

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

# WARNING

THE LOCATION OF THIS PROPERTY IS RESTRICTED INFORMATION. THIS DOCUMENTATION MAY BE REPRODUCED ONLY WITH THE CHIEF OF REGISTRATION'S PERMISSION.

\* WHEN PHOTOCOPYING OR OTHERWISE REPRODUCING THIS DOCUMENT, BE CERTAIN TO COVER ALL LOCATION INFORMATION, INCLUDING THE ADDRESS BLOCKS, VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION, UTM COORDINATES, MAPS OR ANY SECTIONS IN THE TEXT DESCRIBING LOCATION.

Property Name USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)  
State CALIFORNIA  
County San Francisco  
Reference Number 16000358

# WARNING

This file may contain material that must be withheld because it is restricted under one or more Federal laws and regulations. All or some of those noted below may apply. Additionally, other federal laws and program requirements may limit public access to information in these files.

- 1) The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, Section 304[16 U.S.C. 470w-3(a), confidentiality of the location of sensitive historic resources; 16 U.S.C. 470w-3(b), Access Determination; 16 U.S.C. 470w-3(c), Consultation with the Advisory Council];
- 2) The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, as amended [Public Law 96-95; 16 U.S.C. 470aa-mm; with special attention to Section 9 subsections a and b in their entirety];
- 3) The National Parks Omnibus Act of 1988, Section 207 (1 and 2);
- 4) 36 CFR 800.6(5) and 36 CFR 800.11(c);
- 5) Department of the Interior Departmental Manual (519 DM 2);
- 6) National Park Service Management Policies 2006, Section 5.1.1;
- 7) Director's Order 28, Section 5a;

Information in these files that may be restricted can include, but is not limited to, such things as: locations of archeological sites; locations of features within archeological sites; types of artifacts and their recovered locations; the existence of and/or the locations of excavated and unexcavated human remains; photos, maps and text that includes sensitive archeological or cultural information; specific or general information of a sensitive cultural nature such as information about religious ceremonies; rock art or other cultural items; creation stories; or properties associated with such things.

**Please note that Section 304 (c), [16 U.S.C. 470w-3(c)], 36 CFR 800.6(5), and 36 CFR 800.11 (c) require consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation on reaching determinations of withholding. Further, 36 CFR 800.6(5), and 36 CFR 800.11 (c) specify including the views of the SHPO/THPO, Indian tribes and Native Hawaiian organizations, related to the confidentiality concern in reaching determinations of withholding.**

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

Other names/site number: CONESTOGA, AT-54, SP-1128

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: Offshore

City or town: Offshore - San Francisco State: Offshore - CA County: Offshore - San Francisco

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

x national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C x D

	
Director of Maritime Heritage / FPO Designee	21 April 2016
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>NATIONAL OCEANIC &amp; ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
_____	
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

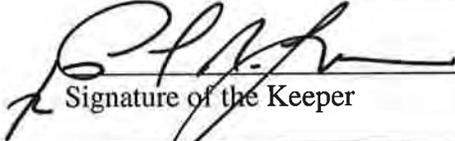
USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
Name of Property

Offshore San Francisco, CA  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

  
Signature of the Keeper

6/10/2016  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
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0

0

objects

1

0

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION – WATER RELATED

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
Name of Property

Offshore San Francisco, CA  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: N/A

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

See Continuation Sheets

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### Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheets

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MARITIME HISTORY

MILITARY

ARCHAEOLOGY - HISTORIC

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1904 - 1921

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

12 November 1903 (launch)

14 September 1917 (acquired by U.S. Navy and converted for military use)

10 November 1917 (commissioned)

March 1921 (sank)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Maryland Steel Company (Sparrows Point, MD)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
Name of Property

Offshore San Francisco, CA  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

See Continuation Sheets

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

See Continuation Sheets

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
Name of Property

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County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

See Continuation Sheets

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Maritime Heritage Program and U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

