

Finding Aid

The steamship *Conestoga* & the schooner *Lillie Parsons*

The Conestoga & Lillie Parsons Project conducted by Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter.

This collection is the result of hard work and a dedication to detail on the part of Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter. In addition to Fred Gregory the Project Director, many others contributed. They are identified in the respective volumes for the *Conestoga* and the *Lillie Parsons*. Their work represents a 'mighty' contribution to the field of underwater archaeology.

This collection consists of six large three ring binders that are numbered 2001.68.1,2,3, 5,6 and 7, a plaque, field book and twenty-nine drawings associated with the two vessels, the schooner *Lillie Parsons* and the steamship *Conestoga*. In addition to the items noted here there are numerous drawings and photographs in the three ring binders. These will be cataloged at a later date.

Up-dated editions of reports for each ship were undertaken so that the original report might be put into more modern typesetting and stored on a CD, thus making it more accessible to the dive and heritage community. Otherwise, the content of the original document/report remains unchanged. The accession number should always be quoted when requesting information.

The Museum has in its holdings, complimentary underwater archaeology collections.

Collection In Brief:

2001.68.1 - *Field Notes - Volume 1, Conestoga*, Marine Archaeological Project Conducted by Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter, 1984-1986, Fred Gregory, Project Director, January 1986, Revised Edition Up-dated 1999.

2001.68.2 - *Field Notes - Volume 2, Conestoga*, Marine Archaeological Project Conducted by Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter, 1984-1986, Fred Gregory, Project Director, January 1986, Revised Edition Up-dated 1999.

2001.68.3 - *Films & Slides, Conestoga*, Marine Archaeological Project Conducted by Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter, 1984-1986, Fred Gregory, Project Director, January 1986, Revised Edition, Up-dated 1999.

2001.68.4 - *Name plaque* that was placed on the *Conestoga* dated 1985 and assumed to have been replaced., 10 inches by 15.5 inches.

2001.68.5 - *Field Notes - Volume 1, Lillie Parsons*, Marine Archaeological Project Conducted by Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter, 1984-1986, Fred Gregory,

Project Director, August 1988, updated 2001.

2001.68.6 - *Field Notes - Volume 2, Lillie Parsons*, Marine Archaeological Project Conducted by Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter, 1984-1986, Fred Gregory, Project Director, August 1988, updated 2001.

2001.68.7 - *Films & Slides, Lillie Parsons*, Marine Archaeological Project Conducted by Save Ontario Shipwrecks - Ottawa Chapter, 1984-1986, Fred Gregory, Project Director, August 1988, updated 2001.

2001.68.8 - *Geotec Fieldbook, for the Lillie Parsons* with hand-written field notes by Fred Gregory.

2001.68.9 - Conestoga New Hog Braces, March 1985, 1 inch = 4 ft, 30.5 by 197, Tracing of an Original from the Collection of Patrick Labadie, pencil on tracing paper

2001.68.10 - *Conestoga New Hog Braces, March 1985*, 1 inch = 4 ft, 35.5 by 215, white print blue line of 2001.68.9

2001.68.11 - *Site Plan*, 28 by 56, a reduction of 2001.68.12

2001.68.12- *Site Plan Conestoga* showing Profile and Plan view, February 1984, 1:50, 92 by 186, ink on mylar

2001.68.13 - *Conestoga Plan View and Inboard Profile*, March 1985, 1 inch = 4 ft, 85 by 207, pencil on mylar (tracing from original c 1906 from the collection of Patrick Labadie)

2001.68.14 - *Conestoga Plan View and Inboard Profile*, March 1985, 1 inch = 4 ft, 87 by 206, white print blue line, copy of 2001.68.13

2001.68.15 - *In-Board Profile* (stern, Lillie Parsons), July 15, 1987, 1:20, 32 by 49 cm, pencil on mylar, letraset numbers and naming

2001.68.16 - *Starboard - 8M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper.

