

# WRECK

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Magazine

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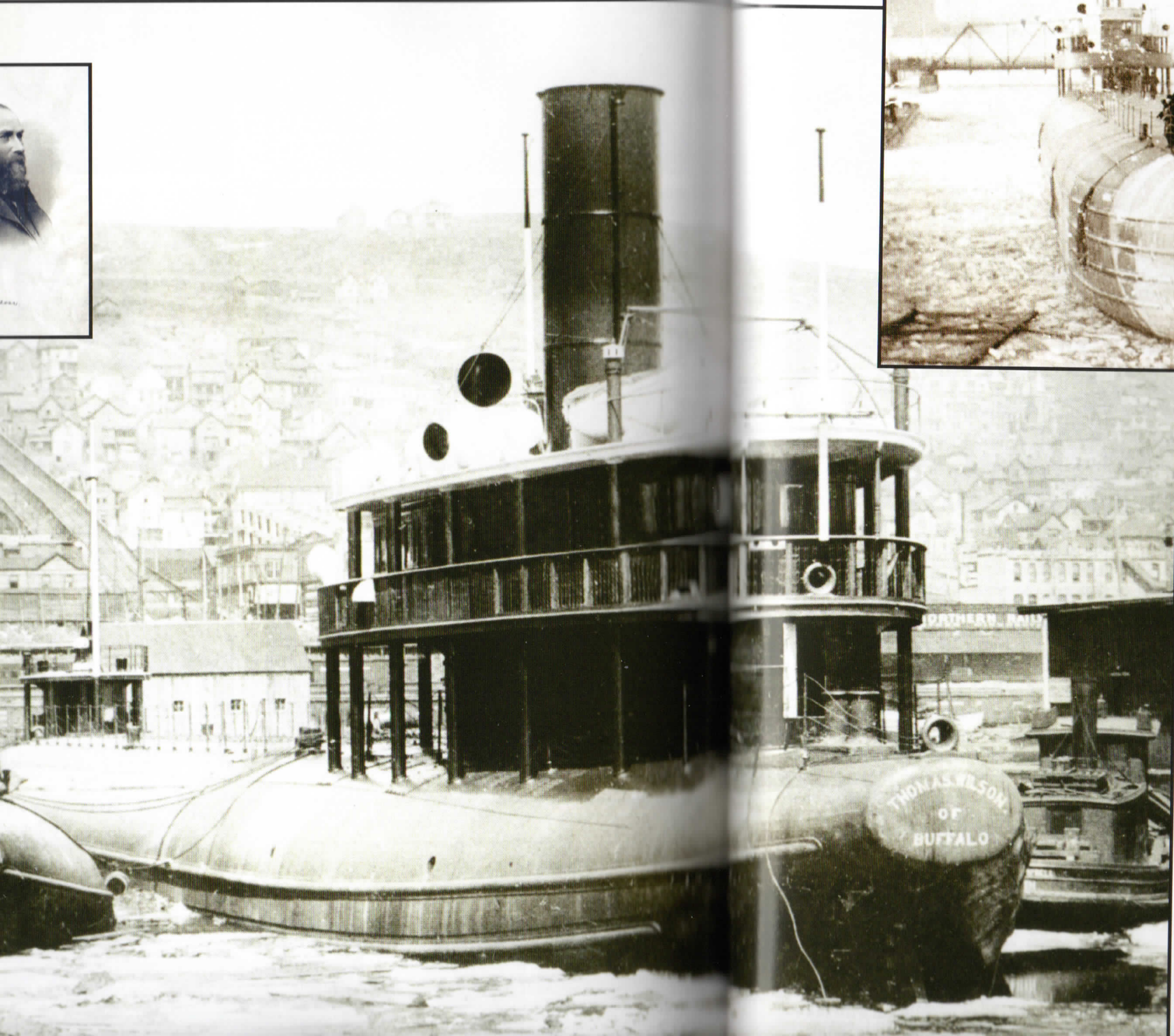
*The Wreck of the  
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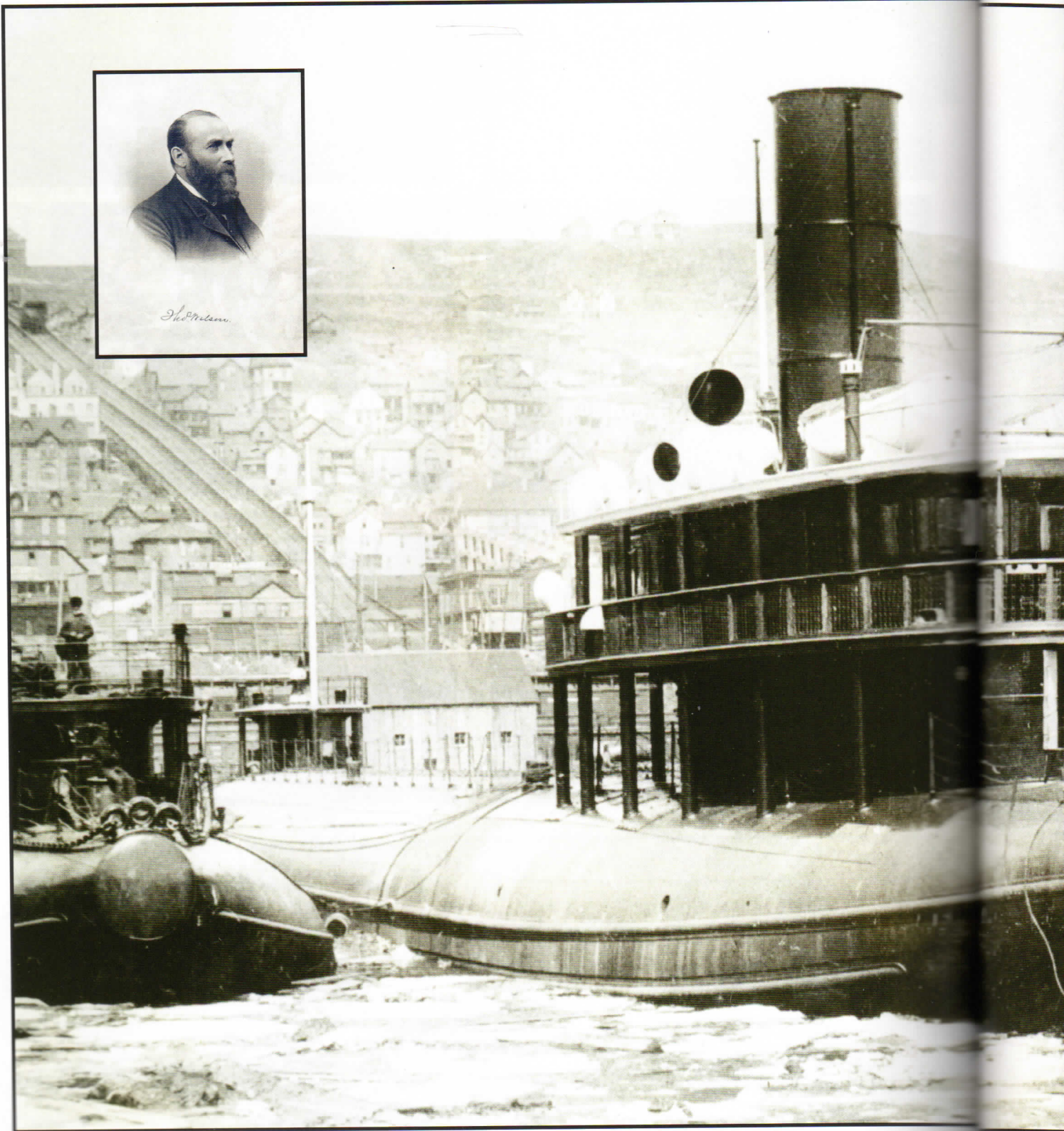
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# Deathblow on Lake Superior!