*\*\*\*Information in section 10 "Geographical Data" including Map 01 and 02 should be redacted or withheld under the National Historic Preservation Act Section 304.\*\*\**

**Acreage of Property**  \_\_\_\_\_

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)



USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
Name of Property

Offshore San Francisco, CA  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Deborah E. Marx, Robert V. Schwemmer and James P. Delgado  
organization: NOAA/Office of National Marine Sanctuaries  
street & number: 1305 East West Hwy Building: SSMC4  
city or town: Silver Spring state: MD zip code: 20910  
e-mail Deborah.Marx@noaa.gov  
telephone: 781-545-8026 ex 214  
date: 4/25/16

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)

Offshore San Francisco, CA

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### Photo Log/Index of Photos

Note: Photos 001 through 011 are embedded within the nomination text and labeled within the text as Figure 001, Figure 002, etc.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Date Photographed: 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA archaeological plan view site map. Photo 001.

1 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix

Date Photographed: 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Port side of the USS CONESTOGA's bow. Photo 002.

2 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix

Date Photographed: 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Starboard hull side of the USS CONESTOGA showing two portholes. Photo 003.

3 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix

Date Photographed: 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA's deck gun and mount. Photo 004.

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Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries

Date Photographed: 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number: One of USS CONESTOGA's boilers. Photo 005.

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USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)  
Name of Property

Offshore San Francisco, CA  
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Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)  
City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco  
County: Offshore – San Francisco State: Offshore - CA  
Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix  
Date Photographed: 2015  
Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA's triple expansion engine. Photo 006. 6 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)  
City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco  
County: Offshore – San Francisco State: Offshore - CA  
Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix  
Date Photographed: 2015  
Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA's towing engine. Photo 007. 7 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)  
City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco  
County: Offshore – San Francisco State: Offshore - CA  
Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix  
Date Photographed: 2015  
Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA's stern. Photo 008. 8 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)  
City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco  
County: Offshore – San Francisco State: Offshore - CA  
Photographer: NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix  
Date Photographed: 2015  
Description of Photograph(s) and number: Side scan sonar image of the USS CONESTOGA from 2009. Photo 009. 9 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)  
City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco  
County: Offshore – San Francisco State: Offshore - CA  
Photographer: Unknown  
Date Photographed: c. 1904 – c. 1917  
Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA during its career in the New England coal trade (Naval History and Heritage Command, US Navy photo # NH 89793). Photo 010. 10 of 13.

USS CONESTOGA, (shipwreck and remains)

Offshore San Francisco, CA

Name of Property

County and State

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: c. 1904 – c. 1917

Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA, shortly after launching being fitted out at the Maryland Steel Company prior to navy service (Mystic Seaport, Steven Land Collection). Photo 011.

11 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1921

Description of Photograph(s) and number: USS CONESTOGA in San Diego prior to its loss (Naval History and Heritage Command, US Navy photo # NH 71299). Photo 012.

12 of 13.

Name of Property: USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

City or Vicinity: Offshore – San Francisco

County: Offshore – San Francisco

State: Offshore - CA

Photographer: Unknown

Date Photographed: 1921

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Photo taken in San Diego of a portion of USS CONESTOGA's crew lost with the tug (Naval History and Heritage Command, US Navy photo #NH 71503). Photo 013.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains) Name of Property
Offshore San Francisco, CA County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

