

Southern New Hampshire University

Chicago Shipwrecks

Disasters and their Impact on Maritime Law

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in History

By

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Submitted June, 2017

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## **Abstract**

The shipwreck and maritime history of the Illinois region of Lake Michigan was one wrought with tragedy and shaped the laws of the shipping industry for the future. What has become known as the ‘Shipwreck Era’ of 1825-1925 hosts the most well-known tragedies of Lake Michigan. Ships such as the *Lady Elgin*, *Eastland*, and *Rouse Simmons* rest as the focal points of most research due to the tragic yet popular nature of their respective disasters. A qualitative analysis into the archival documents at Newberry Library, Manitowoc Maritime Museum and the Winnetka Historical Society along the western lakeshore, explorations of individual shipwrecks are able to be compiled into a digital exhibit and foundation of a boat tour to fully explore the wreckage that remains at the bottom of the lake.

## **Dedication**

Special thank you and dedication to Kathleen Schmidt, for taking me on my first kayak trip in Lake Michigan to see my first sunken ship.

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## Preface

When discussing the options for a project to finish my program, a friend and I discussed points of historical interest around the Chicago area that would be more unique to study. I wanted to avoid the Chicago fire, mobsters, Columbian Exhibition and the transit system. We discussed the option of researching and creating a public history project about the architectural history of Chicago, but then remembered the plethora of tours that run the city every hour. Instead, we talked about the maritime history of the city, knowing how important shipping and trade were and are to the city. Then one of my friends took me kayaking off the beaches in Evanston, where she was able to show me a sunken dinner cruise just off the Northwestern University campus. After all my research I never did learn the ship's name, nor any details besides what she taught me about its fire.

After deciding on the topic, I struggled to narrow my project from the entire suggested list to only the exhibit and tour. Initially I wanted to do a walking tour, though I quickly realized it was impossible, due to the sunken ships being so far from shore. Instead, I realized the potential for boat tours, and began investigating how that could work.



## **Acknowledgments**

I want to say thank you to a few archivists and curators that helped me immensely with researching and creating this project:

Lisa Pike- archival assistant at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum

Rachel Ramirez- curator at the Winnetka Historical Society

Ted Karamanski- Professor at Loyola University

Kris Hartzell- Director of Collections at Evanston History Center

## Introduction

For a final capstone project for the MA History program in public history, the research project proposed is a combination exhibit and tour of the shipwrecks on the Chicago shores of Lake Michigan. To work with the Evanston History Center's mission, which emphasizes the history of Evanston and the City of Chicago, research will only focus on ships that sunk in and around the city.<sup>1</sup> The primary purpose of the project is to showcase and emphasize the important, yet dangerous role of the shipping industry to Chicago and Evanston history. Exhibit design will work in conjunction with the rest of the museum, lending information to other exhibits and providing an interactive component to create a unique and original virtual arena for visitors. This sort of exhibit allows for the interests of the general public who may or may not have an interest in the maritime history, as well as researchers who are looking for answers to questions or a specific background to source material for the region. In addition to the exhibit, a boat tour will provide a visual opportunity for studying the wrecks. The history of shipwrecks in Lake Michigan has played an integral role in shaping the changes of shipping laws, many compared to the devastation created by the Titanic disaster.

The history of Chicago is founded in the shipping industry, and as is part of any industry, tragedies happen, and the unpredictable nature of the Great Lakes creates a greater challenge for the shipping industry. Chapter one of this thesis includes a literature review and historiography, exploring the sources available on each shipwreck and a history of their demise. Included in this is an exploration of topics to further research should the occasion arise. Chapter two concerns the

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<sup>1</sup> "Evanston History Center, Mission." Evanston History Center. Accessed March 17, 2017. <http://evanstonhistorycenter.org/mission/>.

methodology associated with conducting research and designing the exhibit and tour.

Information included discusses the roles of external institutions and individuals who played critical roles in developing the programs. Chapter three focuses on the intended audiences for each aspect of the program. Audiences for the tours will amount to families and students, and the digital exhibit will be intended for those unable to visit the city and those uncomfortable with boat tours. Chapter four covers the plans for executing the tour and exhibit as well as presenting the encapsulating history of shipping tragedies. These tragedies are the focus of the research project, shipwrecks in Lake Michigan, focusing on those that took place along the Chicago area shores. Traveling around the city shows little remembrance of the tragedies on the lake, short of buoys scattered around the water. Many of the shipwrecks that will be the focus of this research will be from the 1860s or later, little information is available prior to that. The tragedies of the *Lady Elgin*, *Rouse Simmons* and *Eastland* are shrouded in mystery, and thereby some of the most popular subjects for maritime research. Many other ships have met their demise in Lake Michigan, though with fewer known aspects of destruction. Due to the leisurely nature of boating at this point in time, without prior knowledge of these wreckage sites, it is very easy to miss where various ships met their fate.

Chapter five will discuss the project recommendations and any ethical concerns, creating a critical point of conversation when considering the creation of the program. The development of housing and commercial spaces around the lakeshore provides little memory of the various wrecks that have made their mark to the lake floor. Each wreck was from a variety of causes, but each played an influential role in the development and enforcement of shipping laws and design.

These legal changes were created in anticipation of other tragedies post-Titanic as well as in hopes of making sure they did not repeat after. With the increase in rail traffic and the later creation of long distance road transit, mass shipping has greatly slowed for the Great Lakes.

The primary research questions that are being studied for answers are the changes in shipping law in response to the numerous shipwrecks that took place on Lake Michigan; and why are some shipwrecks more neglected than others in historical accounts? The majority of sources exclusively discuss the ships of the *Lady Elgin*, *Eastland* and the *Rouse Simmons*, largely due to the tragedy, criminal activity and mystery associated with each of the wrecks. With these research questions in mind, and the knowledge of designing and creating a digital exhibit and boat tour, it is important to answer the questions with as much detail and information as possible. A thorough understanding of how the shipwrecks happened will be very beneficial to designing the exhibit, as the intention is to have an interactive feature that gives the opportunity to view the shipwrecks on the computer screen. The final chapter will discuss budgeting and staffing options to move the project from theoretical to functional. Specific details regarding each phase of the project as well as accurate details regarding cost and funding options are outlined. Following the conclusion, screenshots from the initial version of the digital exhibit outlines a skeleton that has the option to be transformed into the interactive components sought. Appendix B includes the boat tour and a map of the region to be covered. Each ship has an accompanying history and information between each stop of the tour.

## Chapter 1: Historiography/ Literature Review

As mentioned in other places, the majority of secondary sources cover either too broad of a range of information about shipwrecks, or focus on a single wreck. These varying gaps, such as the limited amount of information on many shipwrecks, provide the greatest opportunities to create an original work as well as make sure that as much information is used as is possible in this research. Through time however, research is being released on a fairly consistent basis, providing new interpretations of information, without showcasing any strikingly new ideas or pieces of information. This suggests that there is a limit to the information to be learned, particularly with a singular shipwreck. These potential limitations come down to the select ships that are studied based on their published history as well as opportunities to explore the other ships that sank in the region of study that are currently limited on resources. However, looking at the trends in shipping law in addition to showcasing a variety of wrecks along the Chicago shores provides a more unique and original factor to the field.

Authors such as Charrney<sup>2</sup>, Hilton<sup>3</sup>, and Karamanski take control as far as being published and knowledgeable about various shipwrecks in the area. Hilton<sup>4</sup> has thus far been the most cited regarding any information on the Eastland disaster, and Charrney<sup>5</sup> has been cited frequently about the Rouse Simmons wreck. Professor Karamanski of Loyola however, has been helpful on a more personal level with suggesting research directions and offering titles to explore

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<sup>2</sup> Theodore S. Charrney, *Chicago's Christmas Tree Ship*, Chicago: Privately Printed, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Hilton, *Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> George W. Hilton, *Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore S. Charrney, *The Christmas Tree Ship: the saga of the Rouse Simmons*, 1971.

further when a road block was found. Karamanski discusses the history of shipwrecks in his book *Schooner Passage*, briefly explaining different shipwrecks and explaining the fascination people have with their history.<sup>6</sup> He explains this fascination best: “Shipwrecks are to maritime studies what battle stories are to military history. They are a dramatic human-interest narrative replete with heroism and folly, individual seamanship versus the seemingly inexorable exercise of fate.”<sup>7</sup> This discussion frames the chapter covering shipwrecks in *Schooner Passage*, and is often cited as a focal point of other researchers.

