**In This Issue:**

Not Just a Bump in the Night  
by Mark Shumaker  

Memories of My Life with Great Lakes Boats  
by Skip Gilham  

He Had To Go Out ... The Life and Times of the Henry Cort  
by Neel R. Zoss  

Wreck of the Brig Sultan  
by David M. VanZandt, Jim Paskert, Kevin Magee, Chris Kraska, Ken Marshall, Linda Parsing  

A Vignette of the War of 1812 on Lake Ontario  
Introduction by Richard F. Palmer  

William H. Donner, Old Timer  
by Janie Thibodeau Martin  

A Lost Treasure ... “At the Mercy of Neptune”  
by Donald Gillespie  

Water Colors: The Marine Art of Paul C. LaMarre Jr. — Part Two  
Contributed by Paul C. LaMarre III  

Books  

Letter  

Great Lakes Calendar  
by Greg Rudnick  

Great Lakes Historical Society  

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**INLAND SEAS**
Quarterly Journal of the Great Lakes Historical Society  
Vermilion, Ohio 44089-1099

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WRECK OF THE BRIG SULTAN

by David M. VanZandt, MMA, RPA, Jim Paskert, Kevin Magee, Chris Kraska, Ken Marshall, and Linda Pansing

The following is the first of two articles about the archaeological investigation into the shipwreck Sultan which sank in Lake Erie in 1864. The wreck-age was located and positively identified by the Cleveland Underwater Explorers in 2011 with a survey led by the Maritime Archaeology Survey Team in 2012 and 2013. Presented here is the history of the vessel along with the story of her sinking. Coming in a future issue of Inland Seas® will be the discovery and archaeological report.

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The brig Sultan was built by James Averill at Chicago in 1848. Averill, a shipbuilder from Maine (Mansfield 1899, p 404), had established a shipyard there in 1842 most likely to take advantage of the increased interest in investment in lake shipping occurring at the time. Prior to 1842, only a handful of vessels had been built at Chicago. The Averill shipyard, located just below the Rush Street Bridge (Andreas 1884, p 242), became Chicago's third active shipbuilding operation when it opened. A total of 15 new vessels were constructed at Chicago from 1843 through 1846 and Chicago became a Port of Entry in 1846 as well. Shipbuilding activity increased dramatically in 1847 and an additional 15 new vessels were enrolled there that year including the Averill-built brig S.F. Gale (District of Chicago 1847). The Sultan was completed in April 1848 but not enrolled until 27 July 1848 (District of Chicago 1848a) suggesting that Averill built the Sultan on speculation and required some additional time to solicit interested investment partners. Averill, George M. Higginson, George M. Dole, George Rumsey and Julian L. Rumsey (all of Chicago), are listed as the owners of the Sultan on the first enrollment (District of Chicago 1848a) and, just three months later, Averill sold his interest in the vessel to the others (District of Chicago 1848b).

Constructed of cak and measuring 127 feet in length, 24 feet in breadth, 9 feet 4-5/8 inches in depth and 267-00/95 tons, the Sultan had one deck, two masts, no gallery and a billet head (District of Chicago 1848a). The Sultan appears to be very similar in detail to the brig S.F. Gale built and launched almost exactly one year previous by Averill in April 1847 as noted previously. The S.F. Gale measured 122 feet 6 inches in length, 24 feet in breadth, 9 feet 9 inches in depth, 266-24/95 tons with one deck, two masts, no gallery and a scroll head (District of Chicago 1847). In November 1876, the S.F. Gale was lost with all hands in a gale on Lake Erie 20 miles NW of Cleveland after a long and prosperous career.