### Section 7 – Description

#### SUMMARY

The shipwreck site of USS CONESTOGA, also known historically as CONESTOGA, SP-1128 or AT-54, is the remains of the converted and militarized tug sunk off San Francisco, California in March 1921. USS CONESTOGA had an overall length of 170 feet long by 29 feet in beam with a draft of 16 feet. The vessel, designed and built originally as a merchant oceangoing tug for the New England coal trade in 1904, was purchased by the U.S. Navy in 1917 and adapted for military service. The tug supported American naval operations during World War I up and down the Atlantic seaboard as well as in the Azores. After World War I USS CONESTOGA operated out of Norfolk, Virginia and was then reassigned to American Samoa in 1920. After arriving in California, USS CONESTOGA was readied for its trip across the Pacific in February and March 1921. It departed Mare Island in Vallejo, California on 25 March 1921 for Tutuila, American Samoa by the way of Hawaii. USS CONESTOGA was never heard from again. The tug sank shortly after exiting San Francisco Bay with the loss of its entire 56 man crew. The USS CONESTOGA is one of 18 U.S. Navy ships lost with all hands between 1780 and 1921 as well as the last of only four U.S. Navy ships lost in peacetime without a trace in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*All Hands* 1958:20-21). USS CONESTOGA's wreck site sits in 189 feet of water 20 nautical miles southwest of Point Bolinas, California and 3.1 nautical miles southeast of Southeast Farallon Island in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Its extant remains consist of its steel hull, framing, deck structures, propulsion components, vessel hardware, military equipment and other associated artifacts. The vessel's longitudinal orientation runs nearly northwest to southeast. The vessel's propulsion machinery and rudder clearly identify the stern at the southeast, and the bow is defined by the hawse holes and anchor windlass at the northwest end.

#### SETTING

USS CONESTOGA sits in an upright orientation with a slight list to starboard and is partially buried in a silt and sand bottom in 189 feet of water 20 nautical miles southwest of Point Bolinas, California and 3.1 nautical miles southeast of Southeast Farallon Island within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. Designated in 1981, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary spanned 1,279-square miles (966 square nautical miles) just north and west of San Francisco Bay, and protected open ocean, nearshore tidal flats, rocky intertidal areas, estuarine wetlands, subtidal reefs and coastal beaches within its boundaries. In 2015, Gulf of the Farallones National Marine Sanctuary expanded north and west of their original boundaries to encompass 3,295 square miles and changed its name to Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)
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Historical records indicate that between 1595 and 2014 there have been 400 vessel and aircraft losses in the waters of the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and efforts are ongoing to locate, document, assess and interpret the sanctuary's maritime heritage resources (NOAA 2014:206). The National Marine Sanctuaries Act mandates the management, interpretation and protection of historical properties within the sanctuaries' boundaries as well as the compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and Federal Archeology Program. Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary regulations prohibit possessing, moving, removing, or injuring, or attempting to possess, move, remove or injure a sanctuary historical resource. USS CONESTOGA lies in a dynamic underwater nutrient rich environment west of the Golden Gate Bridge on the continental slope. The offshore cold water, with temperatures typically in the low to mid-50's F, is fueled by the deeper California current as well as seasonal wind-driven waves and surface currents. The shipwreck's vertical relief is in stark contrast to the surrounding featureless sandy seafloor. Its structure serves as hard substrate for encrusting marine organisms and provides shelter for many species of marine life.

### DESCRIPTION: ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS

USS CONESTOGA's contiguous remains retain the overall shape and size of the vessel as constructed. The shipwreck remains are 170 feet long by 29 feet wide. Depending on sediment buildup and location along the longitudinal axis of the vessel, the site has at least 15 feet of vertical relief above the surrounding sediment as confirmed by a remotely operated vehicle (ROV), side scan sonar and multibeam sonar surveys. The site's longitudinal axis is oriented nearly northwest by southeast with the vessel's bow (at the northwest) and stern (at the southeast) both easily identified by the location of associated fittings and features (Delgado and Schwemmer 2014:2). USS CONESTOGA's rudder and propeller are intact at its stern and the bow's stempost and hawse holes are present and visible. The tug is covered by extensive marine invertebrate growth that obscures parts of the vessel and encases smaller features making them hard to discern. However, multiple surveys of the exterior and accessible interior areas of the wreck have documented much of the vessel and confirm beyond a doubt that this is the wreck of USS CONESTOGA.