Regarding the work by Hilton regarding the Eastland, the subject material is very abundant.<sup>8</sup> The texts of this book are written in a very introductory and approachable manner, allowing for any readers to pick up and understand exactly what transpired. Information contained in the book discusses not only the key roles associated with the *Eastland* disaster, including the legal repercussions that came as a result. Hilton’s second book for research so far, covers the some of the car ferries that were used in the Great Lakes.<sup>9</sup> This book, *Great Lakes Car Ferries*, is based on an overarching study of the car ferries in the Great Lakes. A single chapter focuses on the Lake Michigan region, in contrast to the rest of the book. Unfortunately, this book does not encompass as much regarding shipwrecks as other sources. One of the most helpful books that has been found so far is the *Directory of Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes* by Karl Heden.<sup>10</sup> While this book does not contain a lot of specific details regarding wrecks, it does however, list multiple pages of shipwrecks that have occurred over the course of many years.

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<sup>6</sup> Theodore J. Karamanski. *Schooner Passage*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 174.

<sup>8</sup> Hilton, *Eastland*.

<sup>9</sup> George W. Hilton, *The Great Lakes Car Ferries*, (Berkeley: Howell-North, 1962).

<sup>10</sup> Karl E. Heden. *Directory of shipwrecks of the Great Lakes*, (Boston: Bruce Humphries Publishers, 1966).

One of the most reputable sources covering the wreck of the *Lady Elgin* ship is *Lady Elgin is Down* by Pete Caesar, which encompasses the entirety of the shipwreck and the resulting aftermath.<sup>11</sup> This book is one of many texts that explains the history of the ship and the tragedy. Valerie Van Heest is an author, historian and diver, known for her work with the *Lady Elgin*.<sup>12</sup> She discusses the history of the disaster, as well as briefly mentioning other incidents along the lakeshore. The text is written in an approachable manner for any readers, and includes paintings, drawings, photographs and textual documents to showcase the history of the disaster.

Many sources have provided a limited amount of information specific to the region, where singular chapters make up the available information. One such example is from *Great Ships on the Great Lakes: A Maritime History*, in which only one chapter is dedicated to shipwrecks.<sup>13</sup> The earlier chapters focus almost exclusively on the geographic and geological history of the Great Lakes. While little of the book focuses on the Chicago region, the details about *Rouse Simmons* and the captain provide context as well as information to further search terms. The chapter included focuses on shipwrecks as a whole, with an emphasis on the *Simmons* due to proximity of the ship to the Madison, Wisconsin area. Information included provide a large expansion of search terms, while also explaining that “nobody knows just how many boats, ships & Indian canoes have sunk on the Great Lakes. Most likely, many thousands.”<sup>14</sup> Green continues by suggesting that “there are probably over ten thousand shipwrecks in the Great

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<sup>11</sup> Pete Caesar. *Lady Elgin is Down*, (Green Bay: Great Lakes Marine Research, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Valerie vanHeest. *Lost on the Lady Elgin*, (Holland: In-Depth Editions, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Catherine Green, Bobbie Malone, & Jefferson J. Gray. *Great Ships on the Great Lakes: A Maritime History*, (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2013). eBook Collection (EBSCOHost), EBSCOhost (accessed 22 January 2017). Hill, Libby. *The Chicago River: A Natural and Unnatural History*, Chicago: Lake Claremont Press, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

Lakes? Each one is a museum waiting to be explored.”<sup>15</sup> Ending the relevant chapter, Green refers to the legal concepts of the National Marine Sanctuary of 1972 as well as the Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1988 that protects and preserves shipwrecks in the Great Lakes.<sup>16</sup>

Ted St. Mane continues discussion of Lake Michigan shipwrecks in his book *Lost Passenger Steamships of Lake Michigan*, by explaining the purposes of trade on the lake, incidents that created need for laws and specific examples of sunken ships.<sup>17</sup> The text is written from the perspective of specific shipping details, making it more difficult to use for generalized research.

The Manitowoc Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, Wisconsin was a gracious host in conducting research, providing ample materials for research, including numerous issues of the “Anchor News” publications from as early as 1973 to 2012, discussing *Rouse Simmons* and *Lady Elgin*.<sup>18</sup> Information in each edition is created specifically for members of the museum and those interested in the history of ships, particularly in the Wisconsin segment of Lake Michigan. Articles included are commemorative of these tragedies, honoring those who did not survive, as well as explore and explain the controversies that surround *Rouse Simmons*. This archive provided a wide range of information on these ships, and covered a large amount of print items, lacking primary source materials on any sought materials.

As host to much of the information available regarding the *Lady Elgin*, the Winnetka Historical Society provided a large amount of information, including articles from the *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, covering the history of the disaster and a continued analysis

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 104.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 117-119.

<sup>17</sup> Ted St. Mane. *Lost Passenger Steamships of Lake Michigan*, (Charleston: History Press, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> “Anchor News” editions published by the Manitowoc Maritime Museum.



of speculation regarding why the disaster happened in any event.<sup>19</sup> In addition to this journal, the Winnetka Historical Society was able to maintain a copy of the reconnaissance survey of the exploration of the *Lady Elgin* wreckage.<sup>20</sup> This source covers much of the legal information that is directly related to the recovery of the ship and potential theft from the site by salvagers who hoped to gain additional financial gain from selling historic artifacts.

In addition to the research materials to provide a background and history of the shipwrecks, articles and information regarding public history shaped the methods to be discussed in Chapter two. One article that stood out and proved most beneficial in the creation of the digital exhibit is “Historians & the Use of Primary Source Materials in the Digital Age” from *American Archivist*.<sup>21</sup> As was frequently used in the project research, “access to online tools, such as e-mail, mailing lists, blogs, and wikis can facilitate collaboration and communication among scholars.”<sup>22</sup> This methodology was integral to determining where information was available, as well as determining which details were unnecessary in the greater scheme. Chassanoff continues by discussing the roles of technology in conjunction with historical research, rather than contrasted to each other. She discusses that it is imperative for institutions “to provide a seamless experience for historical research, infrastructure should support both historical practices and technological efforts.”<sup>23</sup> This effort is one key factor in the purpose of public historians and a motivational factor for the digital exhibit in addition to the boat tour. To write this sort of program commentary by Edward Berkowitz also provides explanations to the purpose of public

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<sup>19</sup> Dwight Freeman Clark. “The wreck of the Lady Elgin.” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 39 p. 407-419.

<sup>20</sup> Valerie Olson, Robert Gadbois, Don Doherty, and Keith Pearson. *The Lady Elgin: a report on the 1992 reconnaissance survey*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago, 1993.

<sup>21</sup> Alexandra Chassanoff. "Historians and the Use of Primary Source Materials in the Digital Age." *The American Archivist* 76, no. 2 (2013): 458-80.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 460.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 463.

historians in contrast to academic historians.<sup>24</sup> He states that “public historians have the ability to move from an academic base and attempt this sort of writing. In so doing, they may discover their voice, one that blends the scholarly integrity of academic history with the compelling nature of good policy analysis.”<sup>25</sup> In blending the actions of public history by creating exhibits and tours with academic history with large amounts of research and detailed writing to present an idea, public historians are able to provide an interactive and compelling story to educate those who have the greatest chance to change the future by learning the past.

Kansteiner refers to the roles of finding meaning in history by studying the purpose behind objects, writings, and images to learn why they are important to the past.<sup>26</sup> He refers to its cultural significance by saying that “while memory has clearly become a central concept in the humanities and the social sciences, it remains unclear to what extent this convergence reflects actual common intellectual and methodological interests.”<sup>27</sup> This study suggests that while information is clearly important to individuals, it is not necessarily completely clear who or what will find details important on a cultural level. Providing an understanding of the importance of images and ideas fits the purpose and goals of public historians, as well as insights into the motivation of the field.

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<sup>24</sup> Edward D. Berkowitz. "Public History, Academic History, and Policy Analysis: A Case Study with Commentary." *The Public Historian* 10, no. 4 (1988): 43-63. doi:10.2307/3377833.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 62.