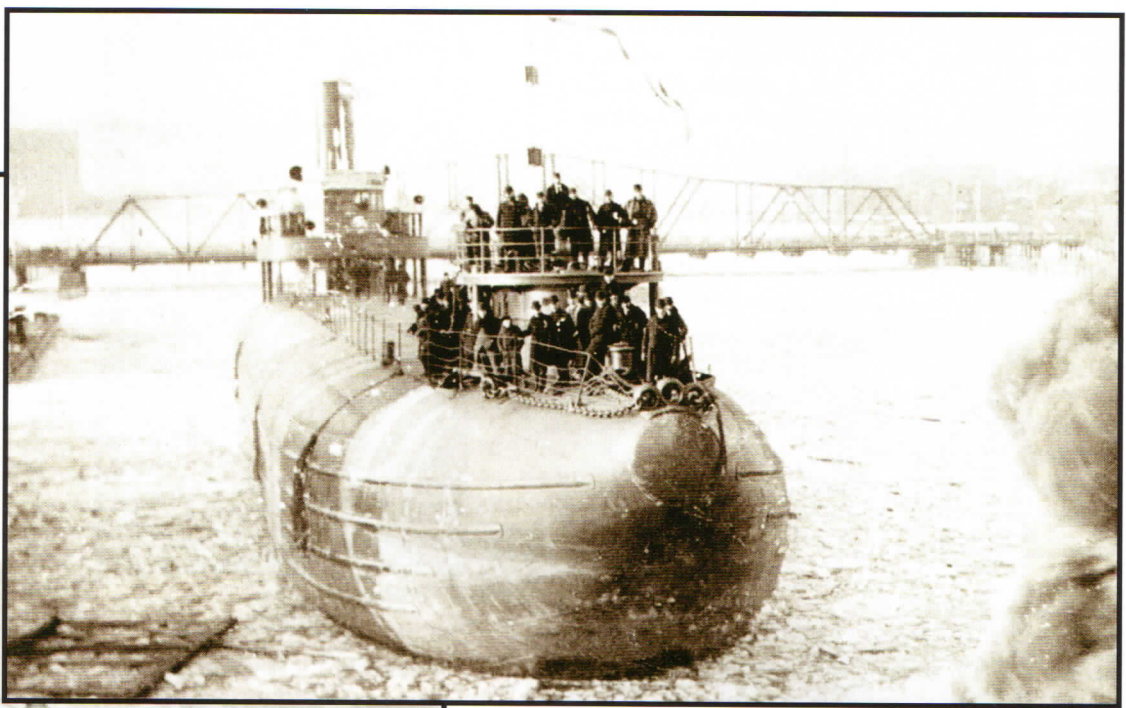
A careless collision under calm conditions claimed  
nine lives and an unusual ship in 1902.

Text and Photographs by *Cris Kohl*



**Above:** Although formally registered in the port of Buffalo, New York, on Lake Erie, the *Thomas Wilson* spent much time at Duluth, Minnesota, on Lake Superior, close to where the ship was launched.  
(Kohl-Forsberg Archives)

**Inset:** Captain Alexander McDougall named one of his whaleback steamships after his longtime friend and strong supporter, Captain Thomas Wilson.  
(Kohl-Forsberg Archives)



**Right Top Corner:** The rounded steel sheets of a whaleback's hull easily rolled or pushed lake ice out of the way. (Kohl-Forsberg Archives)

Captain Alexander McDougall (1845-1923), between 1888 and 1898, a time when steel gradually replaced wood as the material of choice for shipbuilding on the Great Lakes, constructed 40 steel vessels of a rather unique and revolutionary design. Proudly called “whalebacks” by their designer, these ships resembled rounded, smooth-decked, semi-submerged, giant cigars or submarines bearing bows that looked like pigs’ snouts, enticing the less respectful to refer to these vessels as “pigboats,” a nickname which, unfortunately, drew quick acceptance in common usage.

McDougall’s most productive year was 1892, when his American Steel Barge Company of Superior, Wisconsin, the “twin city” across the bay from Duluth, Minnesota, at the extreme western end of Lake Superior, launched ten whalebacks, including four that shared the exact same hull dimensions: 308 feet (93.3 metres) in length, 38 feet (11.5 metres) in beam, and 24 feet (7.3 metres) in draft. These four sister ships, three steamers and a barge, were the *Thomas Wilson*, launched on April 30, 1892; the *Samuel Mather*, launched on May 2, 1892, renamed the *Clifton* in 1923, and lost in a Lake Huron storm in 1924 (see WDM #42, *From the Debris Field....* about its recent discovery); the *James B. Colgate*, launched on September 21, 1892, and foundered in Lake Erie’s Black Friday Storm of 1916 (see WDM #40, *From the Debris Field....* for its tale); and the engineless barge named the *Sagamore*, launched on July 23, 1892, and lost in Lake Superior after a collision with another ship in 1901 (see WDM #14 for that complete story.)