2001.68.17 - *Port 36 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.18 - *Port 34.8 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.19 - *Port 33.2 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.20 - *Port 27 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.21 - *Port 17 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.22 - *Port 10 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.23 - *Port 8 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.24 - *Port 4.5 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.25 - *Port 2 M from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.26 - *Starboard - 10 from Stern*, Lillie Parsons, September 1988, 1:20, 32 by 44, white print on tracing paper. (.16 to 26 are all profiles of selected hull sections).

2001.68.27 - *Artefact Distribution*, Lillie Parsons, May 1988, 1:20, 37 by 26, pencil on mylar with letraset numbers and naming of hull parts

2001.68.28 - *Steering Gear*, Lillie Parsons, (detail plan and profile) October 1984, 1:50, 28 by 44, pencil on mylar

2001.68.29 - *Bottom View of Steering Gear*, (plan view) Lillie Parsons, December 1984, 1:75, 26.5 by 32.25, pencil on mylar.

2001.68.30 - *Helpport and Crosshead*, Lillie Parsons, November 1984, 1:10, 20 by 42.5, pencil on mylar

2001.68.31 - (No title but this is a trail drawing) for completed winch drawing on 2001.68.31.1, Lillie Parsons, 27 by 43, pencil on tracing paper

2001.68.31.1 - *Centreboard Winch*, (profile end and profile side), Lillie Parsons, February 1986, 28 by 35, pencil on tracing paper

2001.68.32 - *Rudder* (side view), Lillie Parsons, November 1984, 1:10, 47 by 31, pencil on mylar

2001.68.33 - *Ships Wheel*, Lillie Parsons, October 1984, 1:50, pencil on mylar

2001.68.34 - *Top of Rail aft and Side View of Rudder Post and Navigation Shelf*, Lillie Parsons, No date, 1:25, 56 by 43, ink on mylar, (these are details, incomplete)

2001.68.35 - *Lillie Parsons Artefact Distribution*, Field Drawing 1985, Fred Gregory, 1:20, 60 by 46, pencil on mylar, (artefact locations are numbered, a preliminary drawing)

What follows is an Abstract for each ship and brief notes (edited) related to each vessel prepared by Fred Gregory.

The Conestoga

The *Conestoga* was built by Quayle & Son of Cleveland for the Anchor Line and was launched July 6, 1878. She was originally enrolled No. 125669 at Erie, but in September 1919 became Canadian registered under No. 140998. She was the sister ship to the Delaware.

A wooden-hulled, propeller-driven steam freighter, the *Conestoga* was registered at 252.8 feet in length, 36.0 feet in the beam and 16.2 feet in depth. The depth of hold from tonnage deck to the ceiling amidships was 15 feet; she drew a 4 foot 6 inch forward draft and a 9 foot 3 inch stern draft, when launched. "She was stiffened by means of hog braces of the arch type that rose high over the shelter deck". The gross tonnage was 1726 tons while the net was 1562; she had a 2100 ton package freight capacity.

There were two decks, "...the 'tween deck being enclosed by upward extensions of the hull sides: Entrance to the freight deck was gained through cargo ports spaced three to each side". The hull was carvel laid (planked), with a round counter and plumb stem, typical of the period; there were two bulkheads.

The *Conestoga* was powered by a two stage (24"x48"x48") steeple compound engine built in 1878 by the Cuyahoga Iron Works of Cleveland. This engine developed 96 N.H.P. (normal horsepower) and 473 I.H.P. (indicated horsepower) and could attain 8 knots with the 14 foot, four bladed propeller. Her single steel boiler, constructed in 1886 by the Lake Erie Boiler Works of Buffalo N.Y., was coal fired.

Her galley, officers and ". . . crew accommodations were located in cabins on the shelter deck and her original octagonal (*sic – actually the original pilothouse was a decahedral structure*) pilothouse was far forward on the boat deck . She carried one tall mast forward and her single, raked stack rose from a small house located far aft on the shelter deck. In later years, her tall foremast was removed to be replaced by a lighter pole foremast and a main set abaft the stack. The ornate ‘birdcage’ pilothouse was replaced by a rather ugly structure which had but three small windows across its rounded front and an open bridge above. The height of the hog braces was reduced so that the top of each arch barely rose above the shelter deck rail".