<sup>26</sup> Wulf Kansteiner. "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies." *History and Theory* 41, no. 2 (2002): 179-97. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3590762>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 180.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

The primary methodology and lenses used in conducting research come from the social and legal history standpoints. The social history aides in defining the different ships that sunk, the causes and death tolls associated with each. In contrast to this, the legal history tracks the impacts each wreck made on shipping regulations, including the development of the Coast Guard and the consequences individuals faced at each turn. To develop the most effective research process to encapsulate the greatest amount of information available, these lenses were researched separately and then information was combined in the most logical and appropriate ways.

To begin with, the region of study had to be determined, to provide boundaries for research, and create a cutoff point. A project covering the entirety of Lake Michigan would require multiple years of study, and work beyond a thesis project. In order to effectively build a research foundation, research began with the social lens, and compiling a list of shipwrecks in the target area, as well as a list of relevant dates, names, locations and national events. These search terms provided ample information upon which research could grow and cover the entire region to be covered. Once these terms were categorized and arranged in a traceable method with like terms being grouped together, general research was started with public libraries between Evanston and Chicago, as well as contact e-mails sent to surrounding historic societies and museums for further guidance. At the suggestion of friends and family living around the area, contact was made to the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, Wisconsin to explore their research materials. From this point, more information was available to explore the wrecks of the *Rouse Simmons* and the *Lady Elgin*, with little reference to any other incidents, due to the tragic nature of both shipwrecks.

Beyond the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, research visits were made to the Winnetka Historical Society, Evanston History Center, Newberry Library and the Chicago location of the National Archives. The assistance of archivists and librarians at each of these locations helped to guide research in different directions when a source stopped short of original information. Pending further development of the research project, interviews with influential authors such as Valerie VanHeest would be requested to gain more insight to the underwater views of different wrecks on the lake floor. Further research at the Chicago History Museum to expand the items available for exhibit design will be necessary in the event of designing the digital exhibit to have the interactive components recommended.

The use of secondary sources allowed for the greatest expansion of search terms and filling in the necessary background information associated with the history of the project. As was explained in chapter one, the variety of secondary sources showed clearly what information has been created regarding the various shipwrecks in the area as well as laying out the gaps in scholarship. By looking at the existing gaps opportunities for original work and new interpretations present themselves for researchers. The greatest issue associated with the study of shipwrecks from a historic perspective, regardless of the lens in use, is the lack of surviving primary sources from those involved. Little primary sources from survivors or family members of those involved in incidents have survived, leaving the sole primary sources that provide information come from newspaper articles published around the aftermath. Due to ownership issues that accompany the sunken ships, items are often strongly sought after and protected viciously. This provides little opportunity to see or study what has been recovered.

To study the legal history associated with the shipwrecks and study the legal

ramifications associated with each wreck, it is important to understand the charges as a part of the aftermath from each sinking. The National Archives location in Chicago holds many legal proceedings associated with shipwrecks, owners and development from the Life Saving Station to the Coast Guard. Due to the more involved nature associated with the legal history, many details associated with the aftermath of individual wrecks are left out of the research to provide ample space to discuss the national consequences, such as inspection procedures, lifeboat requirements and passenger capacities.

### Chapter 3: Target Audience

The target audience for a project of this scope is grounded in idea of allowing all possible visitors to see the exhibit, and setting the tone of the tour to be for families. To follow the course of the local history centers, the target demographic for these pieces of the program will be dedicated to the residents of the area, generally for the middle class in regards to income. Unfortunately there is not a readily available amount of information to state any statistics regarding the different variations of people who were able to visit different locations. However, the Chicago Tribune published overall attendance numbers for museums and other tourist locations around Chicago.<sup>28</sup> Focus in this article discusses the Adler Planetarium, the Field Museum and the Art Institute. These institutions are used to the large numbers; however, a growth is critical to the ensuring survival of the museum in future years. This is a goal for the Evanston History Center when discussing the potential this project places on the institution.

To track the audiences that actually use the tour and exhibit it would be beneficial to the History Center to know who is visiting, and why.<sup>29</sup> Using Audience Finder, the history center has the option to view the feedback and demographics for guests who take the time to fill out information. However useful this information would prove to developing future programs, it is unlikely that the data collected would benefit much from participation from all visitors.

It should be noted that the majority of membership pass holders for smaller institutions such as local history centers are in the upper classes and generally retired. The Evanston History

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<sup>28</sup> Steve Johnson. "Chicago museums set attendance records in 2016." *Chicagotribune.com*. January 25, 2017. Accessed June 04, 2017. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/museums/ct-museum-attendance-chicago-ent-0126-20170125-story.html>.

<sup>29</sup> "Insight into Museum Visitors." *The Audience Agency*. Accessed June 04, 2017. <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/insight/insight-into-museum-visitor>.

Center publishes their activity reports at the end of each year.<sup>30</sup> For 2015-16, it was reported that 45 people attended walking tours, and 62 attended bus tours. This is compared to the 1170 people who were listed as attending house tours on an individual basis. However, none of this information breaks down into specific demographics. The Evanston History Center does frequently partner with other neighborhood organizations when relevant. In the case of this program, a partnership with Northwestern University may be possible, due to the connection between the Life Saving Station and shipwrecks.

General observations from other tours around Chicago and interest in the subject shows that families tend to look for the activities that can take up a day, particularly if the families are able to bring food with them to said locations. In addition to this, visitors will be of an age range where they not only have the patience to remain seated for the duration of the tour, but also to be able to maintain safety while on board a ship.

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<sup>30</sup> "Evanston History Center." Evanston History Center. Accessed June 04, 2017. <http://evanstonhistorycenter.org/>.

## Chapter 4: Plan for Project and Topic Research

Shipping is an essential piece of Chicago history, and understanding the importance of this mode of transportation helps to explain why Chicago quickly became a major trading hub for all forms of trade and transportation. Particularly with the findings related to the *Eastland* shipwreck, which is frequently compared to the scale of the *Titanic*, a point of interest rises from this concept. The wreck of the *Titanic* is regarded as one of the most famous shipwrecks in history, and rings through generations, as a result of the movie of the same name. Understanding and showcasing the shipwrecks that changed the lives of people across a century in a specific part of the country is important in shaping the historic memory of a community.

Much of the research that focuses on shipping accidents rarely chooses to focus only on a specific portion of water, let alone a very specific region of a lake. Secondary sources covering the maritime history of Lake Michigan do exist and are useful resources, but explain only a couple wrecks of this region within a couple of pages. By selecting to focus on many wrecks in a specific region, it combines the useful information of the more broad works and the specific details of individual wrecks that are emphasis of other authors. Many shipwrecks are referred to either in addition or comparison to other incidents of the time. For example, the *Sea Bird* accident is often overshadowed by the collision of the *Lady Elgin*. Combining these details into an exhibit is something that is only done at maritime museums, rather than general history museums.

The primary plan for this project is to create an exhibit and boat tour to showcase and explain the histories associated with shipwrecks along the shores of Lake Michigan around Chicago. A significant component of this is a digital exhibit to showcase the history of individual



wrecks. To best showcase these histories, journals, photographs, maps and other visual medias will be combined from various sources to best encompass the histories. Future plans for the exhibit will include interactive maps using software that will work with Omeka. This point in the project, OpenExhibits appears to be the best available option. In addition to the lack of information available for learning the software addition, the project requires the knowledge of higher level programming and visual design work, and would require outside help to be accounted for in the budgeting.<sup>31</sup> The interactive components of the exhibit require programming knowledge in php, html and Java programming languages. It will be the role of the developers to create the programs necessary to create and maintain the interactive maps and make sure that components will be equal parts interactive as well as informative.

The second component to the public history project is a boat tour of the various wreckage sites, or their best approximation. A large piece of this project that has been covered in detail at this point is the history associated with each ship. In many ways, this tour matches with the exhibit, particularly with the information available and sources used. To help visitors and guests keep track of location and read about the history both on and off-shore, brochures will be designed to work as an aid, and have been included in the following budget of Chapter 6.

It is through the boat tour that the majority of research becomes most relevant. Staff running the tours will be required to be versed in the history of each ship and causes for the disasters, but also need to be aware of the importance of the shipping industry in Chicago and how each location along the shore had an influence. Staff also will need to be aware of sources in the event that visitors ask for information to better understand where information came from

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<sup>31</sup> "Multitouch, Multiuser Software for Museums." Open Exhibits. Accessed June 04, 2017. <http://openexhibits.org/>.

and answer further questions associated. Appendix B includes an explanation of the ships as well as a map documenting the suggested routes and stops along the tour to allow for breaks and changing.