The *Thomas Wilson*, the largest whaleback in the world at the time of launching, became, tragically, the very first steamship of its type to sink with loss of life.

Captain Thomas Wilson, master of the steamer *Meteor* in 1867, had hired the younger Alexander McDougall as Mate, operating the ship between Cleveland and ports on Lake Superior. McDougall fell in love with the largest and wildest of the Great Lakes, and moved to the pioneer town

of Duluth from Collingwood, Ontario, in the early 1870s.

In 1880, Captain Wilson persuaded McDougall to oversee the construction of two of the largest wooden ships built to date on the Great Lakes: the 235-foot [71.2-metre] steamer, *Hiawatha*, and its 200-foot [60-metre] tow barge, the *Minnehaha*. With this huge project, McDougall gained considerable experience in ship construction and in the management of shipyard labor, and, while working as the captain of the *Hiawatha* which towed the *Minnehaha*, he thought out his plan to design a steel ship that could “carry the greatest cargo on the least water” – the whaleback.

Not until 1888 was McDougall able to build his first whaleback ship, secured by his own patent and financed with his own savings. Barge 101 was immediately successful (despite derision deriving mostly from its nickname). McDougall was well on his way to building more vessels of this unusual type, with financial backing coming his way from several sources, including Captain Thomas Wilson who, by now, was owner of the Wilson Steamship Line. Whaleback barges and steamers quickly became attention-grabbing visitors in many harbors of the inland seas. Today, only one remains above water, as the museum ship *Meteor* (no relation to Captain Wilson’s early charge) in West Superior, Wisconsin.

Early in 1892, McDougall’s workers put the finishing touches on their newest project, hull number 119, a steel-hulled steamer named the *Thomas Wilson* after McDougall’s old friend and supporter. A pair of huge, Scotch boilers provided steam for the 1,200-horsepower, triple expansion engine. In between the single, vertical turret on the bow and the three tubular aft turrets holding up the cabins and the pilot house were a dozen cargo hatches with their heavy, steel covers. The ship was solidly crafted of steel, with wood joinery trimming the interiors. Newspapers in Chicago and Detroit described the launch of this fine vessel:

#### DULUTH’S BIGGEST STEAMER.

**Duluth, Minn., April 30. – The steel steamship, *Thomas Wilson*, was launched this afternoon at the Superior Yard of the Steel Barge Company in the presence of a large crowd [estimated to be 3,000 people]. The *Wilson* is the largest vessel ever completed by the company.... [She] will carry about 4,000 tons. She loads her first cargo of wheat for Buffalo next week, and there is much curiosity among lake vesselmen to see what she can carry on the small draught now allowed through the Sault canal.**

[*Chicago Inter Ocean*, May 1, 1892]



**Left:** Captain Alexander McDougall invented the whaleback design of ships, and built more than three dozen of them at the western end of Lake Superior in the late 1800s. (Kohl-Forsberg Archives)

The new ship carried and delivered her first cargo with flying colors:

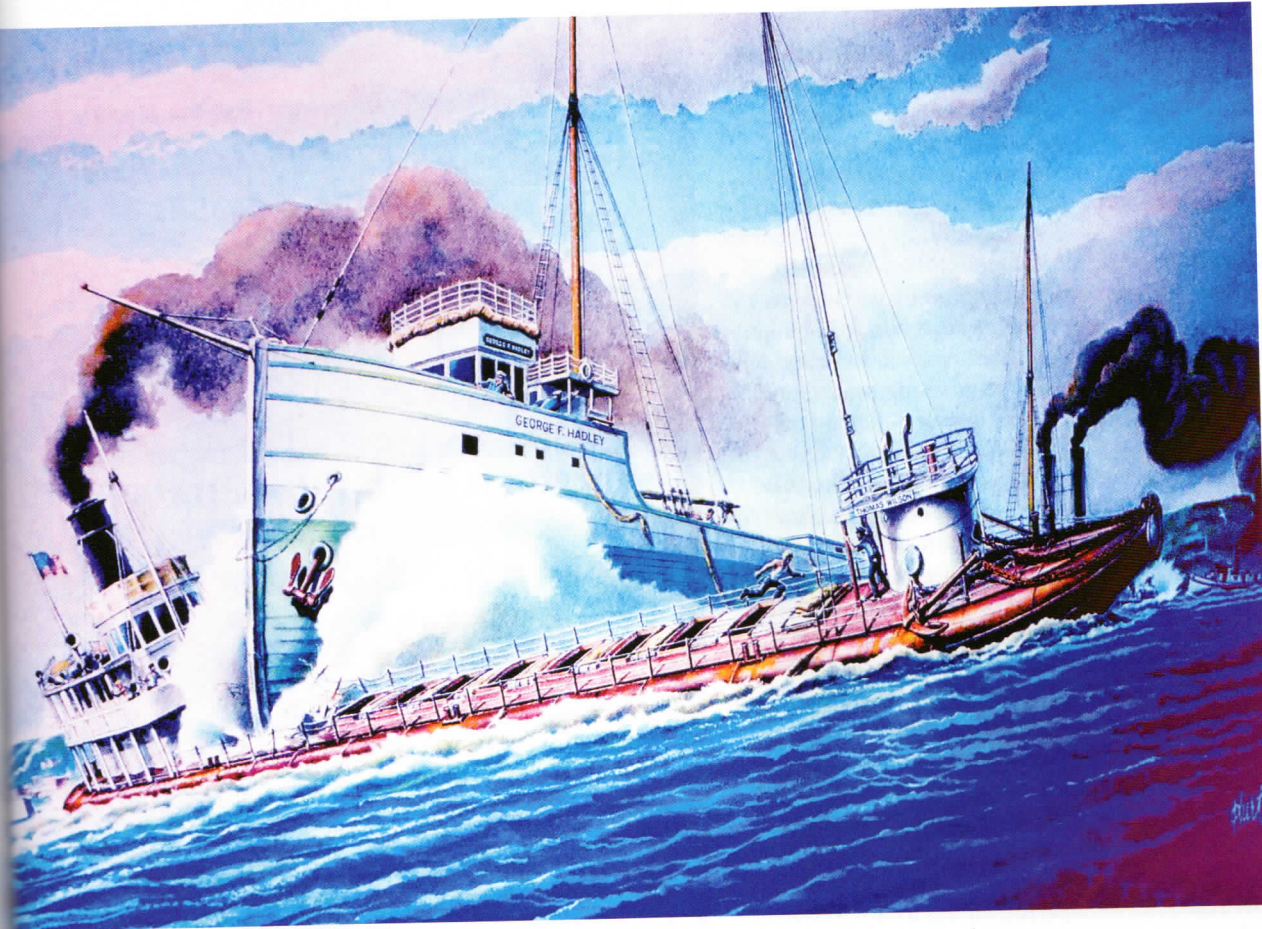
**The new whaleback steamer *Thomas Wilson* was at Hodges’ yesterday, her airpump requiring some attention. She has a cargo of 86,000 bushels of wheat, the largest load through the Soo canal this season, and she could have carried 5,000 more without lightering. [Detroit Free Press, May 17, 1892]**

