

Wisconsin Historical Society: Antelope Shipwreck in Ashland County listed in National Register of Historic Places

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La Pointe, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society has announced the listing of the Antelope Shipwreck in the vicinity of La Pointe, Ashland 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 Antelope, built in 1861, and sunk in 1897, is a tug-barge, an early example of a passenger packet steamer that was converted to a lumber steamer, and later cut down and converted into a barge in the Great Lakes tradition of converting old wooden schooners and steamers into “floating wheelbarrows” for large bulk cargos. Sites such as Antelope present a rare opportunity to study and learn about historic wooden steamer construction and converted barge conversion, and how these vessels were used across multiple industries. The wreck site remained unknown following its sinking in 1897, until its discovery by avocational wreck hunters in 2016. Since then, only one crew of archaeologists has visited the site using a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) and multibeam sonar. With no visitation from divers and no invasive mussel populations, the site has retained remarkable structural and archaeological integrity since its sinking in 1897.

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.