The history of maritime in Chicago stems from the beginning of the 1800s, estimated to have started with the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825.<sup>32</sup> While this is a date for when trade as now understood began, it is clear that Native Americans used the lake for travel, hunting and trade well before large-scale commerce began. AT Andreas explains the growth of this commerce by explaining that the initial plans to open the Chicago River for trade came about in 1830.<sup>33</sup> Chicago quickly became known for its bustling atmosphere, while also being very susceptible to weather changes: “as the Port of Chicago was one of the busiest in the world during the summer, in winter it became one of the most deserted.”<sup>34</sup> By 1882, the Port of Chicago had recorded over 26000 departures and arrivals, of varying types of ships such as barquentines, brigatines, and schooners.<sup>35</sup> To mark the importance of shipping as both passengers and as cargo ships, St. Mane explains that “the lucrative trade in transporting fresh fruit from growers in Michigan to markets in Chicago and elsewhere also corresponded with the primary months of vacation traffic, increasing profitability and sometimes dangerously overloading steamers bound for Chicago.”<sup>36</sup>

The causes for many of these shipwrecks is well explained by St. Mane, suggesting that a combination of navigation challenges, poor harbors, and dangerous sandbars created a sort of

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<sup>32</sup> Rita L. Frese and David Young, *From lumber hookers to the hooligan fleet: a treasury of Chicago maritime history* (Chicago: Lake Claremont Press, 2008), 116.

<sup>33</sup> AT Andreas. *History of Chicago: from the earliest period to the present time*. Vol. 1. Chicago: AT Andreas, 1884.

<sup>34</sup> Frese, 143

<sup>35</sup> Frese, 132.

<sup>36</sup> St. Mane, 24.

obstacle course for captains to move through.<sup>37</sup> Green names the height of shipwrecks in the lake as ‘shipwreck century’, placing it from 1825-1925, highlighting the largest number of shipwrecks, as well as the height of the shipping industry.<sup>38</sup> The only clear changes associated with this century, is the slow, almost halting of passenger travel during the Civil War.<sup>39</sup>

### **Lady Elgin**

The disaster of the *Lady Elgin* is recorded as one of the most tragic in the history of Lake Michigan shipwrecks. She was traveling from Chicago toward Milwaukee, when, on September 7, 1860, tragedy followed the ship.<sup>40</sup> The *Lady Elgin* was spoken of in high regard after her demise, “here was a ship of hope, symbolizing the American way of life, that had literally been torpedoed by another vessel.”<sup>41</sup> This vessel that ‘torpedoed’ the *Lady Elgin* was the *Augusta*, a lumber schooner travelling to Chicago. The *Augusta* spotted the *Lady Elgin* just before 2:30am on September 8, but was moving too quickly to slow down and too heavy to turn quickly and safely, winds had diverted ships to head closer to shore in their respective treks, but created the scenario for collision.<sup>42</sup> Controversy around this shipwreck arises when reports from *Augusta* Captain, Malotte reports different explanations. In an initial interview, he reported seeing the ship and was unable to move away, then later, claimed to have never heard or seen anything from the *Lady Elgin*, and did not know she was present until it was too late.<sup>43</sup> After contact, the *Lady Elgin* quickly began to take on water, break apart and sink. *Anchor News* reported that the

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<sup>37</sup> St. Mane, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Green, 85.

<sup>39</sup> St. Mane, 21-22.

<sup>40</sup> Caesar, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Caesar, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Caesar, 21.

<sup>43</sup> Caesar, 24.

ship took only twenty minutes to sink in approximately 300 feet of water.<sup>44</sup> Passengers used any objects that could be reached to float and hope to make it to shore. By the morning of September 9, thirty-three bodies had been recovered from washing ashore, 34-49 more were found the next day, along with the body of the ship's captain, Wilson.<sup>45</sup> By the time the search for victims was ended, the body count had risen to over 300.<sup>46</sup> This leads to the consensus that approximately 98 people survived.<sup>47</sup> It wasn't until 1989 that the wreckage of the *Lady Elgin* was discovered by treasure hunter Harry Zych.<sup>48</sup>

## Eastland

Due to proximity in time, the *Eastland* disaster is frequently compared to the *Titanic*, which is known for a death toll of 829 passengers and 694 crew. As a result of this tragedy, the International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea determined that any ships built after July 1, 1915 required "bulkheads, watertight doors, and weathertight decks. Doubled bottoms were required in at least the forward portions of all ships over 200 feet long."<sup>49</sup> The *Eastland*, was built in 1903, so it avoided the requirements of bulkheads and door changes determined by the *Titanic*, however, it did face the challenge of being built with a very low metacentric height.<sup>50</sup><sup>51</sup> The best description of the metacentric height issue is comparing the ship to a bike, "...being

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<sup>44</sup> Manitowoc Maritime Museum . *Anchor News*. (Sept. 1976).

<sup>45</sup> Caesar, 69.

<sup>46</sup> Caesar, 72.

<sup>47</sup> *Anchor News* (Sept. 1976).

<sup>48</sup> Van Heest, 128.

<sup>49</sup> Hilton *Eastland*, p. 7.

<sup>50</sup> Hilton *Eastland* p.25.

<sup>51</sup> Metacentric height is calculated with higher level mathematics, thought put simply for historic purposes, is the level upon which the center of mass is located on the ship. Having the metacentric height be too low, as with *Eastland*, the ship will list different directions and roll.

unstable when loading or unloading but stable when underway.”<sup>52</sup> July 2, 1915, when being loaded for a picnic cruise with Western Electric employees and families, the metacentric height was allowed to be too high, making the ship topheavy. Crew noticed as people boarded that the ship began to list to the port side, and had people shift to the starboard side to aid in righting the balance. However, by the time that 2500 passengers in addition to crew had boarded the ship began to turn to its side, only an hour after boarding began.<sup>53</sup> By the time the ship settled in the muddy Chicago River, it was also in 19.2 feet of river water, with passengers struggling to stay above water or on top of the ship’s hull.<sup>54</sup> Once victims and survivors were removed from the scene, the Cook County coroner’s office determined that 812 had perished, while the Red Cross estimated over 2000 survived.<sup>55</sup>

### **Rouse Simmons**

The *Rouse Simmons* falls the most outside of the region, having disappeared well before entering Illinois waters. However, it was en route to Chicago, and was one of the most influential and mysterious shipwrecks to explore. Captain Herman Schuenemann sought to transport Christmas trees from Michigan to Chicago every November. In 1912, the ship left Thompson, Michigan and never arrived in Chicago, sealing the fate of the captain and sixteen crewmen.<sup>56</sup> In an article published in *Anchor News* in 1973, it was explained that the most likely reason the *Rouse Simmons* sank was due to a nor’easter covering the ship in ice and snow, forcing it to weigh more than the ship could handle.<sup>57</sup> Neuschel explains in another article from *Anchor*

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<sup>52</sup> Hilton, *Eastland* p. 44.

<sup>53</sup> Hilton, *Eastland* p. 111.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, 111.

<sup>55</sup> Hilton, *Eastland* p. 134-135.

<sup>56</sup> Green, 99-100.

<sup>57</sup> Manitowoc Maritime Museum . *Anchor News*. (Dec. 1973).

*News* that after the *Simmons* disappeared, there were no publications explaining its disappearance for at least ten days, and once it was realized, newspapers began to sensationalize the tragedy.<sup>58</sup> By 1971, the wreckage of the ship was discovered in 192 feet of water by Kent Bellrichard, and the anchor was salvaged and presented to the Coast Guard Station in Two Rivers, WI to place on display.<sup>59</sup> Karamanski established the importance of the *Rouse Simmons* by comparing it to other shipping tragedies, “for every Rouse Simmons that went down in a winter gale on the open lake, there were five or six Lake Michigan shipwrecks that amounted to no more than a vessel going aground on the lee shore and being refloated again in a matter of days.”<sup>60</sup>

### **Changes in Shipping Law**

The initial major change in shipping law that came about as a result of a shipwreck in Lake Michigan came in 1852, when Congress passed a bill “providing for the licensing and inspection of steamboats. The bill included requirements for carrying lifeboats and live preservers as well as regulations regarding boiler procedures and other safeguards.”<sup>61</sup> In response to the sinking of the *Lady Elgin*, Congress passed another act that took effect September 1, 1864, “setting forth rules for vessel encounters and establishing right of way.”<sup>62</sup> Prior to this, rules were remembered based upon simple rhymes, such as “if to starboard red appears, tis your duty to keep clear.”<sup>63</sup> Caesar explains that lights were not required on ships at this point, but “there was a safety rule, that said when two ships are approaching straight at each other they were to

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<sup>58</sup> Fred Neuschel . “Nov. 23, 1912: The Rest of the Story, Part I” *Anchor News*. Vol. XXI no.1 (Jan./Feb. 1990) p.4-11.