The *Thomas Wilson* settled into the regularity of hauling grain to Buffalo and returning to Duluth with a cargo of coal. But the *Wilson* experienced her first accident early in the shipping season of 1893 when four whalebacks -- two steamers towing two barges -- came into contact:

**The *Thomas Wilson* Punches an \$8,000**

**Hole in the Barge 115.**

**Two Harbors, Special, May 11. – The Barge No. 115, wheat laden, bound down in tow of the steamer *J. B. Colgate*, was brought in here by the tug *Stone*, having been in collision with the steamer *Thomas Wilson*, three miles off this port. She has a bad hole in her side above the water line. The probable damage to the boat and her cargo is \$8,000. She will have to return to Duluth for repairs, and will probably reach there tomorrow morning. [Duluth New Tribune, May 12, 1893]**

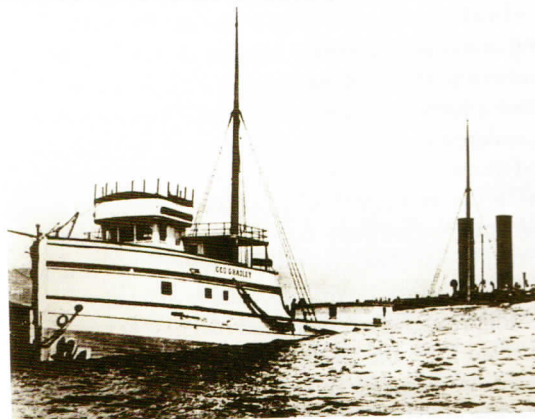


The high-profile *George G. Hadley* sliced deeply into the heavily-laden whaleback, *Thomas Wilson*. Obviously, from the results, a pointy bow, even when it was made of wood, could not penetrate a rounded, steel hull. (Detail of a painting by Kurt Carlson, courtesy of the Canal Park Museum, Duluth, MN. The painting now resides at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Point)

The *Wilson*, towing whaleback barge No. 101 at the time of the collision, was not badly damaged, but did require a few days' stay in dry dock for repairs. Whaleback barge 115 was also repaired and returned to service, but six years later, on December 18, 1899, it was permanently wrecked on Pic Island in northern Lake Superior, becoming the last Great Lakes shipwreck of the 1800s and providing fodder for one of the most dramatic tales of survival ever experienced in the inland seas.

In early October 1901, the *Wilson* nearly ended her career on Lake Michigan. Headlines screamed news of the ship's demise with words such as, "The Whaleback *Thomas Wilson* Is a Total Wreck," giving details in the article:

...The whaleback steamer *Thomas Wilson* went on the reef at Baileys Harbor [Wisconsin] about 9 o'clock last night during a heavy storm and dense fog, and will prove a total loss. The *Wilson* was light and bound to Escanaba [Michigan] for an [iron] ore cargo. Losing her bearings, she struck the reef while going at a pretty high rate of speed and was driven on the reef. The crew of twenty were [sic] taken off by the Baileys Harbor life saving crew. She sprang a leak during the night and this morning was half full of water and faring badly in the seas running.



The *George Hadley* clearly also suffered consequences from the collision with the *Thomas Wilson*. The *Hadley* was soon raised, repaired, and returned to service under a new name. (Kohl-Forsberg Archives)

Word was received at 10 o'clock that the steamer had become a total loss. This means that she has broken in two.

The *Thomas Wilson* was built at West Superior [Wisconsin] in 1892, had a gross measurement of 1,713 tons and was valued at \$125,000 in the Inland Lloyd's register. The loss is a fatal one to the steel trust, which carries no insurance on its vessels. [Duluth Evening Herald, October 9, 1901]

The next day, newspaper headlines were equally

pessimistic, e.g. "Reports Not So Favorable From the Stranded *Wilson*." However, a miracle occurred five days later, when headlines totally reversed their gloom: "The *Thomas Wilson* Released Not Very Badly Damaged." The wrecking tug, *Favorite*, towed the intact *Wilson* off the reef and into a dry dock for repairs. The whaleback had obviously not broken in two, and minor repairs were quickly made.

With cooperative weather, the year 1902 witnessed a very early start to the shipping season on Lake Superior, and indications pointed to total tonnage shipped being 25% ahead of the 1901 season. Greater tonnage being carried by more ships meant more maritime traffic, and this served as a warning sign for possible collisions.

On June 7, 1902, the *Thomas Wilson* loaded a cargo of iron ore in Duluth harbor, an activity that took more than the entire night to complete, postponing the ship's departure until nearly 10:30 the following morning. Seeing perfect spring weather for sailing on Lake Superior, Captain M. A. Cameron decided to get underway quickly and have his crew fasten the ship's hatch covers when the vessel cruised across smooth, open water.