Along with retaining the vessel's characteristics as a militarized tug with a steel riveted hull, USS CONESTOGA's intact steel frames continue to hold portions of its decks and frames in place and show the hull's original shape. Although much of the vessel's superstructure, deckhouses and main deck have collapsed, artifacts and constructional elements associated with these structures have accumulated inside the hull. The absence of the upper deck enables an examination of the tug's inside compartments including its engine room. This perspective allows

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National Park Service

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USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)
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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 3

constructional elements, artifacts, and other material culture remains to be viewed and studied in situ without requiring the site to be disturbed (see Figure 001).

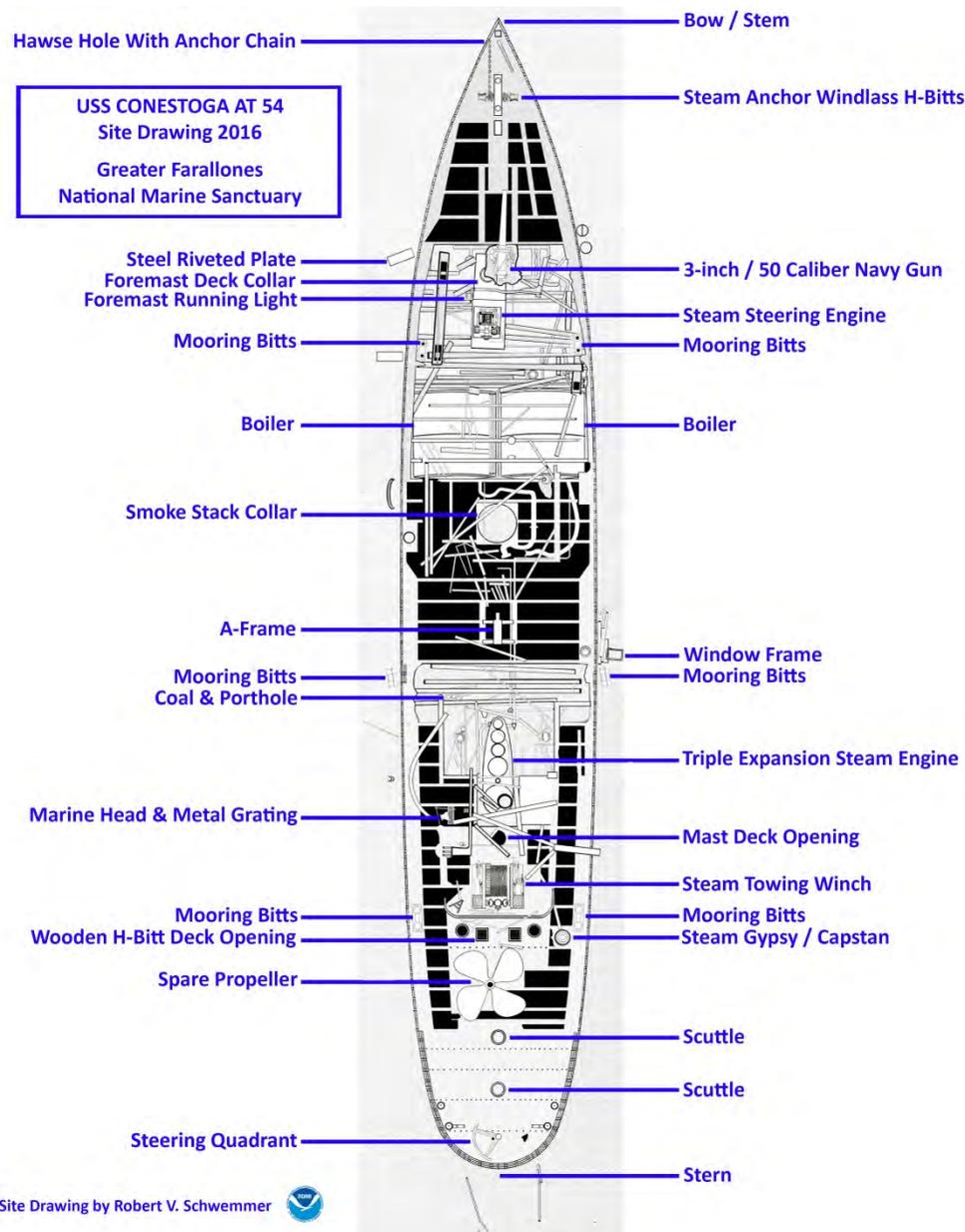


Figure 001. USS CONESTOGA archaeological plan view site map (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

Name of Property

Offshore San Francisco, CA

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

USS CONESTOGA's outer hull includes features such as bulwarks and rub rails. The tug's bulwarks are present but the wooden cap rail is not. Near the bow a chain plate on the starboard side, just below the bulwarks, indicates the position of the foremast. The bulwarks at the stern appear to be damaged with a section missing on the port side. The upper and lower rub rails on both port and starboard sides are present. The upper rub rail runs the length of the hull just below the bulwarks and the lower rub rail runs from the bow for approximately three quarters of the hull length. The wood that was mounted inside the rails is not present. There is evidence of five portholes with glass intact on the port and starboard side of the bow between the rub rails (see Figure 003) (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:3-5).



Figure 002. Port side of the USS CONESTOGA's bow (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).



Figure 003. Two portholes on USS CONESTOGA's starboard hull side (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).

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National Park Service

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USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