<sup>59</sup> *Anchor News* (Dec. 1973).

<sup>60</sup> Karamanski, 174.

<sup>61</sup> St. Mane, 46.

<sup>62</sup> Van Heest, 109.

<sup>63</sup> Van Heest, 24.

pass on the right side to avoid collision, in other words, the port sides of each would be laying parallel.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Caesar, 22.

## Chapter 5: Recommendations and Ethical Considerations

Potential social or intellectual implications would fall under the usability of the digital exhibit, and the accessibility of a boat tour. If this were being implemented in completion at the end of this program, the boat tour would be the most involved and temperamental to plan. Not only would renting and staffing the boat be a requirement, but also ensuring the changes in locations of wrecks due to tides and winds changing. Presuming a summertime popularity of the tour, it would be limited to a seasonal program due to the cold and icy winters the lake endures, and the volatile nature of spring and fall. This increases the operating costs of the program significantly, by forcing the ship into storage for three-fourths of the year, and operating occasionally during the summer months. If this tour were to be too expensive, it would only benefit those who were wealthy enough to afford admission, and thereby remove the public aspect from the use of the tour. However, as a privately run excursion, much like other shipping tours along the Chicago river, budgeted trips could be planned, and allowing for shorter treks between locations, making it more approachable to all people.

In addition to the financial considerations, explanations on the importance of shipwrecks will be called into question on many tours. Achenbaum explains best how these situations will be forced to be handled or considered. "Museums must become 'places that deal with politics as well as culture', able to teach their visitors about the complexities and contrarities of a past that cannot be disconnected from the present."<sup>65</sup> Not only this, but as public historians, it will be important to keep in mind the questions and questionability that comes about from exploration of a new topic. Susan Crane discusses the issues that arise from such new materials; "although

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<sup>65</sup> Achenbaum, W. Andrew, and Robert W. Pomeroy. "Public History's Past, Present, and Prospects." *The American Historical Review* 92, no. 5 (1987): 1162-174. doi:10.2307/1868490.



visitors may fully expect and desire to be educated, instructed, to learn ‘something new’, as soon as that knowledge conflicts with memory and experience, trouble begins.”<sup>66</sup> This same struggle with the audience is a factor that will be required to take into consideration the ages of the audiences.

This same viewpoint is also necessary when looking at how to teach the program. Carson explains this well, “museum historians need to entertain the real possibility that rising generations of learners since, say, the 1970s acquire and process information very differently than previous generations did, those old folks that our older museums were built to serve and served well.”<sup>67</sup> To best prepare for these challenges, program directors will be required to consider alternatives to scripting for the boat tour, and ensure the interactivity between the exhibit and tour. Keeping track of the interests of those on board the tour boat allows for the greatest customization of presentation.

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<sup>66</sup> Susan A. Crane. "Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum." *History and Theory* 36, no. 4 (1997): 44-63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505574>.

<sup>67</sup> Cary Carson. "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" *The Public Historian* 30, no. 4 (2008): 9-27. doi:10.1525/tph.2008.30.4.9.

## Chapter 6: Budgeting and Staffing

Item	Cost	Running total
1. Digital Exhibit		\$1,829.00
-Omeka Subscription	\$99.00	
-OpenExhibit	\$0.00	
-Computers	\$1,720.00	
-Data Storage	\$10.00	
2. Boat Tour		\$75,608.00
-Boat Rental	\$75,008.00	
-Boat Fuel	\$0.00	
-Boat Insurance		
-Boat Storage	\$0.00	
-Pamphlet Printing	\$600.00	
3. Staff		\$5,100.00
-Boat Captain	\$0.00	
-Boat Safety Crew	\$0.00	
-Boat Tour Guide	\$3,840.00	
-Exhibit Programmer	\$1,260.00	
-Research	\$0.00	
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$82,537.00</b>

Figure 1 Proposed Budget

The recommended modification to the exhibit includes a paid subscription for Omeka, such as the available silver plan, which provides greater storage capacity as well as additional exhibit resources.<sup>68</sup> As stated in the project plan, the digital exhibit will be expanded into an interactive exhibit, with the ability to click through the exhibit and view higher resolution and detail. To do so, OpenExhibit is an open-license software that specializes in human-computer

<sup>68</sup> Center for History and New Media, George Mason University. "Upgrade Your Plan." Omeka.net. Accessed June 04, 2017. <http://www.omeka.net/dashboard/upgrade-plan>.

interaction, and, most beneficial for developers and the institution, is free to use.<sup>69</sup> Regarding technology associated with the project, a strong computer is not necessary, however one that can handle photo editing and maintain technical specifications for software updates is key to ensuring fewer upgrade needs. For storing images, videos, audio and any other components associated with the exhibit, a paid subscription for Google Drive provides a stable, cloud based option to ensure secure storage of information that can be accessed from multiple machines if necessary.

The segment of the budget regarding the boat tour includes the breakdown between staff and programs, as well as the accurate costs from Chicago Electric Boat Company.<sup>70</sup> Contact with a representative at the boat company provided information regarding prices for boats. The tours are estimated to take roughly five hours, largely due to the distance to be covered, as explained in Appendix B. Each boat holds twelve passengers, providing opportunities for a moderate sized group and an intimate setting between tour guide and passengers.<sup>71</sup> A benefit of using this particular service to run the tour is the lack of extra costs associated with boat operation, such as fuel, insurance, storage and staffing.

The final segment of the budget comes from staff and marketing costs, being the most fluid aspect of the budget. Brochures and flyers to advertise the tour would be the most important aspect of marketing. Included in the budget, is an estimate for two-thousand brochures, to create a starting point for advertising. For simplicity, pricing was created based on options from

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<sup>69</sup> "Multitouch, Multiuser Software for Museums." Open Exhibits. Accessed June 04, 2017. <http://openexhibits.org/>.

<sup>70</sup> "Chicago Electric Boat Company." Chicago Boat Rentals - Chicago Electric Boat Company. Accessed June 04, 2017. <https://www.chicagoelectricboats.com/>.

<sup>71</sup> The five hour tour, when configured with the boat size and required taxes daily costs are \$1172, running the tour on weekends for a summer, roughly 64 days would create the included amount included in the budget.

Vistaprint due to popularity and ease. Staffing is a minimal aspect of the budget, where required staff includes tour guides on the boat and a developer for creating and maintaining the digital exhibit. The tour guide to be hired for the tour program will not only understand the tour and history associated, but also be skilled in boating safety to act as another authority in the event that passengers are afraid or an emergency arises. The recommended pay for this position is \$12 an hour, which is on average for tour guides in the Chicago area. Regarding the developer necessary to continue the creation of the interactive digital exhibit, it will be important to not only have someone who understands programming websites, but also flexible to knowing a variety of media based programming. As a result of this, and again meeting the average for the region, the pay scale recommended for this sort-term position is recommended to be \$18 per hour. The final aspect of the budget is regarding research, which has been conducted on an unpaid basis for the creation of the thesis project.

In addition to the budget, to offset the cost, and make the program accessible in the future, low cost admission would be available. This admission charge would be based from the general seat cost of each seat on the boat, averaging to about \$105 per person.<sup>72</sup> Compared to other river and lake tours that are in operation throughout Chicago, this would be a very low-cost option. Architectural tours when calculated to the same duration as the proposed program comes out to \$130-160 per person.<sup>73</sup> These numbers are estimated from the Chicago Skyline Tours<sup>74</sup> and the Mercury Skyline Tour<sup>75</sup> companies. Cost from this program for the initial season would

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<sup>72</sup> This comes from dividing total cost by the intended 64 operating days of the tour, and then divided by 12, for the number of passengers available in the boat.

