



Shipwreck Handbook



Artistic rendering of the *Cornelia B. Windiate* under sail by artist Robert McGreevy.

Ship information courtesy of Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary and the Thunder Bay Sanctuary Research Collection at Alpena County Library.

Albany

The *Albany* was a paddlewheel steamer that was built and launched in 1846. The *Albany* was built to carry the tens of thousands of settlers, who by the 1840's, were in search of passage and opportunities further west. With a home port and pick up point of Buffalo, New York, the *Albany* carried passengers and freight from Buffalo to other ports on the Great Lakes, including Cleveland, Detroit, Milwaukee and Chicago. In November of 1853, the *Albany* was sailing with passengers and a large cargo load of coal around Lake Huron. A gale swept across the lake, and as the ship sought refuge in Presque Isle Harbor, she ran aground. After a harrowing night of fierce wind and waves, the nearly 200 passengers and crew of the *Albany* were rescued by local boats. But salvage efforts, winter ice, and storms eventually tore the wooden ship apart.

Shipwreck length: 1.97 meters.

Cornelia B. Windiate

The *Cornelia B. Windiate* was a three-masted sailing schooner that was built and launched in 1874. In late 1875, the ship left Milwaukee, Wisconsin carrying a load of wheat. The *Cornelia B. Windiate* was traveling back to its home port of Buffalo, New York. The final moments of the *Cornelia B. Windiate* are a mystery, the ship and crew disappeared, never to be heard from again. From the weather reports around the time it went missing, it is possible that spray from huge waves may have coated the vessel with layers of ice, adding a crushing weight to an already overloaded ship.

Shipwreck length: 1.27 meters.

Florida

The *Florida* was a propeller-driven bulk freighter. The *Florida* was built and launched in 1889 from its home port of Buffalo, New York. In 1897, the *Florida* was returning to Buffalo with a large cargo of wheat. While traveling in dense fog of Presque Isle, *Florida* collided with the *George Roby*. The impact cut *Florida* nearly in half, and the freighter sank quickly. Fortunately, the *George Roby* rescued the entire crew from the *Florida*.

Shipwreck length: 1.97 meters.

Ironton

The *Ironton* was a sailing schooner that was built and launched in 1873, from its homeport in Buffalo, New York. In late September 1894, the *Ironton*, carrying bricks, was under tow by a steam ship when they encountered another oncoming vessel, the freighter *Ohio*, in rough conditions 10 miles north of Presque Isle. When the vessels were near to passing each other, the towline for the *Ironton* parted. The *Ironton* broke free, veered off course, and collided with the *Ohio*. It took about half an hour for the *Ironton* to sink. Although some were rescued, five crew, including the captain, went down with *Ironton*.

Shipwreck length: 1.73 meters.

M.F. Merrick

The *M.F. Merrick* was a sailing schooner that was built and launched in 1873. In May of 1889, she left her home port of Detroit, Michigan sailing Lake Huron with a load of furnace Sand. The spring waters were still ice cold, and a dense fog shrouded the schooner as it passed Presque Isle late at night. Just after midnight, the crew heard the whistle of another ship, and minutes later, the bow of the steamer *R.P. Ranney* suddenly appeared out of the fog and smashed into the *M.F. Merrick's* side. The *M.F. Merrick* sank quickly, offering little chance for the crew below decks to escape. Five crew members perished, but the crew of the *R.P. Ranney* was able to rescue the captain and one other seaman from the *M.F. Merrick*.

Shipwreck length: 1.48 meters.

Marine City

The *Marine City* was a paddlewheel steamer that was built in and launched in 1866 in *Marine City*, Michigan, and worked out of its home port of Detroit, Michigan. After being loaded with a cargo of bricks, it loaded on passengers as well. Shortly after launching from the dock, smoke and fire erupted from the engine room, setting off a panic amongst the passengers, who began to leap into the water to escape the fire. The *Marine City* drifted away from the dock and burned to the waterline and sank into the waters of Lake Huron. The entire crew survived, but 5 of the nearly 150 passengers were listed as lost.

Shipwreck length: 1.48 meters.

New Orleans

The *New Orleans* started life as the paddlewheel steamer, *Vermillion*, entering service when it was built in 1838. The *Vermillion* burnt to the waterline in 1842 but was quickly rebuilt by the owners. Its size was increased, and it once again entered service on the Great Lakes, sailing from its home port of Detroit, Michigan. Carrying a cargo of passengers and furnace sand, the *New Orleans* grounded on a reef between North Point and Sugar Island on the foggy morning of June 14th, 1849. All of the passengers and crew were rescued by local fisherman, but the ship broke up and sank into the cold waters of Lake Huron.

Shipwreck length: 1.27 meters.

Norman

The *Norman* was a 1.73 meter long, propeller-driven bulk freighter built in 1890. With its home port in Cleveland, OH, the *Norman* carried coal to many other ports around the Great Lakes. Fog was a great danger at this time, and on a foggy night in 1895, the *Norman* collided with the Canadian steamer *Jack of Kingston*. The *Jack's* bow punched an enormous hole in the *Norman's* side while most of the *Norman's* crew slept in their berths. Within three minutes, the *Norman* and three of its crew, disappeared below Lake Huron's waves.

Shipwreck length: 1.73 meters.

Ohio

Built in 1873, the *Ohio* was a propeller-driven bulk freighter. Sailing from its home port of Duluth, MN with a cargo of wheat, the ship was destined for Ogdensburg, New York. The transit require *Ohio* to cross Lake Superior, pass through Soo Locks, then traverse Lake Huron, past Presque Island and Thunder Bay. Along this route, *Ohio* encountered heavy weather and busy shipping lanes, a dangerous, yet all too common, combination. Coming the other direction were the sailing schooner *Ironton*, being towed by the steamer Kershaw. As they were about to pass, the *Ironton's* towline broke loose, and the sailing schooner drifted into the path of, and collided with the *Ohio*. Both vessels sank in about 30 minutes, allowing the crew of the *Ohio* to make their way to lifeboats, where they were picked up by other vessels.

Shipwreck length: 1.48 meters.

Note: Ship lengths shortened to mission dimensions.

Companies should use the information in this handbook to identify the competition shipwrecks. Data in this handbook may differ slightly from historical data found on the TBNMS website and other historical websites. Cargo, home ports, build dates and length may have been changed to better accommodate the MATE ROV Competition mission tasks.