

(8/17/99) Here's the weekend dive report from David VanZandt and Kevin Magee, who were diving in Lake Erie's eastern basin with Osprey Dive Charters this weekend. We planned to dive the famous "Dean Richmond" on Saturday. Unfortunately, the weather was just as bad out east as it was in Cleveland, so the dive didn't happen. There were 3-5 ft. waves, rain, strong winds, and 58 deg. air temperatures, which would not have made for a pleasant dive. Fortunately, the weather on Sunday was much improved, and we dove two wrecks.

The first was "Schooner B," which is believed to be the "Washington Irving," but definite proof has yet to be found beyond general ship size, type, location between Buffalo and Erie, and coal cargo. It is a two-masted wooden schooner and lies in 120 ft. of water. The most notable feature of this wreck is that like the famous "Schooner X" / "St. James," both masts are still standing and rise to within 80-90 ft. of the surface. Unlike the "St. James", however, the ship is listing to port by about 30 degrees and is completely buried in silt except for the starboard gunwale, which is barely exposed. Beyond the masts, the most outstanding feature of this wreck is the bowsprit, which is also completely intact and stretches 30-40 ft. out in front. There is no figurehead, however. There is some machinery on the fore deck, some deadeyes on the gunwale, and some of the hatches are just barely showing. The 20 minute bottom time we did on this wreck pretty much allows one to see everything since most of it is buried.

The second wreck was the "Passaic," an arched wooden steamer in 85 ft. of water. It was discovered in the 1960's or 1970's and was at first thought to be the "Dean Richmond." The result was salvagers who blew up the wreck with dynamite looking for treasure. Needless to say, they spent more than they found. As a result of their efforts, the wreck is now completely broken up with just scraps of wood and the remains of one arch. However, as a side benefit, the boiler and engine are now completely exposed and upright and relatively intact, allowing one to completely explore the engine. One can also enter the fire box and swim up the stack of the boiler. The bottom temperature for both dives was 43-44 degrees, and the thermocline was at 65 ft. Kevin dove wet and didn't have any problems for the 35 minute dive times while Dave dove dry.

Visibility on "Schooner B" was a fantastic 80-100 ft and on the "Passaic" was 50-80 ft. The reputation of the eastern basin's spectacular viz remain intact.