

On Saturday, August 18, Kevin Magee went diving in the eastern basin of Lake Erie on Jim Herbert's Osprey Charter boat "Southwind." The weather was overcast and slightly drizzly, but the lake was calm with just 1'-2' seas. The wreck was the "Sir C.T. Straubenzie," also known as the "Ten Volt" or "Yawl Boat Wreck." It is a three-masted barquentine that sank in 200' of water in 1909 after a collision with another ship.

Upon descending the mooring line, which is attached to the stern on the starboard side, it was discovered that conditions were very dark but that visibility was good at an estimated 50'-100'. Immediately evident at the stern is a large wheel in good condition with the steering gear visible behind it. Unfortunately, the wreck is silted to the point where the rudder and undersides of the ship cannot be seen. However, when viewed from behind, it can be seen that the transom contains two vertical 3'x3' doorways in it, one on each side, that Kevin has never seen before on any other ship. The port one contains the remains of a split push-in door, and the opening seems to lead either to the main deck or slightly beneath it. This was hard to judge because of silt build up and deck damage. The starboard opening has the mooring line tied to it. Forward of the wheel is the remains of the cabin, which has collapsed into a pile of broken boards. The rear wall of the cabin and the remains of its centerline companionway are still standing and somewhat discernable, however. Within the jumbled pile of the cabin on the port side is either a large upright barrel or some other cylindrical container. Immediately forward of the cabin is the aft mast, which is broken off after about 5'. Belaying pins and deadeyes can be seen on the starboard railing adjacent to this mast.

Leaning up against the port side of the ship adjacent to the cabin is the remains of the ship's yawl boat, a unique and rare feature. Yawl boats were usually lost in the sinking and ended up nowhere near the wreck. The yawl is turned so that its keel points away from the ship, and its bow is buried in the bottom. The stern, however, leans up against the port gunwale and sticks up several feet. The remains of its small rudder and - amazingly - its tiller can still be seen. Several planks are missing along the yawl's bottom, allowing one to look into it at various points along its length and see its ribs and structure. A block and tackle still hangs from the yawl's stern as well. The place where it would have hung on the wreck still has both divots pointing straight out rearward from the corners of the stern.

Another unusual feature seen on this wreck was an approximately 2" diameter pipe sticking out about a foot from the starboard side of the ship just forward of the cabin area. This pipe is pointed downward as if to drain something from the main deck, and there did appear to be a V-slotted pattern on the deck where the pipe would be. This was the only pipe like it spotted on this wreck, and Kevin has never seen one before on any other wreck. The ship is broken into two pieces, probably as the result of the collision, and there is at least a 10'-20' gap between the stern section and the bow section with a clear bottom in between.

There is one piece of debris, however. It appears to be a box-like structure somewhat resembling a fire rail with one side missing sitting upright on the bottom. A zebra mussel encrusted object sits in the middle of this structure. It is either a piece of machinery or possibly the ship's bell, which the object is shaped somewhat like. The only way to be sure would be to scrape the zebra mussels off of it, but this was not done to preserve the viz.

The bow section is in much better shape than the stern section. The middle mast has fallen diagonally across this section with its base on the starboard side and its top resting against the port side and pointing up. This fallen mast's bracing platform is visible in the middle of the ship, and its top mast portion, which is thinner and grafted onto the main mast, is intact and visible up to the end of the mast. Amazingly, the forward mast is still standing, complete with a fire rail around it. Despite the dark conditions, looking up its outline could be seen against the green haze of the surface - a beautiful sight. Its bracing platform is in place, and the top mast portion appears to be at least partially intact. A snagged net on the starboard gunwale also towers up parallel to the mast to at least half its height. The bow's deck has a very small, spindly windlass on it with one large geared wheel and very little other machinery. The bowsprit is intact but plain and utilitarian in its construction. The starboard anchor is in place and hanging by one fluke from the gunwale, but the port anchor was not seen. Instead, on the deck in this area there appeared to be a squashed cylinder with a double lining, very much like a smokestack or funnel would appear. However, this would be unlikely since it is a sailing vessel, so the object remain unidentified.

Bottom conditions, in addition to being very dark and requiring a strong canister light, were chilly at 38 deg F. A thermocline was evident at 55', and the surface temperature was a warm 70 deg F. Maximum depth was 196', bottom time was 20 minutes, and total run time was 61 minutes. It would be very nice to get back to this wreck next season and explore in more detail some of the objects to further identify them.