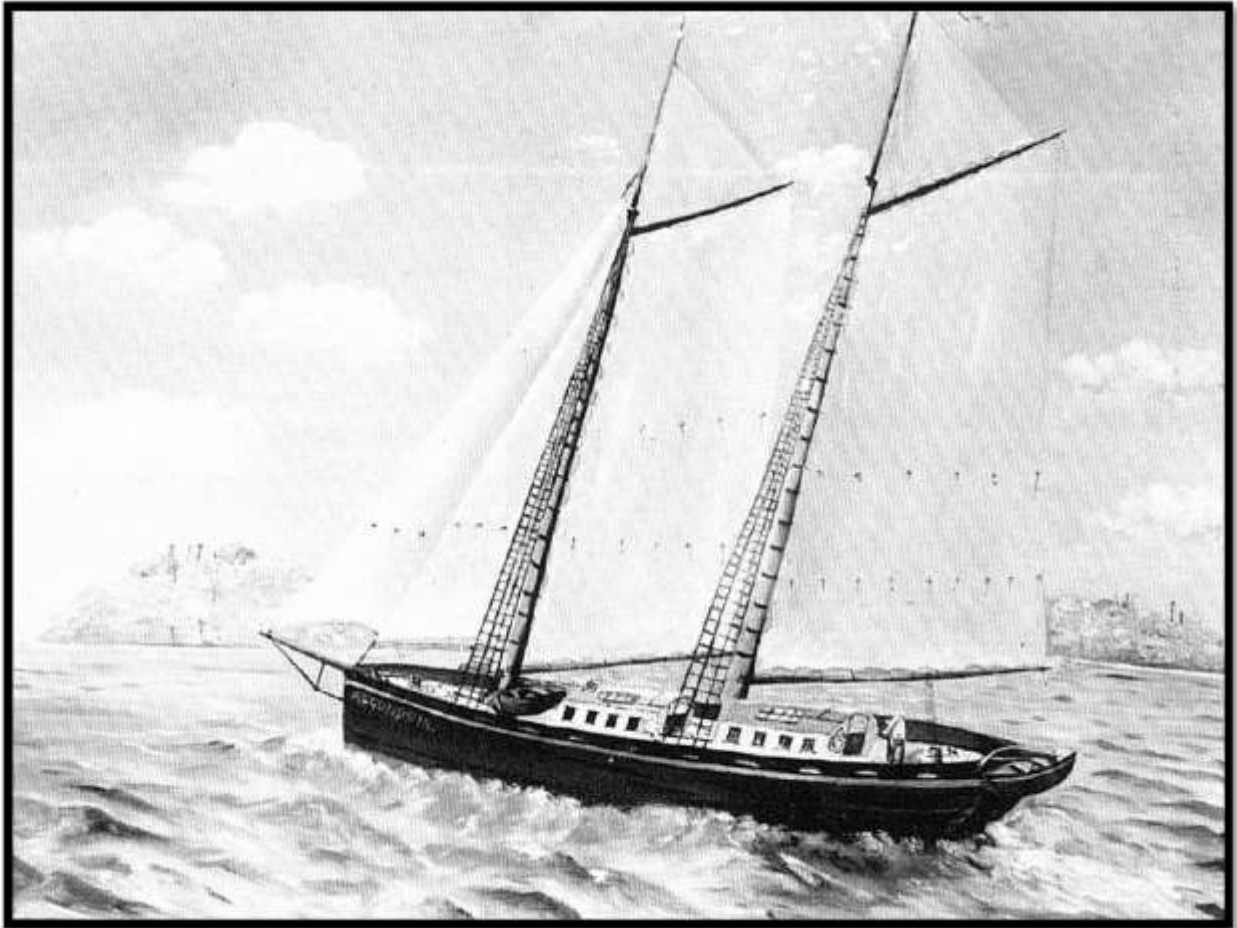


# ALGONQUIN

## HISTORY OF A PROUD SHIP



The schooner Algonquin was built in 1838-39 by the Cleveland North Western Lake Company in Lorain, Ohio. Her express purpose was to compete with the Hudsons Bay and American Fur Companies on Lake Superior. The entire fleet on the Big Lake consisted of five schooners at that time. At 55 feet, Algonquin was the largest of the bunch.