Originally constructed for and employed in the lumber trade, the Sultan, like most sailing vessels hailing from western Lake Michigan ports, also found work hauling grain. Lumber and grain cargoes were typically delivered to lower lake ports such as Buffalo where cargos of coal or manufactured goods were usually available for the return trip to Lake Michigan. The Sultan was owned and operated out of Chicago from the time of its construction in 1848 until May 1854 when it was sold to H. C. Walker & Co. of Buffalo, New York, who had the brig completely refitted (Maritime History of the Great Lakes 2013a). These repairs were necessitated by the last of several unfortunate accidents which occurred during the 1853 shipping season. On 6 June 1853, the Sultan capsized and sank five miles from Chambers Island, Green Bay, Lake Michigan. The wreck was successfully raised in early July 1853 (Maritime History of the Great Lakes 2013b), repaired at Chicago during August and September, and returned to service (Maritime History of the Great Lakes 2013c). Just two months later, on 11 November 1853, the Sultan, loaded with a cargo of railroad iron intended for the Galena Railroad, went ashore and was heavily damaged at Forty Mile Point, Lake Huron. The cargo of railroad iron was salvaged and sent to Chicago, but due to the lateness of the season, the Sultan was left to endure the winter of 1853–1854 in the shallow waters near Forty Mile Point. Efforts to salvage the Sultan were renewed the following spring, and it was pumped out and released (Maritime History of the Great Lakes 2013a).

An additional incident occurred on 4 November 1856, when the Sultan, loaded with a cargo of wheat, went ashore on the east side of Lake Huron about 50 miles above Goderich, Ontario, near old Port Bruce, Ontario, Canada. The cargo of wheat was lightered off; the brig was released and subsequently taken to Detroit, Michigan, where it was repaired later that same month (Maritime History of the Great Lakes 2013d). The Sultan was purchased by Robert Mills of Buffalo in April 1858 (District of Buffalo 1858) and continued in the lumber and grain trade until April 1859, when Mills sold the brig to the mercantile firm of Dibble & Co. of New York, New York (District of Buffalo 1859). On 2 June 1859, the Sultan sailed from Buffalo to the city of New York via the Welland Canal and St. Lawrence River. On 5 November 1859, the Sultan was registered at the Port of New York (District of Buffalo 1859) and commenced an interesting two-year
saltwater: career trading between New York and various ports in North and South Carolina.

Calv'n B. Dibble, a successful merchant, owned and controlled the mercantile firm of Dibble & Co. with headquarters in New York, New York, and branches in several North and South Carolina port towns. Dibble was a native of Hartford, Connecticut, and maintained his home there. He also owned property in North Carolina and in the early 1840s owned and operated a river steamboat in Newbern, North Carolina. It appears that Dibble owned one or two other vessels that were used to trade between New York and the southern states. It is assumed that an increase in demand stimulated Dibble to purchase an additional vessel. Exactly why Dibble purchased an inland, freshwater vessel is not clear.

The *Sultan* made regular trips between New York, New York, and Georgetown, South Carolina (*The New York Times* 1860a:8, 1860b:8, 1860c:8, 1861a:8), although the nature of the cargos loaded in New York and freighted to Georgetown is not known. Entry records for freight loaded in Georgetown and landed in New York consistently describe these cargos as "naval stores" (*The New York Times* 1860b:8, 1861a:8). The definition of "naval stores" has yet to be determined. Upon the commencement of the Civil War in 1861, Dibble apparently used his various long-established connections with many high ranking U.S. military officers to receive permission to continue to conduct trade between New York and several southern coastal ports still under the control of the U.S. military (Dibble 1864:14–16).

In late August 1861, the *Sultan* sailed in ballast from Havana, Cuba, to New York City under the command of Captain Sutton (*The New York Times* 1861b:8). Captain Sutton had been the master of the *Sultan* during its entire saltwater career. Exactly why the *Sultan* was in Havana and departed with no cargo is still unknown. On 9 September, Mrs. Sutton, the brig's cook and the wife of Captain Sutton, died and was buried at sea. The *Sultan* arrived in New York City on 11 September and was "anchored in the Lower Quarantine" as reported in the "Marine Intelligence" column in *The New York Times* (*The New York Times* 1861b). Just over three weeks later, on 4 October 1861, the *Sultan*, under the command of Captain Sutton, cleared New York for Chicago, Illinois (*The New York Times* 1861c:8), thus ending its saltwater career.

No doubt the death of Mrs. Sutton and possibly the cause of her death (e.g. cholera), along with other factors, influenced Dibble to sell the vessel quickly. The brig's recent history might have made it difficult to secure a crew and/or sell the vessel locally. It may have been much easier and more profitable to return the vessel to the Great Lakes where interested parties may not be as well informed. This, of course, is purely speculation.