Just outside Duluth harbor, the wooden-hulled freighter, *George Hadley*, approaching with a full cargo of coal, was met by the tugboat *Annie L. Smith*, with the news that the Duluth coal docks were full, and that the *Hadley* should discharge her cargo at the Superior, Wisconsin, dock. Without a moment's hesitation, 73-year-old Captain Michael Fitzgerald ordered his ship to make a 90-degree turn to port and head to Superior, failing to sound the required whistle signal indicating a course change, and also failing to notice the *Wilson* bearing down upon his vessel. Cameron, on a collision course with the *Hadley* and worried that a turn to port would ground his ship in the shallows, ordered the *Wilson* to turn sharply to starboard and hoped to outrun the *Hadley*. But the timing was off.

The bow of the wooden *Hadley*, with a resounding blow, surprisingly penetrated deep into the *Wilson*'s steel hull on her port side just forward of the aft turret. The impact rolled the *Wilson* to starboard, allowing lake water to enter the hull through the uncovered hatches. When the *Hadley* recoiled from the crash, put its engine in reverse, and backed away from the *Wilson*'s hull, a torrent of water rushed into the gash in the *Wilson*'s port side, dooming the stricken vessel. All of the *Wilson*'s crew, except for two sailors who reportedly tried to retrieve some of their clothing, were able to reach the deck where, seeing the futility of staying with their sinking ship, they jumped into

# STEAMER WILSON SUNK

## Whaleback Steamer Run Into By the *Hadley* Off Duluth Harbor.

### Sank In a Few Seconds and Nine Men Lost Their Lives.

**THE DEAD:**  
**AARON TRIPP, Cook.**  
**FRANK, Second Cook, shipped at Toledo on last trip.**  
**JAMES McDUGALL, Oiler, West Superior.**  
**JAMES M. FRASER, Oiler, Manitowish Island.**  
**JOSEPH McDRAW, Wheelman, Sauk Ste. Marie, Mich.**  
**JOHN CAMPBELL, Lookout, Greenleaf, Mich.**  
**JOHN CAREY, Deck Hand, St. Catharines, Ont.**  
**THOMAS JONES, Deck Hand.**  
**WILLIAM ROEBUCK, Fireman, Port Lambton, Ont.**

AN AMERICAN STEAMER WAS RUN INTO BY a British vessel near Duluth harbor Saturday night, and the American ship was wrecked and sunk in a few seconds. Nine men were lost and the vessel was completely destroyed. The British vessel was the *Hadley*, a whaleback steamer, and the American vessel was the *Thomas Wilson*, a freighter. The collision occurred at about 10:30 p.m. Saturday night. The *Wilson* was on a collision course with the *Hadley* and was unable to avoid it. The *Wilson* was struck on her port side and was rolled to starboard. She sank in a few seconds and was completely destroyed. The *Hadley* was damaged but was able to return to Duluth harbor. The *Wilson* was towed to a dry dock for repairs but was found to be too damaged to be repaired. She was broken up and the wreckage was scattered over a large area of the harbor. The bodies of the nine men who were lost were recovered and buried in Duluth. The names of the men who were lost are listed in the accompanying list.

## THE WORK OF THE DIVER ON THE STEAMER THOMAS WILSON



Top to Bottom: The *Duluth Evening Herald*, because it was not an early edition newspaper, was able to report the tragic results of that morning's collision on the same day that it occurred. (Kohl-Forsberg Archives)

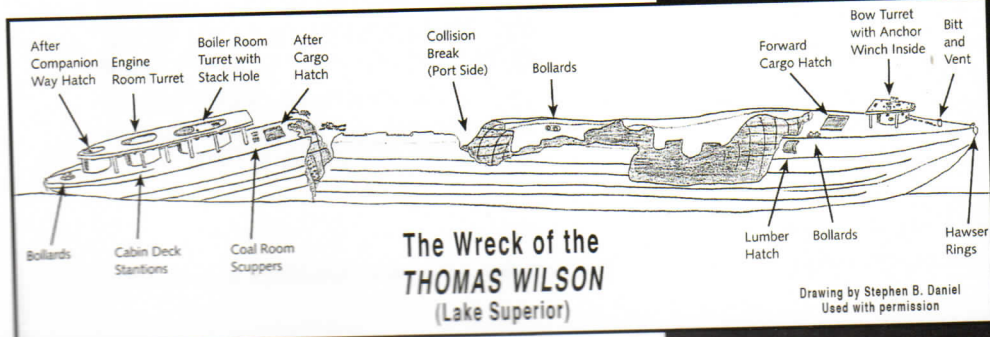
The initial salvage efforts to recover the *Thomas Wilson* wreck and its cargo did not end in the year 1902, nor even in 1903, but continued well into 1904. These February 1904 headlines indicated the hardhat diving activity taking place on this shipwreck. (Kohl-Forsberg Archives)

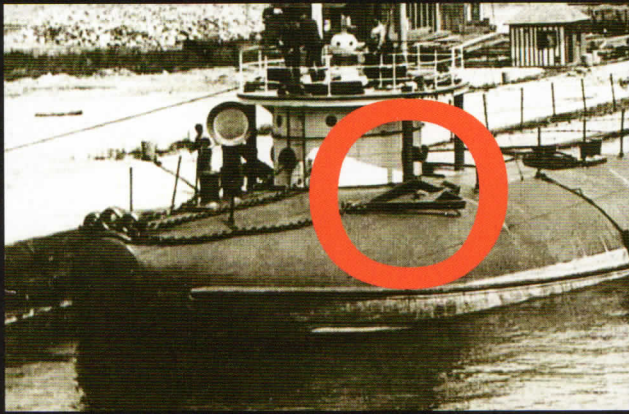
The wreck of the whaleback, *Thomas Wilson*, displays its port side collision damage, as well as fractures in the steel hull and superstructure created by modern freighters dropping their anchors onto the wreck while awaiting entry into Duluth harbor. (Courtesy of the artist, Stephen B. Daniel)

Opposite Page - Top to Bottom: The whaleback, *Thomas Wilson*, could be visually identified by sailors based upon the type of anchor it carried on its port bow: a triangular-shaped, McDougall patent anchor from 1891. (Kohl-Forsberg Archives)

This unusual anchor, an 1891 McDougall patent invention, was produced at the American Steel Barge Company that built whalebacks in Superior, Wisconsin. This particular one, on exhibit outside the Canal Park Museum in Duluth, was recovered from the *Thomas Wilson* wreck in 1977 by divers Elmer Engman, Robert and Randy Bradford, Al Kennedy, and Judy Ferrell.