<sup>73</sup> Cost pulled from website values of \$30-\$50 for a 75-90 minute cruise and multiplied to be for a 5 hour duration.

<sup>74</sup> "Chicago Skyline Lake Tours| Shoreline Sightseeing| Chicago Boat Tours." Shoreline Sightseeing. Accessed June 04, 2017. <http://shorelinesightseeing.com/classic-lake-tours/>.

<sup>75</sup> "MAIN MENU ▼." Mercury Skyline Cruiseline. Accessed June 04, 2017. <http://www.mercurycruises.com/tours>.

be sought from federal or private funding sources in the forms of grants. Beyond the initial costs to create the initial program, unless additions were added, the tour and exhibit would be able to be self-sufficient, and allow the History Center to remain a non-profit organization, with all income from the project adding funding to the program budget.

## **Conclusion**

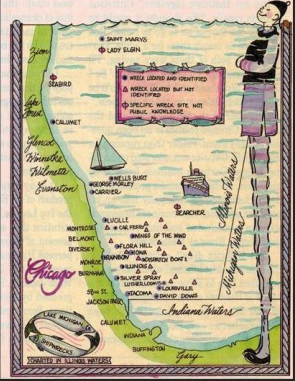
The history of shipwrecks on the Illinois region of Lake Michigan present a wide range of information and the changes in shipping laws. Creation of a digital exhibit and accompanying boat tour of the shipwrecks along the shore will best showcase these changes. Histories of these shipwrecks focus on individual tragedies, and rarely touch upon other shipwrecks in the region. While little information is available on other ships, they are extremely important to place focus on each ship in its own right.

## Appendix A: Exhibit Panels

Browse Exhibits

SHIPWRECKS ON CHICAGO'S LAKE MICHIGAN: **OVERVIEW** Noted Shipwrecks

### OVERVIEW




Lake Michigan holds a trove of secrets beneath the surface. Many shipwrecks have taken place across the lake, most notably during the Shipwreck Century from 1825-1925. While the majority of shipwrecks recorded in the Illinois waters of Lake Michigan are cargo ships, the most noted incidents of the *Rouse Simmons*, *Lady Elgin*, and *Eastland*, showcase the loss of life in addition to cargo. An exploration of the primary accidents around the Chicago and Illinois region provides insight not only to the history of the area, but also a glimpse into the history of shipping law. Laws have been changed in response to the disasters, most notably with *Eastland* and *Lady Elgin*.

Map from Summer 1992 detailing shipwrecks along the Chicago area shores of Lake Michigan.

Figure 2 Introduction Panel

CHICAGO AREA SHIPWRECKS MAP



Citation  
 Herb Phillips, "Chicago Area Shipwrecks Map," 2006, Open Culture, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://www.openculture.com/Herb/Shipwrecks/>

Dublin Core

Title  
 Chicago Area Shipwrecks Map

Subject  
 Chicago Area Shipwrecks

Description  
 Color map detailing major shipwrecks along the Chicago shores of Lake Michigan.

Creator  
 Herb Phillips

Source  
 Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago

Publisher  
 Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago

Date  
 Summer 1992

Figure 3 Source of Map

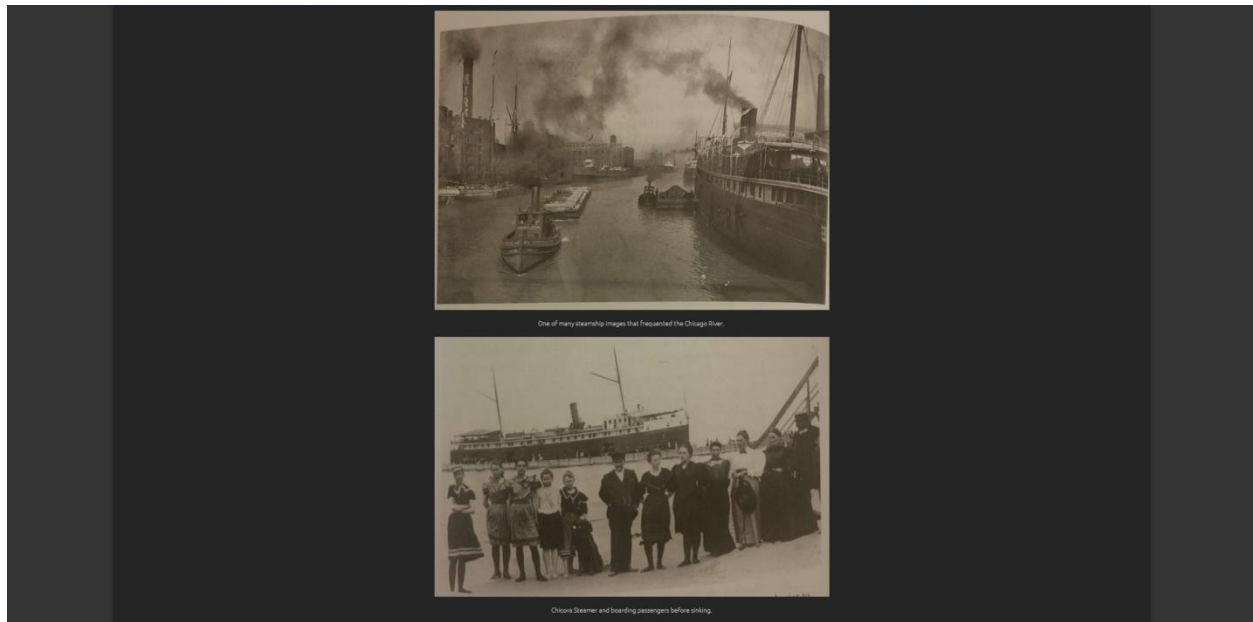



Figure 4 Overview Panel 2

Browse Exhibits

### RUSH ST. BRIDGE



**Citation**

"Rush St. Bridge." *DNHU Online Exhibits*, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://dlang663.omeka.net/items/show/23>.

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Rush St. Bridge

**Source**  
St. Marie, Ted. *Last Passenger Steamships of Lake Michigan*. Charleston: History Press, 2010. p.95.

**Publisher**  
History Press

← Previous Item

Next Item →


Figure 5 Source for Rush St. Bridge Picture



SNHU Course Exhibits

Browse Exhibits

### CHICORA STEAMER



**Citation**

"Chicora Steamer". SNHU Course Exhibits, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://digitalcommons.net/items/show/25>.

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Chicora Steamer

**Subject**  
Chicora

**Source**  
St. Marie, Ted. *Last Passenger Steamships of Lake Michigan*. Charleston: History Press, 2010. p. 93.

**Publisher**  
History Press

**Date**  
2010

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Figure 6 Source for Chicora Ship Picture

SNHU Course Exhibits

Browse Exhibits

SHIPWRECKS ON CHICAGO'S LAKE MICHIGAN: Overview **NOTED SHIPWRECKS** Changes in Shipping Laws Resources

### NOTED SHIPWRECKS

Lady Elgin Eastland Rouse Simmons

Estimated Deaths in Selected Major Disasters		
Disasters, with cause and date	Total	Passengers
<b>Lake Ontario Disasters, 1912 - 13</b>		
Great Rock Island, April 14, 1912	1,523	829
Great Rock Island, April 14, 1912	1,012	840
Great Rock Island, May 29, 1914	1,306	785
Great Rock Island, July 24, 1915	844	841
<b>AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE DISASTERS</b>		
Great Rock Island, above mentioned	1,653	
Great Rock Island, New York City, June 15, 1914	957	
Great Rock Island	844	
<b>OF CHICAGO DISASTERS</b>		
Great Rock Island	844	
Great Rock Island, December 30, 1903	606	
Great Rock Island, October 9 - 9, 1871	300-400	
<b>OF LAKE DISASTERS</b>		
Great Rock Island	844	
Great Rock Island, September 6, 1880	279	

*Lady Elgin, Eastland, and Rouse Simmons* are three of the most famous shipwrecks to take place in this region of study. The lack of research and credible information published on other shipwrecks notes that these three are the most influential in this region's history.

