

Wrecked, Abandoned, and Re-used: Archaeological Exploration on the Great Lakes

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Abstract

The Great Lakes of North America comprise nearly 100,000 square miles (160,934 km) of fresh water and stretch inland for nearly 1,000 miles (1,609 km). This is a fair sized sea by any definition. The unique properties of these inland seas have shaped their maritime history and helped builders on the lakes produce both unique craft as well as perfect and adapt ocean going technologies. For more than a decade, the Maritime Studies Program at East Carolina University (E.C.U.) has studied the maritime history of this inland sea by examining the shipwrecks, abandoned, and re-used vessels now scattered across the lake floors. Of primary interest to researchers at E.C.U. has been the everyday work horse or vernacular watercraft of the Great Lakes. From early coasting haulers to the giant bulk carriers it is through a careful examination of these "less than romantic" relics that we are able to understand and interpret the maritime culture of the Great Lakes.