

On Sunday, September 22, six (6) LEWD members joined 13 other divers to dive the famous "Atlantic," a side paddlewheeler that sank in 150' of water after colliding with the steamer "Ogdensburg" in 1852 off the tip of Long Point in eastern Lake Erie. In addition to the great loss of life, the wreck is also famous for the divers Harrington and Green competing to recover the purser's safe from it in 1855-56, the loss of the Philips sub nearby at the same time (pre-dating the Civil War "Hunley" by ten years), and the infamous court fight over its ownership and salvage in the early 1990's.

Along for the trip were Dave Soule, Greg Ondus, Ken Marshall, David VanZandt, Cindy LaRosa, and Kevin Magee. They boarded Osprey Charter's boat "Southwind" in Barcelona, NY, and made the long one hour, twenty minute ride to the site. Captaining the boat was the capable Sam Genco assisted by the helpful Kathy Melice. The wreck lies very close to the tip of Long Point with its sand beaches, trees, and lighthouse visible at the tip. The seas were calm at 2' for most of the trip, but upon approaching Long Point, they increased to 3'. In addition, a distinct mud line could be seen. The surface visibility was milky brown and less than 3'-5'. However, everyone suited up and entered the water, which had also turned choppy. A surface current was found running E, making reaching the mooring line difficult.

Upon descending, visibility on the bottom was found to be very clear at greater than 50', but it was also - as Soule called it - a "night dive" with pitch black conditions. These conditions proved to be disorienting, making for a difficult dive without a powerful light and good knowledge of the wreck beforehand. There was no distinct thermocline, but both visibility and temperature conditions changed between 60'-80'. The surface temperature was 70 deg F, and the bottom temperature was a relatively warm 43-45 deg F. The mooring line was tied to the top of the walking beam engine, which lies at the center of the ship between the two paddlewheels. The paddlewheels are fairly intact but buried up to their hubs. Running along both gunwales of the ship between the engine and paddlewheels are the hogging arches, which added structural integrity to the long hull. The top of the engine was at 125', the top of the arches was at 135', and the deck, which is equal to the bottom of the lake, is at 150'.

The wreck is heavily silted with only the vague outline of the gunwales being apparent. No superstructure, cabins, or below deck spaces are apparent as one swims along the length of the hull. A thick mound of silt covers the deck, and the arches form the major structural element and reference for divers. Swimming E, the stern can be found sticking 3'-5' out of the mud with the roof of a curved walkway apparent. Peering underneath, the doorway to a silted corridor can be seen, but nothing more. Some collapsed holes and small boards are apparent sticking out of the mud on the deck above. Swimming towards the W, the bow can be found. A 20'-30' tall standing mast and curved railing across the front of the deck are apparent sticking out of the deck's mud before reaching the bow. The mast was draped in a net. The bow tapers afterwards to a point and sticks

out of the mud approximately 3'. At the bow a vertical wooden post is present with a strange ornamental or protective metal "cage" around it.

Because of the dark conditions, it was a challenging dive where many did not get to fully see the wreck. Several expressed an interest in doing this wreck again in the spring to try to see it under better conditions. The surface conditions also made the deco challenging, but fortunately no one strayed away from the line and became lost in the rough seas. This is a fascinating wreck from a historical perspective, and the intact paddlewheels and walking beam engine make the wreck unique in Lake Erie.