



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: JULY 21, 2023

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Announces New Shipwrecks for Public to Explore

Vergennes, VT – The research and archaeology team at Lake Champlain Maritime Museum is making Lake Champlain’s underwater world accessible to the public. Today, the museum announced two new shipwrecks have been added to the Lake Champlain Underwater Historic Preserves. For underwater explorers without diving certification, the museum also started a weekly ROV Shipwreck Tour, a tour by boat which uses an underwater remote-operated-vehicle (ROV) to explore a shipwreck and send back real-time footage to passengers onboard.

“Lake Champlain’s rich underwater material history is key to understanding the story of people, technology, and ecology of the Champlain Valley,” said Chris Sabick, the museum’s director of research and archaeology. “It is a powerful experience for people to be able to explore and experience underwater history in person to better understand the present and build a sustainable future for the lake.”

New Shipwrecks for Divers

The Lake Champlain Underwater Historic Preserves provide public access for divers to the lake’s historic shipwrecks. The system is designed to protect these underwater resources from damage and artifact collecting and make them available for generations of divers to explore. The preserves are operated by the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and managed by Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. The preserves already include 10 dive sites, the first of which opened in 1985. This year, the museum will add two new shipwreck sites: the Pot Ash Point Canal Boat and the Providence Island Canal Sloop.

The Pot Ash Point Canal Boat shipwreck will be the new southern-most dive site location in Lake Champlain. It sits in approximately 35 feet of water, accessible for divers of all skill levels. The boat is a pre-1862 standard canal boat with the bow and stern intact; quarried stone cargo and fragments of internal structures are visible. The Pot Ash Point Canal Boat will open for divers in August 2023.

The Providence Island Canal Sloop is an extremely well-preserved canal sloop shipwreck sitting perfectly on the bottom of the lake deep underwater, approximately 85 feet deep. A unique example of a canal sloop with a fine entry, or pointed bow, most of its rig is still in place

and the vessel's eye-catching coat of turquoise paint has been preserved by the cold water. There is no obvious source of sinking and, despite its unique appearance, no history on this boat has been found to date. Evidence shows there was a family living in the stern cabin and a load of coal is still present in the boat's hold. The Providence Island Canal Sloop will open for divers in September 2023.

The addition of new dive sites was made possible by Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, and a family foundation that generously supports the Museum's archaeology and research projects.

New ROV Shipwreck Tour Series

Members of the public interested in exploring a shipwreck without getting in the water can experience a shipwreck dive from the comfort of a boat on the museum's ROV Shipwreck Tour. Passengers will take an easy and safe boat ride to the site of the steamboat *Champlain II* shipwreck, just across the lake from the museum. Once at the shipwreck site, the museum team will send a small underwater remote-operated-vehicle (ROV) into the water to dive down to the shipwreck and send back real-time video to an onboard screen for all to see.

The *Champlain II* is a unique vessel launched in 1868 originally to ferry railroad cars from Burlington to Plattsburgh before it was converted into a passenger steamboat in 1874. Passengers will hear the dramatic story of how the boat sank in 1875 and explore the shipwreck, keeping an eye out for fish, via the ROV real-time video feed. Shipwreck Tours leave at 10 am every Thursday from the museum and tickets are \$40 for adults and \$25 for youth under 18. Tickets should be reserved in advance at www.lcmm.org/ShipwreckTours.

About Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Founded in 1985, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum connects all people to Lake Champlain, inspiring them to learn from the past, build together in the present, and create a sustainable future. Committed to free access to the lake and its history, archaeology, and ecology, the Museum is open to all from late May to mid-October with free admission. Year-round education programs serve more than 2,500 K-12 students, as well as hundreds of educators locally and nationally. For more information, visit www.lcmm.org.