← Overview

Noted Shipwrecks

Lady Elgin →

Figure 7 Noteworthy Shipwrecks Panel

SNHU Course Exhibits

Estimated Deaths of Select Marine Disasters

Estimated Deaths in Selected Major Disasters			
Disaster, with cause and date	Total	Passengers	Crew
<b>WATER WALKING DISASTERS, 1912 - 15</b>			
Titanic struck iceberg, April 14, 1912	1,523	629	494
Empress of Ireland, collision, May 29, 1914	1,012	840	172
Atlantic suspended, May 7, 1915	1,790	785	415
Hardford, capsized, July 24, 1915	844	841	3
<b>AMERICAN MERCHANT MARINE DISASTERS</b>			
Salem, boiler explosion, above Memphis, Tenn., April 22, 1885	1,653		
General Sherman, fire, New York City, June 15, 1904	957		
Hardford	844		
<b>CITY OF CHICAGO DISASTERS</b>			
Hardford	844		
Trinidad Theatre fire, December 30, 1903	656		
Chicago fire, October 8-9, 1871	300-400		
<b>GRAND LAKES DISASTERS</b>			
Hardford	844		
Lake Elgin, collision, September 8, 1880	279		

**Dublin Core**

Title: Estimated Deaths of Select Marine Disasters

Subject: Death tolls

Creator: From National Agency of the Titanic by George Hilson, in 1917; other writers sourced in book.

Text Item Type Metadata

Text: Table of death tolls for major marine based accidents, and divided by type of vessel.

Previous Item

Next Item

Privately owned by Dineka

Figure 8 Death Toll Source

DEBRIS FIELD

**Dublin Core**

Title: Debris field

Subject: The shipwreck of the Lady Elgin

Creator: The National Agency of the Titanic

Source: The National Agency of the Titanic

Publisher: The National Agency of the Titanic

Text Item Type Metadata

Text: Debris field of the Lady Elgin shipwreck.

Previous Item

Next Item

Privately owned by Dineka


Figure 9 Lady Elgin Debris Field

Browse Exhibits


SHIPWRECKS ON CHICAGO'S LAKE MICHIGAN: Overview NOTED SHIPWRECKS

LADY ELGIN Eastland Rouse Simmons

## LADY ELGIN



The most noteworthy painting commemorating the disaster of the Lady Elgin, created by Edward Sheahan in 1951 and presented to the Winnetka Historical Society. Image courtesy of the Winnetka Historical Society



Frame to commemorate the presentation of the Lady Elgin disaster painting. Courtesy of the Winnetka Historical Society.





Figure 10 Lady Elgin Exhibit Panel

SNHU Course Exhibits

Eastland Disaster



**Creation**

From Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic by George Hagan, p. 111. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. "Eastland Disaster." JNU Course Exhibits. Accessed June 6, 2017. <https://www.jnu.edu/courses/exhibits/>

**Dublin Core**

Title  
Eastland Disaster

Subject  
Eastland

Creator  
From Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic by George Hagan, p. 111. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Source  
From Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic by George Hagan, p. 111. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Publisher  
Stanford University Press

Date  
1995

Type  
Photograph


**Still Image Item Type Metadata**

Original Format  
Photo

Figure 11 Capsized Eastland Source

Browse Exhibits

## EASTLAND DISASTER



**Citation**

From *Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic* by George Hilton, p. 117. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. "Eastland Disaster." *DNU Course Exhibits*, accessed June 4, 2017. <http://lange665.omeka.net/item/show/18>.

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Eastland Disaster

**Subject**  
Eastland Disaster

**Creator**  
From *Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic* by George Hilton, p. 117. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

**Source**  
From *Eastland: Legacy of the Titanic* by George Hilton, p. 117. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

**Publisher**  
Stanford University Press


**Date**  
1995

Figure 12 Eastland Disaster Source

SNHU Course Exhibits

Browse Exhibits

## LADY ELGIN DOCKED



**Citation**

Heest, Wierke van. *Lost on the Lady Elgin*. Holland: In-Depth Editions, 2010, p. 44. "Lady Elgin Docked." *DNU Course Exhibits*, accessed June 4, 2017. <http://lange665.omeka.net/item/show/19>.

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Lady Elgin Docked

**Subject**  
Lady Elgin

**Creator**  
Heest, Wierke van. *Lost on the Lady Elgin*. Holland: In-Depth Editions, 2010, p. 44.

**Source**  
Heest, Wierke van. *Lost on the Lady Elgin*. Holland: In-Depth Editions, 2010, p. 44.


**Publisher**  
In-Depth Editions

**Date**  
2010

[← Previous Item](#) [Next Item →](#)

Figure 13 Lady Elgin Source

WRECK OF THE LADY ELGIN



**Citation**

Frank Leslie, "Wreck of the Lady Elgin," *DNAJ Course eBook*, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://dange645.com/na/na.htm/#how25>.

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Wreck of the Lady Elgin

**Subject**  
Lady Elgin

**Description**  
Woodcut of the collision between Lady Elgin and Augusta

**Creator**  
Frank Leslie

**Source**  
Heest, Valerie van. *Lost on the Lady Elgin*. Holland: In-Depth Editions, 2010. p. 56.

**Publisher**  
In-Depth Editions

← Previous Item      Next Item →

Figure 14 Lady Elgin Disaster Wood Cut

LOST ON THE LADY ELGIN

1:00

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Lost on the Lady Elgin

**Subject**  
Lady Elgin

**Description**  
Song chronicling the events of the Lady Elgin disaster

**Creator**  
Henry Clay Work (lyrics) and Lee Hurstich (song)

**Source**  
Amazon download

**Publisher**  
Lee Hurstich

**Date**  
1993

**Contributor**  
Lee Hurstich

**Type**  
Song

**Sound Item Type Metadata**

**Transcription**

Up from the poor man's cottage, fresh from the mission door,  
I searched among the water, drifting along the shore,  
Caught by the morning breeze, borne on the evening gale,  
Came at the hour of mourning, a sad and solemn wail.

**Chorus**

Lost on the Lady Elgin, drifting to sea for miles,  
Hundred men aboard that fateful day, destined to their graves,  
And now the wail of children, wailing for departed souls,  
Children that sleep at evening, fathers lost at sea.

Down the garden waters to husband for morning dew,  
There were the day that were separated by those few fateful hours,  
And they looked their father in the stormy sea before,  
Praying the vessel and father safe to reach the shore,  
Little they thought that morning would send us to a grave.

**Original Format**

**Citation**

Henry Clay Work (lyrics) and Lee Hurstich (song), "Lost on the Lady Elgin," *DNAJ Course eBook*, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://dange645.com/na/na.htm/#how22>.

Figure 15 Lost on the Lady Elgin Song Source

**CAPT. A. E. DOW**  
WISCONSIN MARITIME MUSEUM

MAINTENANCE NO. 2006.05.002

After the ship Schwanman was sunk  
I was at home I received your  
letter the day after you wrote it  
I was very sorry to hear that  
I never knew that you were  
wife was not when I left home  
and I received a letter from  
you some time ago and  
the matter was then brought  
down and finally and I left home  
the day after you were  
sunk I was very sorry to  
hear that you were  
sunk but I don't know  
I am very sorry for it  
I don't know what you  
do. I think that the  
sunk down and that  
you are very sorry  
I hope that you are  
in all in if any thing  
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**Citation**  
"Letter From Capt. Dow," SNHU Course Exhibit, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://dang665.omeka.net/items/show/25>

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Letter From Capt. Dow

**Subject**  
Rouse Simmons

**Description**  
Letter to wife of Capt. Schwanman after the Simmons sunk

**Source**  
Wisconsin Maritime Museum

**Date**  
1912

Figure 16 Capt. Dow Letter

SNHU Course Exhibits

Previous Exhibits

**L.R. DOTY**

**Citation**  
"L.R. Doty," SNHU Course Exhibit, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://dang665.omeka.net/items/show/26>

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
L.R. Doty

**Source**  
Hancock, Paul. *Ships of the Great Lakes*. San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2001, p. 33.

**Publisher**  
Thunder Bay Press

← Previous Item

Next Item →

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Figure 17 LR Doty Ship Source

Eastland Steamer SNHU Co. X


slange665.omeka.net/items/show/24

50%

Search

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**EASTLAND STEAMER**



**Citation**

"Eastland Steamer." *DNU Course Exhibits*, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://slange665.omeka.net/items/show/24>.