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USS CONESTOGA's bow (see Figure 002) is defined by two prominent hawse holes with oval openings and a thicker lip at the bottom indicating that a heavier chain or cable was run through the hawser. Chain was observed running through the port hawse hole up to the forecandle head in association with the windlass. Aft of USS CONESTOGA's stem is the steam windlass, fitted with mooring or towing bits, and a section of chain along with a single stowed anchor. Moving aft the deck beams are in place but the deck plates have collapsed. On the starboard side there are three curved metal braces rising up from the hull edge used to support a raised deck extension forward of the pilothouse. This deck was where the single 3-inch/50 caliber naval gun and its mount sat. The gun deck and the gun are present but have collapsed inside the hull. Evidence of USS CONESTOGA's use as a military asset can be discerned by the presence of that World War I era gun once positioned at its bow (see Figure 004). In the debris pile below the main deck there are four diagnostic features that can be observed in the opening, the naval deck gun along with its mount and spotting scopes, a Williamson patent steam steering engine, an electric navigation light from the mast and two Scotch marine steam boilers spanning the breadth of the hull. Lastly, two pairs of mooring bits lay inside the hull on the port and starboard sides forward of the boilers (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:3-5).



Figure 004. USS CONESTOGA's deck gun and mount (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).

There are fewer intact deck beams as you move aft along the USS CONESTOGA. One unidentified metal "A-frame" structure is located at the centerline amidships forward of the triple expansion engine. The function of this "A-frame" has not been determined. An open area near the hold, forward of the engine, is the coal bunker, with some coal observed within it. Aft of coal bunker is the engine room, which is filled with collapsed deck structure, framing, piping and machinery along with smaller cultural artifacts including portholes, two porcelain marine heads

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
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USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

and a ceramic plate. There is also the through hull fitting for the tug's smoke stack (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:3-5).



Figure 005. One of USS CONESTOGA's boilers (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).

USS CONESTOGA's engine room and triple expansion marine steam engine are visible due to the upper deck structure having fallen inside the hull (see Figure 006). Observed features surrounding the engine are the catwalks, railings and ladders. The engine's aft end is draped with beams and debris but a small ceramic plate and portholes are present lying near the steam cylinders. Near the engine room on the starboard and port side are lifeboat davits that have fallen down from the collapsed upper deck (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:3-5).