This conventional anchor (a 3,000-pound Trotman folding stock anchor) serving as the *Thomas Wilson*'s starboard bow anchor, was recovered in 1973 from the wreck by divers Elmer Engman, Dave Anderson, Dan Goman, and Paul von Goertz.





the freezing water and swam towards the nearby *Hadley*. Meanwhile, the *Hadley's* crew tossed anything that would float into the water towards the *Wilson* survivors. But the *Wilson* sank bow-first within three minutes, with her still-turning propeller ending up high in the air above Lake Superior's waters. The suction created by her sinking pulled down many of her crew members struggling on the surface, nine of whom rose no more.

Eleven survivors reached the *Hadley*, which, despite having a stove-in bow, remained at the scene to pick them up. But her damage was too severe, and she also failed to reach harbor, sinking to her deck level in 24 feet (7.3 metres) of water just outside Duluth harbor.

Many people on shore, less than a mile (1.6 kilometres) away, had witnessed the collision, and numerous tugboats, as well as the local life saving team, sped to the site of the two sinkings to quickly transport the sailors safely to shore. The *Wilson* survivors were taken to Duluth's St. Louis Hotel, while the *Hadley* crew was conveyed to the Tremont Hotel.

The nine victims of the collision were the Head Cook (Aaron Tripp), the Second Cook (Guy Frink, who had just shipped on board the *Wilson* at Toledo on the previous trip), two oilers (James McDougall from West Superior, Wisconsin, and James M. Fraser from Manitoulin Island, Ontario), the wheelsman (Joseph McGraw, from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan), a lookout (John Campbell from Greenleaf, Michigan), two deck hands (John Carey from St. Catharines, Ontario, and Thomas Jones, home unknown), and a fireman (William Roebuck, from Port Lambton, Ontario).

Captain Cameron of the *Wilson* gave this account of his survival:

...After the crash occurred, I hailed the *Hadley* and told them to stand by. Then I ran aft and tried to get the life raft loose. The boys were jumping overboard [all] about me.... Before we could do anything, she sank. I was standing right at the stern, the last part of the boat to go under. There was a tremendous rush of steam and air and water, and I seemed to be in the very midst of it.

Then I went down. I don't know how far underwater I went, but I remember thinking that I never would reach the top again. I was striking out with my hands to try to get to the surface, and as I was coming up, my hand struck someone else down there. He was coming up and apparently just ahead of me. Of course, I could not see who it was, I felt him for a moment, then we parted. When I got to the surface, I did not see anyone near me. [*Duluth New Tribune*, June 10, 1902]



Plans for salvaging both ships began immediately, with the *Duluth Evening Herald*, on June 7, 1902, the day of the collision, forecasting that

...The *Hadley* is in good shape, apparently, as her only damage is in her stem. She is in shallow water and can be raised without any great difficulty.

The wrecking job on the *Wilson* will be much more difficult. Her depth and the fact that she is loaded with a heavy cargo of iron ore will make it harder, and if the rent in her side is as great as most of the witnesses of the accident believe, this, too, will retard the work.

Work on the wrecking of the *Wilson* will not begin until Monday, and work on the *Hadley* will begin tomorrow.

The day after the collision, June 8, 1902, the newly-launched, steel freighter, *William F. Fitch*, struck the wreck of the *Thomas Wilson*, carrying away the wreck's wooden spar that had stood ten feet (three metres) out of the water, conveniently marking the wreck's location. The *Fitch* was not damaged. At this point, the *Wilson's* smokestack remained upright, rising to within ten feet (three metres) of the surface – clearly a hazard to approaching vessels.

One Detroit newspaper reported that the *Wilson* went down “in 60 feet” (18 metres) of water and that she was worth “about \$100,000.” Both numbers were slightly off. Other accounts placed the *Wilson* at a depth of 72 feet (21.8 metres), which is where it remains to this day. Some reports inflated the value of the wrecked *Wilson* to \$200,000, an unlikely number considering that her value, according to the Inland Lloyd's just eight months earlier, was \$125,000. One Chicago newspaper reported that the *Wilson* “was valued at \$115,000” (very likely, since the value of a ship would logically go down by a comparatively small amount from one year to the next), and that “It had on board 3,500 tons of iron ore, valued at \$14,000. Neither ship nor cargo is insured.”

A court of inquiry found that both ships failed to observe passing rules and were equally at fault for not doing so. The *Hadley's* Captain Fitzgerald had his license revoked permanently, and Captain Cameron's was suspended for 60 days. Four new rules also went into effect in Duluth Harbor:

1. Ships cannot leave the harbor with open hatches.
2. A ship may not pull out from another ship following a collision.
3. A pilot may not carry out any order given by the captain when another vessel is sighted without first calling the captain's attention to the other vessel.



**Above:** Joan Forsberg shoots video of an opening to the *Wilson's* engine room that she is about to enter.

**Opposite Page - Top to Bottom:** The huge, round opening at the top of the boiler room turret clearly indicates where the smokestack once stood in place. This is another access point for entry into the engine room.

Steel ladders welded onto the *Wilson's* deck beams remain perfectly in place, indicating the strength and durability in utilizing steel construction methods. These lead to the *Wilson's* coal bunker.

The day after the collision, June 8, 1902, the newly-launched, steel freighter, *William F. Fitch*, struck the wreck of the *Thomas Wilson*, ...