Algonquin was 55' 4", 18' 2" abeam and drafted 6'8". She was scrolled head and square sterned. Gaff rigged with two masts that carried topsails and two gibs. Her tonnage was 54 59/95.

Algonquin left Cleveland on November 13, 1839 bound for Sault Ste. Marie.

The St. Marys River is the only water connection between Lake Superior and the other Great Lakes. At Sault Ste. Marie, the water drops 21 feet over hard sandstone in a short  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long stretch. This rapids, or "sault" to use the original old French term, made it impossible for trade vessels to pass.

The first [lock](#) to accommodate trade vessels was not built until 1855. Up until then, explorers, fur traders, and Native Americans portaged their canoes and cargoes around the rapids.

The Algonquin was the first large decked schooner to be hauled on rollers by a horse and capstan down Portage Street in Sault Ste. Marie. It took three months to move the vessel from Lake Huron to Lake Superior, inching about five boat lengths per day. The portage started on November 30, 1839 and was completed March 12, 1840.

One of Algonquin's first recorded landings was in La Pointe in October of 1940.

In 1941, Jack Wilson was the captain of the Algonquin. It was November and the vessel was headed to Sault Ste. Marie for the winter. The schooner was off of Copper Harbor and got caught in a gale. The passengers reported they could not see from stern to bow due to blowing snow. The rigging, spars, mainsail and deck became encased in ice.

In the middle of the night the wind shifted and the vessel was blown toward shore. Burdened with ice, the Algonquin would not tack. The captain ordered two crewmen above to cut the rigging and sail, but both failed. The captain finally went above himself and was able to hack the rigging and sail free. Five more minutes and the vessel would have struck the rocks outside of Grand Island.

Captain Wilson fell into unconsciousness. A fire was built, blankets were used to cover him and after a time he came back to life and asked, "Boys, are you all Safe?". A passenger onboard the Algonquin at the time used this story to raise funds for a memorial on the captain's grave.

Among her many duties, the Algonquin was involved in exploration for copper and other minerals in 1842 and 1843. In 1843 the great Ontonagon boulder (estimated at 3,700 pounds) was transported from the Ontonagon River. The boulder was placed on board the Algonquin on September 12, 1943 and transported to the falls at Sault Ste. Marie. This boulder is the largest specimen of native copper in the world and is now housed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC.

In 1844, Algonquin continued to carry various types of travelers including miners and settlers to Copper Harbor, Isle Royale and the south shore of Lake Superior. The John Jacob Astor was one the only other decked vessel operating on Lake Superior at the time. But the Astor was wrecked in a storm on September 21, 1844, leaving only the Algonquin to supply the various forts and communities. The Algonquin managed to supply all the forts and communities prior to the start of winter.

For a short period of time (1846?) the Algonquin was owned by Antoine Gordon, the owner of the general store on La Pointe. He used the vessel to haul lumber which he obtained from the mouth of the Bad River.

Over the next 11 years, the vessel changed hands many times and continued to travel Lake Superior with passengers and cargo. On May 8, 1856 the Algonquin delivered passengers to Bayfield.

In 1858 there was a fire in the cabin of Algonquin and she sank at the old Quebec Pier in Superior, Wisconsin. The schooner sat underwater at the pier for 30 years until she was finally pulled to shore. People began taking parts of the vessel for souvenirs and by 1932 she was completely gone.

The term Algonquin refers to a member of an aboriginal North American people related to the Odawa and Ojibwe, living mainly in Quebec. "Algonquin" has two different meanings in the native languages:

Maliseet elakomkwik - "these are our relatives", and

Mi'kmaq algoomeaking - "at the place of spearing fish and eels"

Additional information about the Schooner Algonquin can be found at:

<http://www.aldalgonquin.net/schooner.html>

<http://greatlakeships.org/2892180/data?n=1>

<https://chequamegonhistory.wordpress.com/>