Figure 006. USS CONESTOGA's triple expansion marine steam engine (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).

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National Park Service

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USS CONESTOGA (shipwreck and remains)

Name of Property

Offshore San Francisco, CA

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The main deck plates are intact behind the USS CONESTOGA's steam engine where a large steam powered Hyde patent towing winch is situated. The drum is wrapped with cable (see Figure 007). Two large mooring bitts are mounted to the deck on either side of the towing winch. On the starboard side of the mooring bitts there is a steam "gypsy" capstan to assist with line handling. Aft of the towing winch the deck is clear except for two round and two square openings. The round features are mounts for the port and starboard ventilators and the square holes are where the wooden towing "H" bitts were positioned. A four bladed propeller is still stowed on deck as a spare. The stern's bulwarks are damaged but the stern retains some of the raised metal lettering for "CONESTOGA" beneath the marine growth. The remainder of the stern is relatively featureless besides scuttles and their cover plates as well as the steering quadrant with the rudder positioned to port (see Figure 008). Aft of the propeller are scuttles with their covers in place and the steering quadrant which is rotate hard to port, with the collar of the rudder head pushed up through the deck plate. On port and starboard steering quadrant bam are the cable fairleads and remnants of the steering cable (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:3-5).



Figure 007. USS CONESTOGA's steam towing engine (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).

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Figure 008. USS CONESTOGA's stern (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).

Surveys were able to document USS CONESTOGA's rudder, rudder head and propeller under the stern's overhang. The rudder is sharply turned to starboard at almost 90 degrees. The four-bladed propeller is in place and partially buried in the sediment. The overall width of the propeller roughly measures 9 feet. In addition to the main hull, there is debris from the USS CONESTOGA lying on the seafloor. At amidships mooring bitts are located on the port and starboard side along with light gauge riveted plating. On the starboard side there is also a rectangular window frame from the collapsed superstructure (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:3-5).

Unlike many other shipwreck sites off the California coast, USS CONESTOGA's remains were only recently discovered and have probably never been accessed by recreational or technical SCUBA divers due to the site's location and depth. This means that human induced site impacts are minimal and that cultural artifacts associated with the shipwreck most likely remain on the site. Artifacts that were seen on the site during an ROV investigation in 2014 and 2015 included elements that are often recovered by souvenir hunters such as portholes, armament and ceramics. The only anthropogenic impacts observed on the USS CONESTOGA are a small amount of rope caught on the hull and two crab pots close to the bow's starboard side. This derelict gear is associated with recreational or commercial fishing activities.

USS CONESTOGA's wrecking appears to have been a sudden event, perhaps a catastrophic loss. The tug may have been caught in a storm or heavy seas, perhaps while towing, or after having lost its tow after leaving San Francisco Bay. The rudder's position and the rudder head damage indicate the tug may have sunk stern first with its stern impacting the bottom. The

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rudder's position may indicate a turn, or it may have been forced sharply to starboard as the vessel struck the seabed. The anchor's stowed position also suggests the vessel was not anticipating anchoring and was underway at the time of its loss. USS CONESTOGA most likely sank with its superstructure intact and that corrosion and age caused the upper works to collapse into the hull, including the gun, steering engine and portholes (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:5).

CONESTOGA is one of only two "Conestoga class" oceangoing fleet tugs built by the Maryland Steel Company used in World War I. The CONESTOGA along with the USS *Genesee* (ex *Monocacy*, ex SP-1116 and ex AT-55) served overseas with the United States Navy projecting shipping and providing additional fleet services. CONESTOGA is the only extant example today as the USS *Genesee* was scuttled off Corregidor in the Philippines in 1942 and has never been located.