4. All ships must be equipped with signal devices to all parts of the vessel to warn of danger.

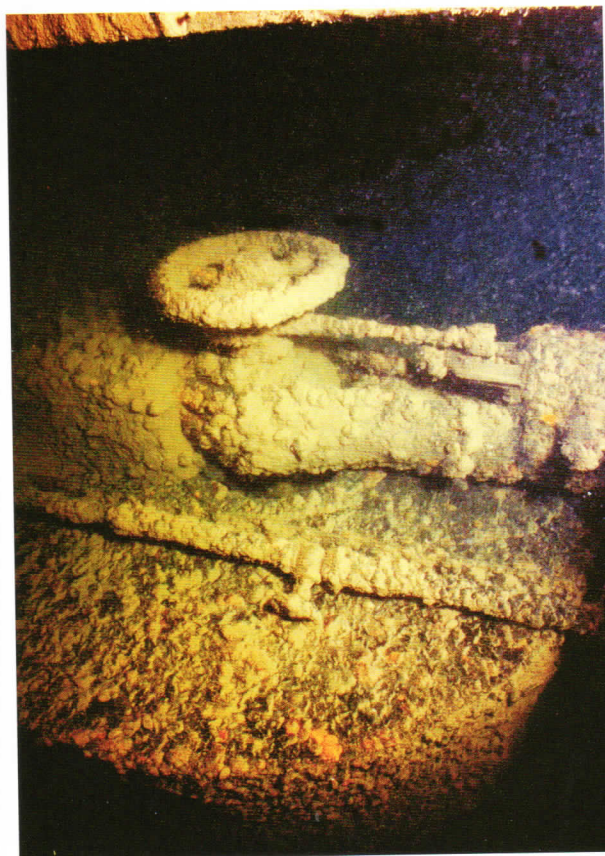
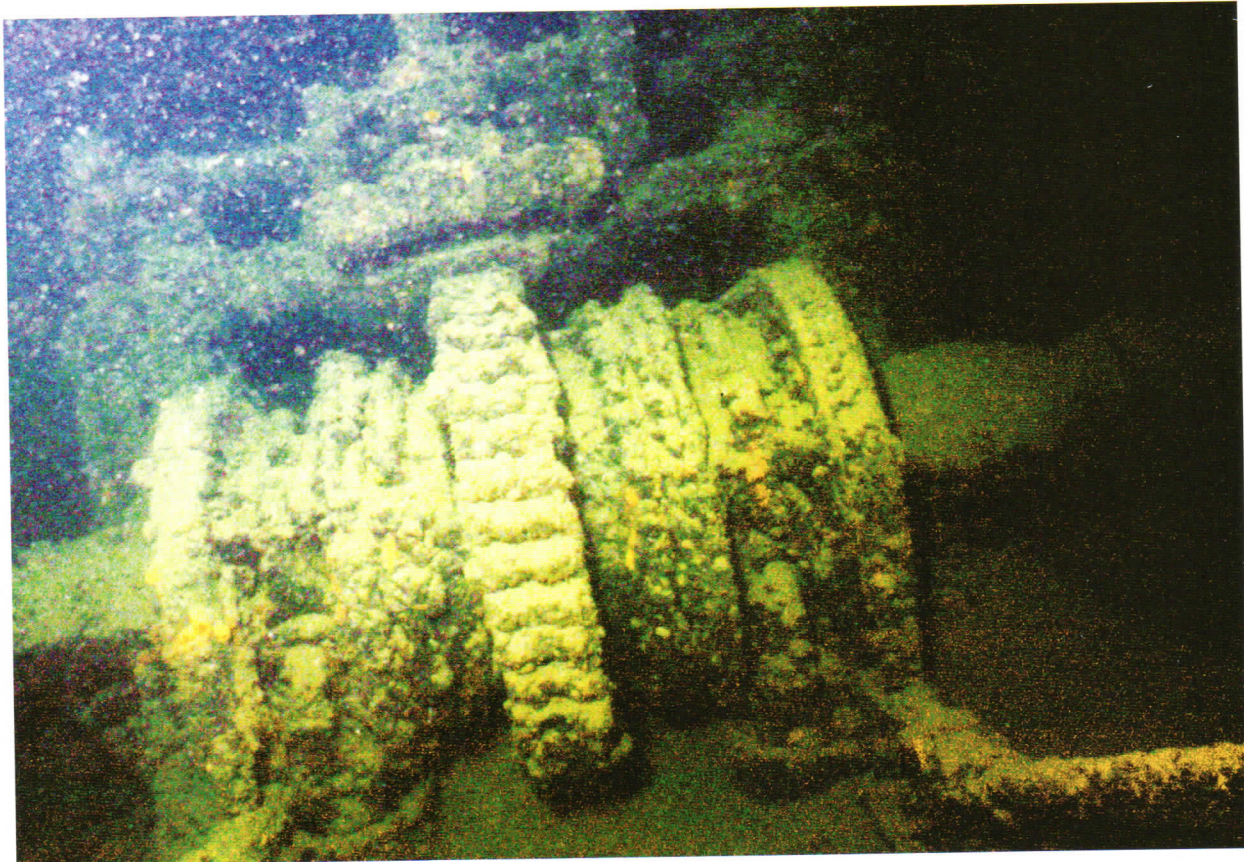
How does an important person, after whom a ship has been named, react to the news that his namesake vessel has been wrecked? In the case of the whaleback named *Thomas Wilson*, we will never know, because the man named Thomas Wilson died two years earlier in March 1900, at the age of 62, while visiting distant Jerusalem "on a trip for the benefit of his health." It took a month for Wilson's body to be returned to Cleveland for the funeral, "one of the largest ever held in Cleveland" with "a very large number of vesselmen from all over the lakes" in attendance. Captain Alexander McDougall was one of the honorary pallbearers.

The salvage of the *George Hadley* was accomplished in just 16 days from the time of its sinking. But there were those who would have left the unlucky ship in place under water. One Chicago newspaper argued that "a Hoodoo Follow[ed this] Boat Until the Collision at Duluth":

It was named after its first owner, George G. Hadley of Detroit, and he took a party of friends on the maiden trip up Lake Superior. The steamer started in right away by losing its rudder, and drifted about the lake until picked up and towed into port.

The rest of the boat's career was a good deal of the same thing. If there was a chance for the *Hadley* to meet misfortune, it did so. The compass went wrong and a stranding resulted if the weather was thick, and the boat showed a wonderful faculty for finding the shoal spots in the rivers.... [Chicago Daily Tribune, June 9, 1902]

In order to divest himself of the bad



**Center:** This 1892 toilet inside one of the *Wilson's* turret structures probably has not been flushed for decades!

**Bottom Left:** Keeping careful eyes upon a burbot comfortably perched on the *Wilson's* bow fairleads, Joan Forsberg makes slow, careful moves so as not to scare the resident away.