Interestingly, Dibble continued to trade between New York and South Carolina ports until he was suspected of aiding the enemy when one of his schooners ran aground in a remote area and the entire cargo was seized by Confederate forces. The U.S. government investigated and suspected that Dibble had arranged to have the vessel purposely run ashore as a ruse. He was never charged with a crime, however, but did lose his trading rights and was forced to turn over his property in the South to the U.S. government. It does appear that Dibble was a loyal citizen and there is no hard evidence of any wrong doing. The fact that he had lived in the South for some time and had many connections there, coupled with the fact that he hailed from Hartford, Connecticut, the epicenter of U.S. arms manufacturing, and was well connected there as well, was enough to make him suspect. There is the possibility, however remote, that the brig *Sultan* was used to smuggle various goods and possibly arms to the Confederates.

Dibble & Co. ultimately sold the *Sultan* in June 1862 to Thatcher, Burt & Co., merchants located in Cleveland, Ohio (District of Cuyahoga 1862), who had the brig completely rebuilt in December by Cleveland shipbuilder Foote & Keating (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4). Thatcher, Burt & Co. owned and operated the *Sultan* until the time of its final loss.

It is important to note that the last enrollment issued to the *Sultan*, No. 62, dated 28 June 1862 (District of Cuyahoga 1862), states the breadth of the vessel to be 28 feet, which conflicts with the breadth of 24 feet indicated on all of the *Sultan*'s previous enrollments. This same document certifies the tonnage as 267–00/95, which is unchanged from all of the previous enrollments. The tonnage could not remain the same if the breadth of the vessel was altered. The breadth on the last enrollment appears to be incorrect and is undoubtedly a transcription error which occurred when the information was copied from the previous enrollment.

The seas were running high when the tug *Ajax* towed the *Sultan* out of Cleveland at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, 24 September 1864 (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4). The crew of eight consisted of newly appointed Captain Nelson Webster of Fairport, Ohio; First Mate Elezor Spear of Kirtland, Ohio; Second Mate and brother of the Captain, Douglas Webster of Fairport, Ohio; Steward Christopher Roe of Euclid, Ohio; Seaman James Greer of Dunnville, C.W. [Ontario, Canada]; Seaman Stephen Johnson of Fairport, Ohio; Seaman Monroe Ellsworth of Fairport, Ohio; and Seaman Barney Carroll of Dunnville, C.W. [Ontario, Canada] (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4). The brig was bound for Buffalo, New York, with a cargo of 200
tons of grindstones shipped by J. McDermott & Co., Wilson, Critenden & Co. and B. Clough along with some hickory lumber and a small quantity of staves (The Cleveland Herald 1864:3). The grindstones came from the Amherst and Berea, Ohio areas, both well known for the quality of their stone, and many of the larger grindstones were stacked on the deck rather than in the cargo hold.

Prior to departing, Captain Webster was advised by more than a few people including George W. Gardner, one of the principals in the firm of Thatcher, Burt & Co., owner of the Sultan, that he should stay in port as the seas were too high to risk making the trip at that time. Some years later Mr. Gardner would recall:

"We had just appointed a young fellow to captain and I called him aside and told him that the trip was not a matter of life and death and he had better wait until the storm abated. He was ambitious, however, to make a record and insisted upon going out, saying that he could land the cargo in Buffalo easily on Monday morning (Marine Review 1901:17)."

The crew had the pleasure of having four ladies aboard the Sultan on the upbound trip from Buffalo, and the wives of Captain Webster and Steward Christopher Roe were aboard while the Sultan was docked in Cleveland. The wives left by train for their homes prior to the Sultan's departure (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4).

As the Sultan passed out of the Cuyahoga River and into the open waters of Lake Erie, the heavy seas began to lift and drop the brig more and more. As predicted by those who had warned Captain Webster to stay in port, the Sultan struck bottom on the bar near the mouth of the river and "pounded it very heavily five or six times" (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). When the brig was well out into the lake, the towline was cast off, the sails were set, and the crew manned the pumps to determine if any damage had been sustained. No more water than usual was found in the bilge, and it appeared that no damage had been done (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4).