### SITE INVESTIGATIONS

After an exhaustive search by the U.S. Navy following USS CONESTOGA's disappearance in 1921, the tug slowly became a distant memory by the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The tug's exact sinking location was not known and its remains were never located during the expeditions following its sinking. Although the story of USS CONESTOGA was kept alive by historians, it was not until 2009 that the shipwreck was unintentionally discovered during routine hydrographic mapping operations by Fugro Pelagos, Inc., under contract from NOAA's Office of Coast Survey. The seafloor data was of interest for fisheries habitat studies by the state of California's Coastal Conservancy as well as for updating nautical charts around the Farallones Islands. The multi-beam sonar survey in August 2009 onboard the F/V *Pacific Star* documented an uncharted wreck, later identified as the USS CONESTOGA, near Southeast Farallon Island (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:1-2).

In September 2014, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries conducted remotely operated vehicle (ROV) operations off the R/V *Fulmar* on the multi-beam target from 2009 and eventually confirmed its identity as USS CONESTOGA. A total of three dives were made to characterize the wreck site that gathered several hours of video footage and identified several distinct diagnostic features. The data suggested the unknown iron or steel-hull steam-powered oceangoing tugboat to be of late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20th century vintage. Subsequent historical research found no documented iron or steel-hulled steam-powered tugboat losses for this time period, either through accident or deliberate scuttling in the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary or en-route to or coming out of San Francisco. After assessing historical accounts of tugs that departed the Golden Gate and were never again seen, and a detailed analysis of the

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“mystery” tug’s features, the wreck was identified as USS CONESTOGA (Delgado and Schwemmer 2016:1-2).

NOAA’s Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and U.S. Navy returned to USS CONESTOGA in October 2015 onboard the R/V *Fulmar* and conducted ROV and autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) surveys that gathered additional data to better document and assess the shipwreck. The project collected side scan sonar imagery as well as video and still photography to provide information to help managers make informed decisions on resource protection and enforcement, as well as education and outreach opportunities (see Figure 009). The data also enabled archaeologists to identify and characterize the site and help with long term monitoring and assessment from natural and anthropogenic impacts. The site surveys were used to assess USS CONESTOGA for its eligibility for potential listing on the National Register of Historic Places (Schwemmer 2015:1).

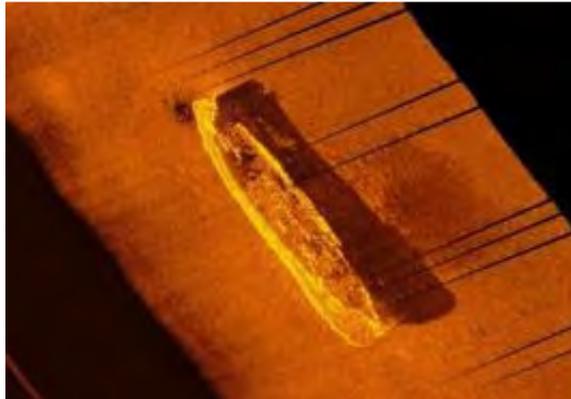


Figure 009. Side scan sonar image of the USS CONESTOGA from 2015 with the bow located at the top of the image (NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and Teledyne SeaBotix).

Since USS CONESTOGA is the only armed ocean-going fleet tug that was possibly sunk in the general area off San Francisco, the identification of the vessel’s towing components and hull measurements combined with naval armament provided enough evidence to positively identify the shipwreck based on the archaeological surveys done in 2014 and 2015.

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### Section 8 – Statement of Significance