**Top Photo:** A geared winch inside the bow turret raised the ship's anchors.

**Bottom Right:** Inside the hull, rusted steel pipes and valves, underwater now for more than 115 years, form parts of the *Wilson's* steam engine system.


luck that followed his steamer, Mr. Hadley sold the vessel to William P. Rend of Chicago, who wanted the boat to carry coal to various ports. After the collision with the *Wilson*, Mr. Rend had the *Hadley* raised, repaired, and returned to service, but not before he changed the ship's name – to the *William P. Rend*! As can be expected when one changes the name of a ship, misfortunes followed, as storms kept driving the vessel ashore and poor navigation ran the ship aground regularly, but it could always be recovered and repaired. Finally, on October 2, 1917, the *William P. Rend* was totally wrecked when stranded near Alpena, Michigan, on Lake Huron, where it remains a shallow water dive site to this day. Coincidentally, Mr. William P. Rend died two years before the final loss of his namesake ship – exactly like the namesake of the whaleback, *Thomas Wilson*!

Attempts to raise the *Thomas Wilson* started as soon as the *Hadley* was raised, but the outlook for success appeared dim, and soon the Pittsburg Steamship Company, which owned the *Wilson*, abandoned both the cargo and the vessel. On August 1, 1902, the wreck of the *Thomas Wilson* was advertised for sale, with bids beginning on August 15th. On August 20, 1902, the bid of nearly \$10,000 placed by Duluth's Wieland brothers was accepted. They planned to recover the iron ore cargo and then raise the ship itself, but the technology of the times was lacking, despite the optimism created in September 1902, when hardhat divers employed underwater lights and underwater telephones, both new inventions. Proposed examinations of the wreck in early 1903 by hardhat divers under the ice continued to boost optimism. When famed wreck salvager W. H. Reid of Sarnia, Ontario, visited Duluth in February 1903, it was assumed that he was there for work on the *Thomas Wilson*. However, spring and summer passed with no salvage work being done. In November 1903, a tug had reportedly been chartered for the project, and "wrecking apparatus" was being prepared. On February 10, 1904, with 20 inches (50 centimetres) of ice over the wreck of the *Wilson*, a loud headline in the *Duluth Evening Herald* announced that the "Wieland Brothers Finally Take Up Work on Sunken Vessel." A large shed was constructed on the ice, a hole was cut into the ice for access to the water, and local hardhat diver, John Wanless, attracting considerable publicity, made a preliminary examination of the wreck. He reported that the *Wilson* had broken in two a short distance from the bow, completely befuddling the readers of well-documented, eyewitness reports that the collision point was closer to the stern. Perhaps the ship broke when the bow hit the bottom first, went one argument. The Wieland brothers countered any doubters with large sums of money that would be made when the ship was brought up piecemeal: the 1,100 tons of steel boiler plate would sell for \$11 a ton, totaling about \$12,000; the steam engine, even in its present condition, could fetch \$15,000 when raised; the two boilers would bring about \$7,000 when recovered. For two months, landlubbers watched for signs of any progress in shipwreck salvage, but by late April 1904, the melting ice placed the large shed positioned over the *Wilson* in so obvious danger of disappearing into the lake that a local newspaper headlined that story, "Its End Is Near."

But the story of the *Thomas Wilson* shipwreck was far from over. In July 1906, the wreck again made its presence known when an anchor, dropped by the 366-foot-(111-metre)-long, steel steamer, *Antrim*, became snagged in the wreckage, requiring diver W. E. Hoy to drop down 12 fathoms to free the anchor. In August 1939, the aging Wieland brothers again made plans to recover the iron ore cargo, seal the broken wreck, and raise it, but again, nothing came of their plans.

The 1950s marked the beginnings of the scuba diving era in the Great Lakes, with shipwrecks quickly becoming the favorite goal of subaquatic explorers. In 1962, early divers again planned to find the wreck of the *Wilson* and raise it, a project which they found was more easily planned than accomplished. By 1970, scuba divers were venturing into the shipwreck for the first time, making detailed examinations inside and out of the *Thomas Wilson*. From archival photos of the *Wilson*, divers could determine that the ship carried two very different bow anchors, one a standard kedge anchor on the starboard side, and a McDougall-patent, triangular anchor on the port side. These two anchors, raised in 1973 and 1978 respectively, now stand as separate exhibits on the grounds of the maritime museum next to Duluth's famous ship canal.

One of the divers involved in the discovery and raising of these two anchors was maritime historian Elmer Engman, who, in the mid-1970s, wrote two of the first books ever published about scuba diving on Great Lakes shipwrecks: *In the Belly of a Whale* (the story of the wrecked whaleback *Thomas Wilson*) and *Shipwreck Guide to the Western Half of Lake Superior*. Elmer still dives on Great Lakes shipwrecks to this day, and was our genial and knowledgeable guide as we explored the *Wilson*.

The *Thomas Wilson* is one of only four whaleback steamers wrecked in the Great Lakes, making it unique on that count alone. It also serves as a memorial to nine sailors who lost their lives in the service of their profession. While the wreck has sustained some damage due to freighters accidentally dropping their anchors on it while waiting to enter Duluth harbor, it remains a unique, unforgettable experience for divers when they get a chance to explore "in the belly of a whale." 

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Cris Kohl, maritime historian and archivist, underwater archaeologist, and prize-winning underwater photographer, has explored shipwrecks in the Great Lakes for 44 years. Since 1985, he has authored or co-authored sixteen books about the Great Lakes' uniquely preserved freshwater wrecks and the dramatic stories behind them. A Past President of the Underwater Archaeological Society of Chicago (2004), the 2008 recipient of the "Our World – Underwater" Lifetime Achievement Award, and the 2013 recipient of the Save Ontario Shipwrecks Marine Heritage Award, he lives with his wife, writer, diver, and historian Joan Forsberg, in Chicago and Windsor (Ontario). They have co-produced 17 documentaries about Great Lakes shipwrecks, plus a variety of shipwreck maps and postcards. Their most recent book is the co-authored *Canada's 150 Most Famous Great Lakes Shipwrecks*. [SeawolfCommunications.com](http://SeawolfCommunications.com)