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Whitefish Point, Michigan
September 8, 2014

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SHIPWRECK SOCIETY DISCOVERS 148 YEAR OLD THREE MASTED SCHOONER OFF LAKE SUPERIOR'S SOUTHERN COASTLINE

The Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society (GLSHS), a leader in the field of underwater exploration and shipwreck documentation on the Upper Great Lakes, recently discovered the wreckage of the 199' schooner *Nelson*. The vessel sank near Grand Marais, Michigan, in May 1899. *Nelson*, a large three masted schooner built in 1866, rests in over 200' of water and is amazingly intact, despite laying on the bottom of Lake Superior for 115 years after foundering in heavy weather.

"This is a shipwreck that we've wanted to find for a very long time", noted the Shipwreck Society's Director of Marine Operations, Darryl Ertel. GLSHS volunteer (technical) divers and the society's ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicle) after examination positively identified the vessel as *Nelson*.

Using a combination of historical research, technology and teamwork, members of the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society's Underwater Research team have mapped areas where ships were reported lost, then searched those areas using the organization's 50' research vessel, *David Boyd*. Side-scan sonar is employed to analyze the lake bottom and identify submerged wrecks.

In the spring of 1899, *Nelson* was in tow of the wooden steamer *A. Folsom*, along with the schooner *Mary B. Mitchell* bound for Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula. A northwest gale with freezing rain and 50 mph winds descended on the trio and thick ice soon formed on the ships' decks. Captain A. E. White of the *Folsom* was attempting to turn the ships and head for the cover of Whitefish Bay when he witnessed the *Nelson's* towline part and the schooner rapidly sinking. He later noted that "...the *Nelson* disappeared as suddenly as one could snuff out a candle." There was only one survivor among the *Nelson's* 10 person complement.

Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society Executive Director Bruce Lynn remarked, "This is a particularly tragic shipwreck. Captain Haganey of the *Nelson* remained aboard his sinking ship to lower the life-boat, which contained the crew, his wife and infant child. Once lowered, Captain Haganey jumped overboard to gain the lifeboat himself. He landed in the water, and upon surfacing witnessed the stern of his vessel rise up as the ship dove for the bottom. The line was still attached to the lifeboat, which took his crew and family along with the sinking ship." Captain Haganey was the only survivor and later struggled ashore to the Deer Park Life-Saving Station, where he was nursed back to health.

The *Nelson* wreck-site is now being documented by the Shipwreck Society and her story will eventually be told at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum, located at Whitefish Point, Michigan.

More information is available at www.shipwreckmuseum.com by calling 800-635-1742 and asking for Bruce Lynn.

The Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society was founded in 1978 by a group of divers, teachers, and educators to commence exploration of historic shipwrecks in eastern Lake Superior, near Whitefish Point in Michigan's scenic Upper Peninsula. Today, this non-profit organization operates two museum sites on historic properties: The Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum, Whitefish Point Light Station, Whitefish Point; and the U.S. Weather Bureau Building, Soo Locks Park, Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan.

The Shipwreck Museum is open to the public seasonally from May 1 to October 31; and the Weather Bureau is open year-round.