has the boiler, engine, and machinery necessary to run the crane and bucket. Chain still runs around the gear wheels and to the upper tier. There is also an electric generator towards the stern, and it was apparently the first generator on a Canadian vessel in Lake Ontario. On the port side amidships is a workbench set up and laid out with all sorts of tools, including wrenches, pliers, hammers, saws, awls, and many other tools. There is a vice attached to the bench, and an anvil is attached to the deck nearby. Wooden grates can be seen on the main deck, and the silted interior of the main hull can be viewed through them. The main deck sits only a few feet above the lake bottom and is completely filled.

Overall, an excellent time was had. The wrecks and visibility are comparable to Lake Erie's eastern basin, but the water is warmer, the depths are shallower, and the zebra mussels are fewer. Most wrecks had only a light scattering of mussels that did not heavily coat or obscure the wreck's items. Bare wood and metal were visible in many places. The one exception was the "Jamieson," which had a thick coating of zebra mussels typical of the wrecks found in Lake Erie. The

only disadvantage to visiting Kingston for Cleveland-bound divers is the relatively long drive that must be done to get to this area.