Not long afterward, the Sultan began "laboring heavily, the waves dashed over her" (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). Working its way down the lake and well heeled over in the high wind and seas, the Sultan made little progress. The order was soon given to start throwing a portion of the deck load of grindstones overboard "for the purpose of easing her" (The Plain Dealer 1864:3). At the same time, one of the crew entered the forecastle and discovered that the brig was leaking badly. The pumps were manned, but it soon became obvious that the brig was settling, so Captain Webster ordered the Sultan put about in an attempt to run the brig onto the beach (The Plain Dealer 1864:3).

After sailing and drifting down the lake about two miles, the Sultan lurched and rolled on its side. The waves knocked off the cabin, and the deck load of grindstones shifted to the starboard side as staves, hickory timber, and cabin contents — including the trunks of the crew — were pitched into the lake. The Sultan was surrounded by wave-tossed debris that was "beating about the waves as if a school of whales had been there pounding and 'thrashing' the sea for a meal" (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4).

The Sultan was now off Euclid, Ohio, eight miles below Cleveland and about three miles from shore. Recognizing that the shifted deck load made it impossible for the Sultan to right itself, the crew realized the brig would soon be on the bottom. The small boat was cut loose but quickly filled with water. After ten minutes of futile bailing, First Mate Eleazar Spear abandoned any hope of using the small boat for rescue (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). He then jumped onto the bulwarks and joined others of the crew as they began climbing the rigging with the Sultan settling fast beneath them. Seamen Monroe Elsworth and Barney Carroll, however, jumped into the nearly-filled small boat and drifted away in the high seas (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). The last time anyone saw Elsworth and Carroll they were standing up in the small boat about half way between the wreck and shore (The Plain Dealer 1864:3).

During the Sultan struck bottom, First Mate Spear, Captain Webster, Second Mate Webster, and Seaman Johnson were clinging to the main top gallant mast while Seaman Greer and Steward Roe were similarly perched on the fore top gallant mast (The Plain Dealer 1864:3). With the Sultan resting on the bottom on its beam ends and swaying back and forth with the surge of every passing wave, the positions of the crew were very precarious. As the masts swayed back and forth, the jerking motion made clinging to the rigging "next to impossible" (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). It was now 3:30 p.m.

Seaman Johnson decided to abandon his position on the main top gallant mast and join Steward Roe and Seaman Greer on the fore top gallant mast where they planned to cut the yard loose and use it to float to shore (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). Johnson made the difficult swim to the foremost and stopped there to rest for a moment. Suddenly the mast broke, and Johnson, Roe, and Greer were all cast into the surging lake (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). The exhausted Johnson sank immediately, but Roe and Greer were able to swim to the main-mast and take refuge there. Just over an hour later, with darkness setting in, a large wave wrenched the main-mast from its step throwing Roe and Greer into the lake never to be seen again (The Cleveland Leader 1864:4). The remaining three crew members,
Captain Nelson Webster, his brother, Second Mate Douglas Webster, and First Mate Eleazer Spear, now found their situation even more difficult. Un-stepped, the mast swayed and jerked much worse than before with each passing wave. Spear was on top of the top gallant with Captain Webster located just below him and Second Mate Webster just below the Captain. Separated by only a few feet, they had to shout to hear one another over the crashing waves and howling wind (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4).

At approximately 9:00 p.m., Captain Webster realized his brother, Second Mate Douglas Spear, had fallen from or was washed off the main-mast and into the lake (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4). In the darkness, the Captain called to his brother but received no reply. He shouted to Spear, "Duck is gone. Duck is gone. Do you see him? Can you see him?" (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4). Soon the rain stopped, and the sky cleared. The captain and mate talked about rescue with the captain commenting about what his wife might think if she knew of his predicament and that he was glad she did not know (*The Cleveland Herald* 1864:3). Some hours later, Spear heard a splash and called out to the captain but received no reply. The captain was gone, and Spear believed that he either fell asleep and fell from the mast or was so exhausted that he could no longer hold on (*The Cleveland Herald* 1864:3). Either way, First Mate Eleazer Spear was alone and the last of the eight man crew aboard what was now the wreck of the brig *Sultan*.

