

Mayflower Dive Report

The Wreck of the Mayflower (Lake Kamineskeg): in the “Ripley's Believe It or Not” column, there was an item on how one dead man saved the lives of three. This was the sinking of the “Mayflower” in 1912 where nine crew perished, and three survived by clinging to a floating coffin that was being transported on the deck of the ship at the time. The Mayflower was built in 1908 in Barry's Bay and was 72' in length with a 20' beam. It had a wood-powered steam boiler, and was driven by a rear paddlewheel. It was used for travel between Combermere and Barry's Bay in the days before good roads were established. It also hauled ore from a mine at Craigmont to the railway in Barry's Bay. On the last trip of the season on Nov 12, 1912 it sank in a storm. An inquest suggested the boat was not in the best condition at the time and was leaking a fair bit of water. The exact cause of the sinking was not determined, but it went down very quickly. Of the twelve people on board, nine were drowned and three survived. Current reports suggest that the boiler and paddle wheel are still in relatively good condition, how much else of the wreck remains intact we will see for ourselves. More information on the depth, VIS, thermocline, etc., is forthcoming. Gerald Priestly has found a local boat operator who will transport a small contingent of divers to the site on July 10. From Combermere it's a one hour cruise, and because of this, there is a cost - \$30 per person. **To register, please contact Gerald at 628-1836.** Be advised that this limited-capacity trip will be booked on a first-come, first-served basis. If there's a really strong demand, however, we may book the operator for two trips that weekend (i.e., Sunday July 11 as well).

This test dive turned out to be a great success, and a must-do/must-see for those that could not come. Gerald Priestly organized the outing, which included finding and hiring a local resident to take us by boat to the wreck site. Located near the shore of a large lake (Kamineskeg), our Captain Bill, armed with local knowledge, took us to the general area where the Mayflower sunk, then Gerald and Brent located the wreckage under water while the rest of us were gearing up on deck. We now have exact GPS coordinates, but hiring Bill is of excellent value.

An excursion to the site of the wreck of the Mayflower in Lake Kamineskeg near Barry's Bay turned out to be a great success, and a local shipwreck well-worth a visit. The Mayflower was a 72 foot long steam-powered paddle wheeler that steamed between a number of communities on Kamineskeg and the Madawaska River, shuttling people and goods at the time before good roads were established in the area. On 12 November 1912, on it's last trip of the season, the Mayflower sunk during a snow storm. This last run was to transport a coffin (with an occupant) from Barry's Bay to Combermere. Nine crew perished, but three survived by strapping themselves to the floating coffin. The vessel sunk in relatively shallow water (25 feet), making it very accessible for diving. Access to the site was through a local resident (a nephew of one of the deceased crew members) that owned a large boat and that knew or the wreck's location. The Mayflower rests quietly on the bottom of Lake Kamineskeg, with the wooden hull intact, and still supporting the boiler, the paddlewheel, and the steam pistons. A colony of rock bass reside in the quarters provided by the hull and the boiler, and a plaque is fixed to the deck at the bow of the vessel, commemorating the tragedy of that cold November day.