In her early years, she carried the Anchor Line colours of a "green hull, with white upper trim, white cabins, yellow mast and a crimson stack with a black smoke band. On the bow was a red keystone, symbolic of the Pennsylvania Railroad, on which was superimposed a white anchor". After her purchase by the Crosby Line, she was painted black with white rail and cabins; the stack was all black.

In Nov, 1906 the *Conestoga* underwent some changes and her hog braces were cut down flush with the deck rail and cabin accommodations were provided for passengers. It may have been at this time also, that the metal skin was added, perhaps to permit operation in light ice conditions.

Abstract for the Conestoga

On May 21, 1922, the wooden propeller driven steamship *Conestoga* burned and sank, 9 metres beneath the St Lawrence River, just west of Cardinal Ontario.

Since the hull interior is still intact and readily accessible, the vessel proved excellent material for research into great lakes, wooden, steam-freighter construction techniques. To this end, SOS Ottawa, undertook an archaeological survey of the ship, under an archaeological license and grant from the Ontario Heritage Foundation, with the intent of compiling her history, measuring the hull and studying in detail the more

interesting machinery and construction techniques. The project subsequently divided the wreck into a number of study areas to allow for individual attention by diving teams.

This report contains an analysis of the following main areas of interest: rudder, various winches, the anchor and capstan. Considerable detail is also presented on the ship's construction including cross sections, stanchions, knees, beam shelf, etc.

A plan drawing was produced showing the ship's lines and the location of the above items.

Sections are also included on her history, the methodology employed and the special equipment constructed and used by the group.

This report has been presented in such a manner that it may serve as a guide to other marine conservation groups pursuing similar projects.

The Project revealed considerable detail of the *Conestoga* construction and from this we conclude that she was a well found vessel and that much thought, detail and expense went towards her construction.

Although much was accomplished, the survey is far from complete. It is hoped that other groups will pick up where we left off and continue adding to the store of information on a most interesting example of our maritime heritage.

The Lillie Parsons

The *Lillie Parsons* was constructed in Tonawanda, New York by her owners and builders, Parsons and Humble. According to newspaper accounts, she was launched September 14, 1868 and registered at Oswego, New York September 18 with the official number 15509.

A two-masted fore and after, centreboard schooner she measured 131 feet on the deck, with a 26 foot beam and a 10 foot depth of hold. Her 500 ton or 17,000 bushel capacity, double hull and hold beams permitted large, diverse and multiple cargos. She commonly hauled wheat, barley, railroad iron, coal and salt; remarkably, when loaded, she had a draft of only nine feet six inches. There is also evidence that she carried double cargos. The hold beams allowed for one cargo in the lower portion of the hold while, with the addition of removable planking placed on these beams, another could be stowed in the upper.

The *Lillie Parsons* was registered at 276 tons, consisting of a 257 ton capacity under the tonnage deck, and the 9 ton capacity of the enclosures on the upper deck.

Her construction (as recorded in newspaper accounts - see Annex A) included 32 inch clamps, 5 2 inch by 20 inch shelf pieces and similarly massive garboard strakes. The shelf pieces and clamps, which ran from stem to stern, provided sufficient strength to preclude hanging or bosom knees; hooked scarves were used where necessary. Special iron brackets replaced hanging knees, where the stanchions met the deck beams. This latter feature was, at the time, a relatively new innovation for vessels constructed on the lakes.

The centreboard trunk was constructed in line with and as an integral part of the keel. The trunk opening is framed on each side by longitudinal timbers laid snug alongside the keel and extending 3 metres beyond either end of the box. The centreboard was constructed of wood planks and pivoted at the forward end. A centreboard winch is barely visible still attached to the deck and the stout chain runs through the deck to the board itself. There is a metal grommet to protect the deck opening through which it passes. Due to the coal, the existence of a forward deck hole to the centreboard could not be confirmed.

