



*The Rothesay, near Prescott  
Photo by: Christian Lloyd-Kohls*



*The Conestoga, near Cardinal  
Photo by: Christian Lloyd-Kohls*



*The Weehawk, near Cardinal  
Photo by: Christian Lloyd-Kohls*

# DIVING INTO THE PAST

By Lisa Crandall

Wreck diving may sound like an adventure for exotic locals and warm waters, but the waters of the St. Lawrence also offer multiple unique opportunities to explore Canada's history through the remains of a bygone era.

## THE WEEHAWK

The Weehawk operated as a ferry along the New England coast for many years early in the 20th century. In the 1960s it was purchased and moved to the area by a

## Near Brockville

## THE ROBERT GASKIN

Launched in the late 19th century, this wood barque originally sported three masts. In 1889, she was down to two masts and being

through drivable wrecks of a wide range of boats and ships. The waters between Brockville and Cardinal offer several easy to reach opportunities.

## Near Cardinal

### THE CONESTOGA

It sank in 1922 as a result of a fire in the engine room while awaiting passage at Lock 28 at the Gallop Canal. After all the passengers and cargo were safely evacuated the freighter was flushed out of the lock, coming to rest about 75 feet (23 m) from the shoreline near Cardinal.

The wreck is lying at a depth of only 22–25 feet (6.7–7.6 m), with the top portion of the steeple engine protruding above the river. According to divers, the wooden portions of The Conestoga site are well preserved, however, the top portions of metal are badly ice-damaged and rusted, and are quickly deteriorating.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Shipwrecks in Ontario are the property of the province. Removal of any material is illegal. As the saying goes "take only pictures, leave only bubbles."

local welder who intended to disassemble it and sell the metal as scrap. Circumstances prevented the welder from ever following through on this plan.

Eventually the abandoned Weehawk sank to the bottom of the canal. All that remains of the ship is half of its hull, which is tipped over onto its side, with part of its skeleton sticking out above the water.

It is located just west of Cardinal in the old lock on the Gallop canal, visible from the shore, only a short distance from The Conestoga.

## Near Prescott

### THE ROTHESAY

A 19th Century wooden side wheeler. This vessel originally plied the waters of the St. John River in New Brunswick. She was later relocated to the St. Lawrence River, carrying passengers between Brockville and Montreal.

In the fall of 1889, she collided with the tug Myra and sank at her present location. In 1901 members of the Royal Military College in Kingston blew up the wreck amid ships in a munitions exercise. The Rothesay was rediscovered in 1964.

used as a floating base for efforts to salvage the railroad ferry Armstrong that had sunk.

The wreck sits a half mile downstream from the Brockville waterfront and river focal point, Block house Island and lies perpendicular to the current. A large anchor is located off the bow towards shore about 40 ft. and adds to the site.

## MUSCALLONGE (MUSKIE)

A wooden tugboat from the early 20th century, Muskie, caught fire near Brockville while it was towing a barge from Toronto in 1936. The Captain deliberately ran the burning boat ashore. It broke in two and sank.

The wreck is located three miles east of Brockville, approximately 1 1/2 miles downriver from Block House Island.

This being the year that Canada celebrates its 150th year of confederation, it is a perfect excuse to explore the waterways that functioned as the original highways and byways, especially the St. Lawrence River, which opened up the interior for the early explorers and immigrants and served as the backbone of commerce.