Spear slid down the mast to the place that had been occupied by Captain Webster since the swaying of the mast was less dramatic there. Fearing that he would succumb to the same fate as his fellow crewmembers, Spear used a piece of "hangerline" that he had in his pocket to make two loops for his feet. He then secured it to the rigging making it easier to stand and hold onto the swaying mast (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4). During the coming hours he would shift his weight periodically from one foot to the other in an attempt to avoid fatigue. It seemed like dawn would never come as Spear continued to hang on and hope (*The Cleveland Herald* 1864:3). When dawn did come, Spear could see shore clearly, and he waved his hat to let people on shore know that there was someone still aboard the wrecked brig (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4).

George Gardner of Thatcher, Burt & Co., owners of the *Sultan*, received news late Saturday afternoon that a vessel was "in distress" (*Marine Review 1901:17*) off Euclid and the crew was in the rigging. He immediately knew that it had to be the *Sultan* as only hours before he had advised Captain Webster not to make the trip to Buffalo until the weather improved. Mr. Gardner later recollected:

> "I received word that a vessel was in distress off Euclid Creek and that the crew were lashed to the cross-trees. The vessel was rolling frightfully and the crew were being submerged half of the time. I made up my mind that that was our brig, the *Sultan*, and I went down to the river to see if I could get some one to go out to help her. The only steamer in was the Northwestern. I asked the captain if he would go out but he was afraid he would get stuck on the bar and declined. There was one tug near the government pier and I asked the captain of her if he wouldn't go out. He said that his insurance wasn't high enough. I asked him how much more he wanted and when he said $4000 I volunteered to get it and pay the premium on it and to go out with him. He then said that the sea was too high and he wouldn't risk it. I had to wait then until 4 o'clock in the morning when the Detroit & Cleveland steamer came in. She stopped at the government pier, as was her custom then, to discharge freight. In a moment or two Capt. McKay came down on the dock. I related the circumstances to him. He didn't wait for me to ask him to go out but said very quietly, 'I'll be ready to back out in three minutes.' He then asked me if I had a sharp knife. I told him I would have one by the time the steamer reached the wreck. When we got to the wreck there was only one man lashed to the rigging left. The rest had drowned. The captain said 'I am going to run her nose across her quarters, so you lean over and cut that man loose from the rigging. You'll have to work quick for I shall have to back out at once to save myself from being crushed.' Well, he sent her bow over the boat and we cut the man loose. He was unconscious but we had some brandy on board and soon revived him" (*Marine Review 1901:17*).

The above description of the rescue differs significantly from the newspaper accounts which were undoubtedly based on interviews with sole survivor Eleazer Spear. *The Cleveland Leader* stated the following:

> "The North Star made a pass for him but missed. Then the City of Cleveland came up, her rail passing about three feet below the yard to which he was lashed. He sprang aboard nimbly, having perfect use of his limbs, not being at all numbed by the exposure to waves and chilly air" (*The Cleveland Leader* 1864:4).
Perhaps the brandy influenced Spear’s recollection of the rescue during his interviews with the press just after the City of Cleveland docked in Cleveland. Perhaps an ambitious and newly appointed reporter, not unlike an ambitious and newly appointed lake captain, decided to stretch things a bit to make a name for himself by embellishing his story. Regardless, Spear was rescued at about 8:00 a.m. on Sunday morning thanks to the skill and courage of Captain George McKay, Master of the Steamer City of Cleveland. Just weeks later, in October 1864, in recognition of, and appreciation for, this gallant act and others that preceded it, the citizens of Cleveland presented Captain McKay with a gold watch and chain “suitably inscribed” (Marine Review 1901:17). During the weeks that followed the sinking of the Sultan, most of the bodies of the lost crew members came ashore or were found floating in the lake. Thereafter, the brig Sultan quickly became a forgotten shipwreck like the hundreds of others on the bottom of Lake Erie.

The second part of this report will cover the discovery and archaeological survey of the Sultan. Look for this exciting article in an upcoming issue of Inland Seas.


The Cleveland Herald 1864 Terrible Disaster. The Cleveland Herald September 26:3. Cleveland, Ohio.

The Cleveland Leader 1864 Terrible Disaster on the Lake. The Cleveland Leader September 26:4. Cleveland, Ohio.


District of Buffalo 1858, Enrollment No. 26, 26 April 1858, Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Record Group 41, National Archives, Washington, DC.