The *Lillie Parsons* had a square stern, displayed an eagle figurehead and was painted green with two white stripes. She reflected a shipbuilding era dedicated to clean lines, superb handling and speed. Indeed, she is reported to have made the round trip from Oswego to Chicago in 25 days and for some years held the quickest time ever, for a sail vessel, of 7 days between Milwaukee and Oswego.

From all accounts, the *Lillie Parsons* would appear to have been a graceful and beautiful vessel. Her model was A. . . an excellent one, and in her fit-out she (was) not excelled. . .@ She was A . . . one of the strongest and best business vessels . . . afloat on inland waters.

Abstract for Lillie Parsons

The *Lillie Parsons* Preliminary Report, published in 1984 by the Ottawa Chapter of SOS, emphasized only those areas for which sufficient research had been conducted at the time. It included research on the:

Centreboard and Trunk;

Stern and Counter;

Rudder;

Steering Gear and Wheel;

After Deck Plan View; and,

Keelson.

Additional research conducted during the 1984, and 1985 field seasons, along with more recent efforts towards developing an Interpretative Trail, are contained in this Final Report. This Report also contains considerable research on an historical sketch of the life and career of the *Lillie Parsons*, as well as a biography of the many people who's lives were intertwined with the history of the vessel itself. Much of this latter work was a result of an, as yet, unsuccessful search to locate a photo of the *Lillie Parsons*.

Because the *Lillie Parsons* lies inverted, with her hull totally exposed, she presented an ideal opportunity to study structural details of a Great Lakes schooner from below the water-line. To this end, much attention was placed on recording the hull lines. Included as well, is the design and construction of the special measuring device (the Profilometre) developed to facilitate the recording of these measurements.

Both during and following the formal project, members of SOS Ottawa worked towards developing the *Lillie Parsons* Interpretative Trail. The aim being to improve this very popular dive site for the benefit of the community. The Report contains information on this aspect as well, and includes the story of how the original anchor was returned to the site, and the unique way we found of displaying some of the artefacts located during the project.

The *Lillie Parsons* is a late 19th century Great Lakes schooner. The information obtained during this project provides valuable information on this type of vessel and the role they played in maritime trade on the Great Lakes.

SOS stands for Save Ontario Shipwrecks, a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of Ontario's marine heritage. SOS encourages divers to preserve their valuable marine heritage and recreational resources by not souvenir collecting. Additionally, SOS Chapters are involved in non-disturbance, marine archaeology, an activity encouraged and supported by the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications.

Notice to Researchers

The *Lillie Parsons* marine archaeological project was conducted over the period 1984 to 1986 and a final report was published in 1986. That report, along with an up-dated

version published in 2001 and on the enclosed CD ROM, is contained within these binders. These binders also contain the following:

Field Note Binders

The Field Note binder contains the raw notes, drawings, material and underwater sketches made by volunteers. It is divided into the following general categories:

General;

Correspondence;

Financial Records;

License;

Articles;

History;

Diver Information & Divemaster Logs;

Profilometer theory and design;

Historical material, notes and photocopies;

Lists of participating divers and individuals, waivers and questionnaires;

Divemaster's logs;

Sketches, sub-divided into the following categories:

General in alphabetical order;

Keel, centreboard & hull;

Rudder;

Transom & stern;

Plan view stern;

Bow;

Deadwood;

Profilometer off-sets;

Steering gear & wheel;

Inboard profile;

Field notes and thoughts;

Artifacts: Gift Form, photos, conservation and records;

Film & Slide Binder

This binder holds many photos, negatives and slides organized into categories concerning the various activities and facets of the project. A listing of the material is located at Annex D of the revised report (on the CD ROM).

Architectural Drawings

The actual, large-scale drawings, product by volunteers are located in a tube along with the other material.

Computer Files

All the printed material along with copies of notes, presentations and articles are also in digital format. Much of the earlier material and reports was produced in a DOS format, which is not always readable by modern programs (it may, however, be viewed if opened as a DOS file). This re-published report was originally done in WordPerfect 9 (registered trademark of WordPerfect Corporation) and published to PDF format.

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