

Wisconsin Historical Society: LaSalle Shipwreck in Manitowoc County listed in National Register of Historic Places

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Contact:

Kara O'Keeffe

kara.okeeffe@wisconsinhistory.org

Two Rivers, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society has announced the listing of the *LaSalle* Shipwreck in the vicinity of Two Rivers, Manitowoc County, in the National Register of Historic Places. National Register designation provides access to certain benefits, including qualification for grants and for rehabilitation income tax credits, while it does not restrict private property owners in the use of their property.

The *LaSalle* is a rare example of a vessel type that was vital to Wisconsin's economy, the economy of the Midwest, and transportation infrastructure prior to the development of road and rail networks. Before rail lines were constructed, canallers like the *LaSalle* were an important link in the development of the Midwest, connecting the region economically and culturally with the eastern markets. On her final voyage, the *LaSalle* was carrying a cargo of wheat bound for Buffalo, New York. This trade fueled the expansion of the Grain Belt and the development of the major industrial centers of the Midwest.

Many opportunities remain for future archaeological research on the *LaSalle* as much of the stern and portside bow sections are likely concealed beneath the soft layer of silt and organic material surrounding the site. Further archaeological discovery and research will increase our understanding of the evolution of canaller construction and significantly add to our understanding of Great Lakes sailing

vessels. Nineteenth-century wooden vessels were rarely built to drawn plans. While it is common knowledge that canallers were boxy vessels compared to the clipper-type Great Lakes schooners, little comparative work has been conducted between archaeological remains of the two vessels types. Today, little documentation exists that illustrates how these vessels were constructed, the nuances of differing hull lines, construction techniques, and adaptations to bulk cargo needs between sailing vessel types.

Conducting a more detailed archaeological survey of the construction features specific to canallers, such as construction of the stem and stern, the turn of the bilge, and hull lines offers significant opportunities to add to our limited knowledge of canallers. As one of the few remaining documented canallers in Wisconsin waters, data gathered on the *LaSalle* has significantly added to the understanding of Great Lakes canaller construction. Due to the high level of hull integrity, the *LaSalle* site has vast potential to yield even further insight into nineteenth-century maritime commerce.

The register is the official national list of historic properties in America deemed worthy of preservation and is maintained by the National Park Service in the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Wisconsin Historical Society administers the program within Wisconsin. It includes sites, buildings, structures, objects and districts that are significant in national, state or local history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture.

State and federal laws protect this shipwreck. Divers may not remove artifacts or structure when visiting this shipwreck site. Removing, defacing, displacing or destroying artifacts or sites is a crime. More information on Wisconsin's historic shipwrecks may be found by visiting www.wisconsinshipwrecks.org.