District of Chicago 1847, Enrollment No. 1, 19 April 1847, Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Record Group 41, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
1848a, Enrollment No. 40, 27 July 1848, Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Record Group 41, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
1848b, Enrollment No. 75, 26 October 1848, Records of the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, Record Group 41, National Archives, Washington, D.C.


The Plain Dealer 1864 Terrible Lake Disaster. The Plain Dealer September 26:3. Cleveland, Ohio.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In This Issue:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembering the Fitz</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Carrie E. Sowden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summers on the Boat With My Dad</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Captain Clayton A. Martin)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Moray Loring Kiehl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sinking of the S. R. Kirby</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by David Balfour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Captain for All Seasons: Remembering Captain Harold Hogan</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Brian Johnson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Current State of the Wreck of the Brig Sultan</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by David M. VanZandt MMA, RPA,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Paskert, Kevin Magee, Chris Kraska,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Marshall, and Linda Pansing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saga of the Steamboat Oswego</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Richard F. Palmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinking the Argo</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Jim Paskert and Tom Kowalczy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes News</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by Greg Rudnick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Lakes Historical Society</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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for the trip was, of course, veteran lake pilot Captain Harold Hogan. It would be his last trip.

"Dad died in February 2000," said Mike Hogan. "He initially went into the hospital in the fall of '99 to have a gallstone removed. He was still working as hard as ever and we sat down one afternoon at Kingston General Hospital after his surgery talking about the next: summer and how maybe he should think about stepping back a bit. He agreed. He'd never leave the waters on a permanent basis while he was healthy enough to sail, but he was smart enough to start taking a little off the throttle.

"He had never been to Boston or New York City. We had made rough plans to visit the two cities, explore the harbours, visit the USS Constitution in Boston and go to a game or two at Fenway Park and Yankee Stadium. Some of my fondest memories as a child surround trips the two of us took to see the Expos at Jarry Park, then Olympic Stadium. I was really looking forward to the planned trips but sadly, we weren't able to take them."

We rookies learned a lot from the ol' man. He never hesitated to share his knowledge and experience with any of us. If you were willing to listen and learn, you absorbed a treasure trove of nautical knowledge you wouldn't get from any textbook. Stood up for a date many years ago, I simply spent the remainder of the evening in the wheelhouse of the Wolfe Islander with mate Ken and Captain Harold. I soon forgot all about the date and the girl. I was hooked. This is where I wanted to be. And I had made up my mind; this is what I wanted to do.

Marine historian, teacher and mate Ron Walsh worked with Captain Hogan for many years on the Island Queen. "If he called me, and said 'Ron, I need a mate," Walsh said, "I never hesitated. It was always a pleasure to walk aboard and work with such a gentleman. It really was."

Oh yeah, it certainly was. He was the best of the best!!

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THE CURRENT STATE OF THE WRECK OF THE BRIG SULTAN

by David M. VanZandt MMA, RPA, Jim Paskert, Kevin Magee, Chris Kraska, Ken Marshall, and Linda Pansing

PREVIOUSLY:

In the Spring 2015 issue of Inland Seas® the history of the wreck of the Sultan was discussed. What follows here is a complete description of her current condition as well as the results from the archaeological study conducted by the Maritime Archaeological Survey Team, Cleveland Underwater Explorers, and the Great Lakes Historical Society.

THE DIVE SITE

The Sultan, Ohio Archaeology Inventory (OAI) number 33 CU 534, is located at 41° 35.685' N, 81° 36.936' W and sits upright on a sand/mud bottom in 42 feet of water. The wreck measures approximately 125 feet x 23 feet and is mostly intact although partially buried with the hull settled into the sand/mud on to a firmer sub-bottom. Silt has filled the interior spaces of the vessel but a slight west-to-east current helps keep the upper structure of the wreck free of major silt. Due to its depth the wreck is not subject to shallow water ice damage, wind-driven surface currents, or wave action. Zebra or quagga mussels cover the vertical surfaces of the wreck to a moderate degree, necessitating the use of gloves by divers to prevent cuts from the sharp mollusk shells.