---

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
Eastland Steamer

**Subject**  
Eastland

**Description**  
Eastland docked in a non-Chicago port.


**Source**  
St. Maine, "The Last Passenger Steamships of Lake Michigan," *Charleston: History Press*, 2010, p. 93.

**Publisher**  
History Press

**Date**  
2010

Figure 18 Eastland Docked

75TH ANNIVERSARY SURVIVORS OF THE LADY ELGIN DISASTER



**Citation**

"75th Anniversary Survivors of the Lady Elgin Disaster." *DNU Course Exhibits*, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://slange665.omeka.net/items/show/20>.

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**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
75th Anniversary Survivors of the Lady Elgin Disaster

**Subject**  
Lady Elgin

**Description**  
Group portrait of 75 of the survivors of the Lady Elgin shipwreck.


**Source**  
The Sheboygan Press, Sept. 7, 1935.

**Publisher**  
The Sheboygan Press

**Date**  
September 7, 1935

Figure 19 Lady Elgin Survivors Source

LAKE MICHIGAN MAP



**Citation**  
 "Lake Michigan Map," DNU Course Exhibit, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://lange655.omeka.net/items/show/26>.

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
 Lake Michigan Map

**Subject**  
 Map of Lake Michigan detailing where the Rouse Simmons was found.

**Source**  
 Peterson, Larry, "The Legend of the Christmas Tree Ship," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* (Winter 2012 2013), p. 34.


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Figure 20 Map of Lake Michigan

ROUSE SIMMONS



**Citation**  
 Wisconsin Maritime Museum, "Rouse Simmons," DNU Course Exhibit, accessed June 4, 2017, <http://lange655.omeka.net/items/show/27>.

**Dublin Core**

**Title**  
 Rouse Simmons

**Subject**  
 Rouse Simmons

**Description**  
 Image from a commemorative article for the Rouse Simmons disaster.

**Creator**  
 Wisconsin Maritime Museum

**Source**  
 Carol, Edward, "Remembering the Rouse Simmons," *Anchor News*, November 21, 1993.

**Publisher**  
 Anchor News

Figure 21 Rouse Simmons Sketch





## Appendix B: Boat Tour Script

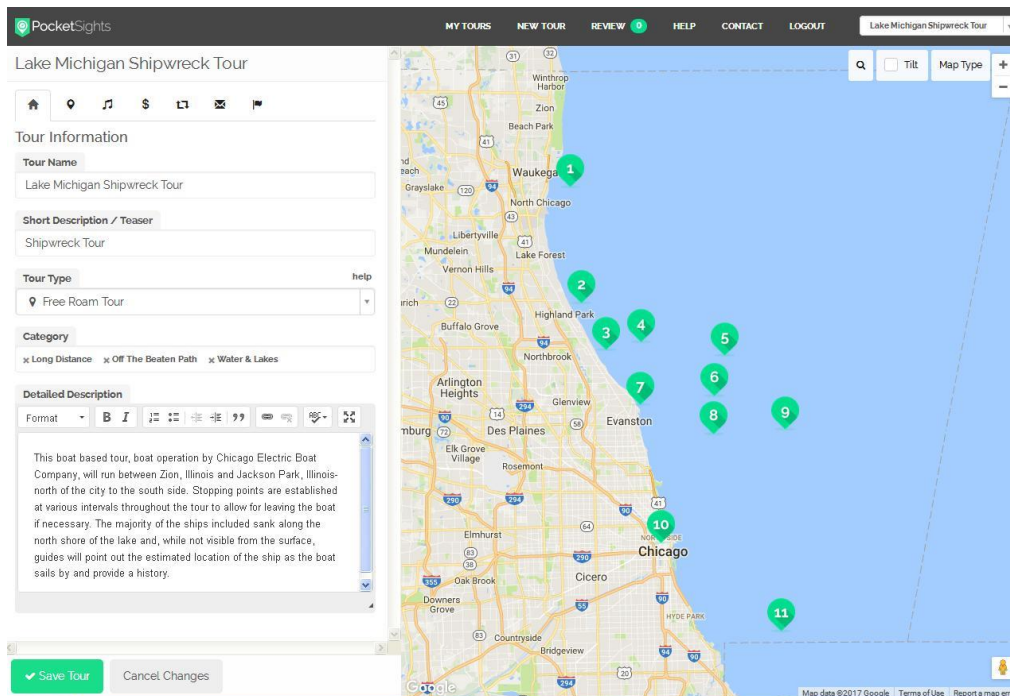


Figure 22 Map of Tour Field

Descriptive content of the tour: This boat based tour, boat operation by Chicago Electric Boat Company, will run between Zion, Illinois and Jackson Park, Illinois- north of the city to the south side. Stopping points are established at various intervals throughout the tour to allow for leaving the boat if necessary. The majority of the ships included sank along the north shore of the lake and, while not visible from the surface, guides will point out the estimated location of the ship as the boat sails by and provide a history. These points will include the North Point Marina in Winthrop Harbor, Sheridan Shore Yacht Club in Wilmette, Belmont Harbor, Navy Pier, Burnham Park, and Jackson Park Yacht Club in Chicago. The image above includes all shipwrecks noted as a part of the tour, numbered ships are explained below with histories and brief explanations related to each.

“So long as men are allowed to command vessels who will not obey laws, and who are too stupid to avoid running into a vessel which they see for half an hour before they strike her, the long list of slaughters by sea and flood cannot be considered closed.” – Harper’s Weekly 9/22/1860<sup>76</sup>

#### 1. Sea Bird

The Sea Bird sank off the shore of Waukegan while en route between Manitowoc, WI and Chicago. The story tells that a porter dumped a bucket of ashes off the side of the ship and was caught in the wind. These ashes are said to have blown back onto the lower deck that had been freshly varnished and stored tubs of hay. As a result of the heat and flammable objects, the ship caught fire and quickly spread. Of the 50-100 passengers and crew rumored to have been on board, 102-250 died in that wreck.

From:

Shelak, Benjamin J. *Shipwrecks of Lake Michigan*, Black Earth: Trails Books, 2003, p. 93.

#### 2. Calumet

1889, the Calumet ran aground near Fort Sheridan, Illinois with 18 men on board, all of whom were able to be saved.

#### 3. S. Thal

Purchased by August Schuenemann, brother of Captain of the Rouse Simmons. The ship came across a sandbar while travelling to Chicago from northern Wisconsin due to strong winds and sank on November 9, 1898. August and his five crewmen died near Glencoe,

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<sup>76</sup> Caesar, 89

IL.

4. Lady Elgin

The Lady Elgin is one of the most famous shipwrecks in the Great Lakes, having a death toll of roughly 380 people, and only 98 survivors between crew and passengers. The sidewheel steamship was built in 1851, measuring 252 feet long, 33 feet across and weighing 1037 tons. September 8, 1860, the Lady Elgin set on her final course, unbeknownst to passengers and crew.

5. Wells Burt

Sank off from Grosse Point May 21, 1883 after the encounter of a spring storm when traveling from Buffalo to Chicago. All 11 members of the crew lost their lives and none of the wreckage was able to be salvaged.

From: Hancock, Paul. *Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes*, San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2001.

6. Eastland

The wreck of the Eastland steamship on July 24, 1915 has gone down in history as one of the most tragic accidents in Great Lakes maritime history, compared on the same scale as the sinking of the Titanic. As a result of this classification, there is a great amount of information to chronicle the tragedy of the Eastland. The day of the sinking, Western Electric employees and family boarded the ship on the Chicago River at Clark Street to travel to the company picnic in Michigan City, Indiana. As people boarded the ship, it

began to rock side to side, leaning as people boarded the ship. By midnight of July 24, the death toll had reached 810 men, women, and children. After recovering the ship and turning it right side up again, the ship was purchased by the US government in 1916, and renamed the ship the *Wilmette*. There were legal consequences for the owners and operators involved in the overloading and design of the ship.

From: Hancock, Paul. *Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes*, San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2001.

#### 7. David Dows

Sunk on the south side of Chicago November 29, 1889, the David Dows was a large schooner on Lake Michigan. The ship measured 275 feet long, 37.6 feet wide, and had 5 masts. This shipwreck faced no loss of life, however, the ship sank due to gale force winds and had woodwork salvaged before the Coast Guard finished demolition.

From: Hancock, Paul. *Shipwrecks of the Great Lakes*, San Diego: Thunder Bay Press, 2001.

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