

Wisconsin Historical Society: F.J. King Shipwreck listed in the State Register of Historic Places

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DOOR COUNTY, Wis. – The Wisconsin Historical Society announces the listing of the F.J. King shipwreck on the State Register of Historic Places. Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Amy Wyatt presented a certificate to Tamara Thomsen. The shipwreck is submerged in Lake Michigan near the Town of Liberty Grove in Door County.

The schooner F.J. King was constructed in 1867 by Master Shipbuilder George R. Rogers in Toledo, Ohio. It was designed for the coal and grain trade between Lake Michigan and the lower lakes. It was later adapted for use in the lumber and iron ore trades. F.J. King is representative of a unique class of sailing vessels called canal schooners or canallers. This was a vessel type unique to the Great Lakes, as it was specifically designed to transit the Welland Canal locks, a canal that bypassed Niagara Falls. The design allows the ship to carry the maximum amount of cargo through the locks with only inches to spare. Grain was collected from Midwest farms and transported from ports on western Lake Michigan to eastern ports on Lakes Erie and Ontario. These ships returned to Lake Michigan loaded with coal to heat Midwestern cities and power factories.

On September 15, 1886, the F.J. King's hull sprang a leak while carrying iron ore from Escanaba, Michigan, to Chicago. The ship's pumps could not keep up with the incoming water, and the vessel sank off Door County. The F.J. King site was located during a citizen science project conducted by the Wisconsin Underwater Archaeology Association in June 2025. The shipwreck site was documented by Wisconsin Historical Society maritime archaeologists and volunteers in August and October 2025. It remains very intact and has not been visited by divers outside of

the initial surveys.

State and federal laws protect this shipwreck. Divers may not remove artifacts or structure when visiting this site. Removing, defacing, displacing, or destroying artifacts or sites is a crime. More information on Wisconsin's historic shipwrecks may be found by visiting Wisconsin's Great Lakes Shipwrecks website: <https://www.wisconsinshipwrecks.org/Home#anchor3>

To learn more about the State and National Register programs in Wisconsin, visit: www.wisconsinhistory.org.

About the Wisconsin Historical Society

The Wisconsin Historical Society, founded in 1846, ranks as one of the largest, most active and most diversified state historical societies in the nation. As both a state agency and a private membership organization, its mission is to help people connect to the past by collecting, preserving and sharing stories. The Wisconsin Historical Society serves millions of people every year through a wide range of sites, programs and services. For more information, visit www.wisconsinhistory.org.