The deck and associated deck equipment are covered with a fine layer of silt which is easily stirred up by survey activities. When this condition occurs, it can drop the visibility in local areas of the wreck to zero. The visibility at the dive site varied from day to day and ranged from zero to sometimes 20 feet of visibility with the average being about 3 feet. The lack of visibility made photography and video recording tenuous activities at best. Normal archaeological methods include having a scale and north arrow in frame when taking photographs of a site and site artifacts. Due to the silting conditions, these were not commonly employed.

Most survey dives were completed during the summer months. The water temperature at these times varies from about 60 to 70°F with little to no thermocline due to the shallow depth of 45 feet.
The ship’s bow, missing the bowsprit, is pointed east and stands five feet high off the sand/mud bottom. The hull sides are intact and the majority of the decking is present. Two anchors are present and visible lying on the bottom off either side of the bow. A wood-stocked bower anchor is partially buried on the port side still attached to its anchor chain. A metal stream or small bower anchor, with a 90 degree-shaped wooden cathead still attached to it, is mostly buried on the starboard side with a grindstone on top of it.

The bow of the ship features a prominent cutwater with a notch for the missing bowsprit. The disarticulated bowsprit rests on the bottom 42 feet to the east of the bow. A windlass is located on the forward deck just aft of the bowsprit notch. Aft of the windlass is a small square access opening in the deck to the chain locker, which is filled with anchor chain. Two separate anchor chains run from the chain locker. The port anchor chain runs from the chain locker through its spurring pipe and loops back into the chain locker. It then comes back out of the chain locker where it wraps around the port whelp of the windlass. From the whelp it continues its run along the deck to the port hawse pipe and presumably out to the partially buried port anchor. The starboard anchor chain runs out of its spurring pipe and is separated at this point. After the separation, the remaining starboard anchor chain wraps around the starboard whelp of the windlass. From the starboard whelp it continues its runs along the deck to the apparently ripped out hawse pipe continuing off the deck and down the side of the ship, presumably out to the partially buried starboard anchor.

Aft of the chain locker is a single-barrel hand pump along with the remains of the foremost located just behind this pump and broken off at deck level. Along the railings adjacent to the forecastle are the remains of six large deadeyes on each side. The deadeyes are no longer attached to the railings and their chainplates are bent down parallel to the hull, suggesting the mast was violently wrested from the standing rigging. The large number of deadeyes is a good indicator that the foremost was square-rigged.

The wreck has an obvious list of about 30 degrees to starboard. The railings on both the starboard and port sides are mostly intact. Round grindstones are piled up on the deck along the inboard starboard railing in stacks of one, two, or three stones high and in several rows. The grindstones start near the foremost and continue all the way to the stern. The larger stones, about 5.5 feet in diameter, are located forward, and the smaller stones, about 3.5 feet in diameter, are located toward the stern.

Aft of the foremost stub is a cargo hatch. Two long boards protrude from the after side of the hatch toward the starboard side and are likely remnants of the secondary cargo of lumber. Along the centerline of the vessel is a small slot in the deck, followed by a small hatch aft of the slot and another small slot. This is the location of the centerboard, although no centerboard box is apparent inside the silt-filled hold as viewed through the center hatch. No centerboard winch is present at the aft slot, but the two forward mounting holes for the winch appear to be on the deck.
A single large 5-foot-diameter grindstone rests on the centerline wedged against a two-barreled wooden pump immediately behind the aft slot. The mainmast is missing, but it stood behind this area as evidenced by the chainplates on the sides of the ship adjacent to this area. There are three deadeyes intended for each side. The deadeyes are missing on the starboard side railing while two of the three deadeyes remain on the port side railing. A strip of missing centerline decking runs aft from the pump to another cargo hatch.

A stern of the aft cargo hatch is a raised wooden combing that spans the entire beam and once formed the front of the now-missing cabin. Grindstones are wedged against this combing and the starboard railing but do not spill into the cabin space. Four floor joists are present where the cabin floor was once located.

The transom is missing and the rudderpost, turned slightly to port, stands high off the bottom. The rudder cap, which would have been mounted on top of the rudderpost, can be seen lying inside the cabin on the port side. A line of grindstones that spilled from the boat as it drifted and sank is visible in the distance behind the stern running out across the bottom of the lake. The wreck's length and breadth were measured at 125 feet and 23 feet, respectively, which compares closely to the 127 feet by 24 feet indicated on the Sultan's various enrollments.

PORTABLE ARTIFACTS

Deck Hardware

The deck of the Sultan is strewn with a variety of dis-articulated deck hardware. Some of the hardware has been identified and some has yet to be. One of the most identifiable pieces of deck hardware is the broken ship's wheel located near the stern where the cabin once stood.

Ceramics and Pottery

A quantity of ceramic items including a cup and several plates manufactured by Anthony Shaw of Great Britain — as evidenced by the maker's mark — were found on the wreck. These marks date to the period of ca 1860–1882, consistent with the wrecking event (Thepotteries.org, 2014a). This tableware appears to be one of the designs manufactured by Shaw and distributed exclusively in the United States. It was likely stocked on the brig as part of its standard galley dishware during the Sultan's time in New York City from 1859–1861.

A ceramic shard was also discovered with a mark that resembles the British diamond mark. During the period 1842–1883, the British Patent Office issued a diamond mark along with the registration number when a design was registered (Thepotteries.org, 2014b). This maker's mark is also consistent with the wrecking date and history of the Sultan.

Additional ceramic, pottery, and glass items have been located on or around the wreck and a formal analysis of this assemblage will be performed at a later date.

The master site plan represents the accumulation of all the survey data collected to date and provides a detailed graphical representation of the Sultan wreck site as it appears today.

POST-SURVEY

Brian Abbott of Nautilus Marine Group International, LLC volunteered his expertise and 360-degree sonar equipment (post-survey) to produce detailed images of the wreck site. Brian and his colleague David Thompson
travelled from Michigan with the equipment and joined MAST member Chris Kraska, who provided and captained the boat, to create these high resolution scanning sonar images.

CONCLUSIONS

The authors have little doubt that the remains of the ship described herein are those of the sailing vessel Sultan, first registered in the District of Chicago in 1848. The vessel’s history is well researched and it has proven to be quite interesting. During her 16-year history, the Sultan sailed not only on the Great Lakes but also in the Atlantic and Caribbean. After several mishaps, refits, and changes of ownership, she came to rest where she sits today, a mere two and a quarter miles offshore just east of Cleveland, Ohio.

Her identification is made using information from a number of sources. First, the archaeological data obtained from the survey is consistent with the time period in which the Sultan sank. This includes personal items, cookware, and tools found on site as well as the construction methods and materials used on the vessel. Second, the scantling data obtained from the survey is consistent with the as-built data obtained from the historical record. Finally, the historical accounts and records are also consistent with the disposition of the wreck and the remains of her cargo. All of these taken together provide a very strong case that the wreck is that of the brig Sultan.

On May 14, 1875, a reporter for the Oswego Palladium was hailed down by an old-timer who claimed to have “known Oswego before it was wakened.” It had been an unusually cold spring and people were complaining about the weather. The old-timer said he could recall a much colder time during the spring of 1834.

If you have a few minutes I will tell you about a storm that spring that exceeded in violence to anything I have since seen.

The reporter asked him to continue his narrative as he started to take notes.

At three o’clock of the afternoon of May twelfth, 1834, the new steamer Oswego, which was launched some time before at this port, left Charlotte under the command of Capt. Macy, an experienced navigator from the Hudson River. The boat carried considerable light freight and a large number of passengers bound for Oswego and ports below.

As the boat started before she was fully completed, several caulkers and carpenters were put aboard to finish her while underway. The boat was staunch, well officered, with William T. Barnes of this city one of the engineers and Horatio J. Carey as customs officer. Among the passengers were several captains ready to lend a helping hand, and William Manchester, a portrait painter of this city. When the boat left Charlotte, both crew and passengers were in high glee, confident that the Oswego would show the snail stammers of that day such speed as had not been heard of.

About half an hour after the steamer left Charlotte, a violent storm from the westward, accompanied with snow, sprung up, but as the boat was new and well manned, no fears were entertained. For some time after the storm burst upon her, she behaved well, and rode the waves as lightly as could be wished for. As the wind increased in violence, it became evident to Captain Macy that unless he could get more ballast in the stern, the boat could not be steered, and accordingly he ordered all hands to commence passing wood from the main deck to the stern deck.

After the wood had been put into the hold and the steamer continued to broach to, blankets were hoisted as sails to keep her off,