#### SUMMARY

USS CONESTOGA was built in 1903 as a commercial oceangoing tug employed in the New England coal trade before being requisitioned by the U.S. Navy in 1917 for military service during World War I. It was converted into an armed tug to support the Allied war effort at home and abroad in the Atlantic. USS CONESTOGA was assigned to the submarine force and was engaged in towing duties along with transporting supplies and serving as an escort for convoys headed to Bermuda and the Azores. For a brief time it was also stationed in the Azores where it helped patrol the surrounding waters for German U-boats, known as the first Battle of the Atlantic. Once the United States entered World War I and Germany extended its *handelskrieg* (“trade war”) to American shores by dispatching U-boats across the Atlantic Ocean, Allied merchant shipping losses mounted. The United States military was caught unprepared and unable to deal with the submarine attacks and its general naval operations needed during war. The limited availability of purpose built naval vessels required the government to search for vessels to purchase from the private sector, like USS CONESTOGA, to fill the gap in the fleet. After World War I USS CONESTOGA was reassigned to be the station ship for the U.S. naval station at Tutuila, American Samoa. After its outfitting in Norfolk, Virginia, the tug transited to San Diego and then on to Vallejo, California for final preparations for its trip to American Samoa via Hawaii. On 25 March 1921, USS CONESTOGA departed Vallejo, passed San Francisco, exited through the Golden Gate and was never heard from again. Events surrounding the tug’s loss with its 56 man crew are not known. USS CONESTOGA is one of 18 U.S. Navy ships lost with all hands between 1780 and 1921 as well as the last of only four U.S. Navy ships lost in peacetime without a trace in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 2009, the shipwreck was located over 20 miles outside San Francisco Bay within the NOAA Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. The archaeological remains of USS CONESTOGA are potentially significant at the national level under National Register of Historic Places Criteria A and D with the period of significance being the year 1904-1921.

USS CONESTOGA qualifies for listing under National Register of Historic Places Criteria A and is significant in the area of Maritime History based upon the vessel’s association with the New England coal trade as well as being an example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century American built oceangoing tug. USS CONESTOGA belongs to a distinct class of oceangoing tugs that facilitated the transportation of coal from the Chesapeake Bay to New England in order to heat homes, light cities and fuel the factories that built the nation. The use of tugs towing schooner barges and barges ushered in a new more efficient way of moving coal and diminished the role of multi-masted coal schooners, once an industry staple. In order for the oceangoing tug to dominate the movement of bulk cargo by water the confluence of a number of design features

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and advancements had to be combined and embraced. This shift in technology could not have occurred without the development of steel hulled tugs equipped with powerful engines and associated towing equipment. Between 1904 and 1917, USS CONESTOGA moved on average 4,500 tons of the “black gold” per trip and exemplifies the height and scale of the New England coal trade at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While USS CONESTOGA was not spectacular or unique and would blend in with the rest of the oceangoing tugs involved in the coal trade, its successful career demonstrated the usefulness and longevity of the tug. The USS CONESTOGA represents the workhorse of the maritime shipping industry that often times gets overlooked but plays a vital role in the flow of commerce.

USS CONESTOGA qualifies for listing under National Register of Historic Places Criteria A and is significant in the area of Military based upon the vessel’s association with United States and Allied military operations during World War I to combat the German U-boat threat in the Atlantic Ocean during 1917 and 1918 as well as the interwar years of 1919 and 1920 that were characterized by entrenchment and expansion. The United States’ unpreparedness for World War I resulted in the need to purchase private vessels, as was done with the USS CONESTOGA, to build up naval capacity. The tug was converted for military use, equipped with minimal weaponry and pushed quickly out to sea to participate in the first Battle of the Atlantic. As with its role in the coal trade, the USS CONESTOGA did not make headlines for involvement in historic events, rather is supported the Allied mission in World War I by ensuring convoys moved safely, by supplying materials for the war effort and patrolling around American bases abroad to protect strategic assets. Even during the interwar period USS CONESTOGA importance was not overlooked as it was chosen to be moved to American Samoa where there was a U.S. naval base with growing prominence in the Pacific. USS CONESTOGA’s history and eventual loss in 1921 serves as a reminder that ordinary naval vessels, such as a tug, served an important role supporting the larger military campaigns around the world during and after World War I. USS CONESTOGA’s shipwreck off California is a physical reminder of a time in military history when the U.S. developed its identity as a world naval power and this could not have been achieved without the infrastructure built and maintained by support vessels including USS CONESTOGA.

USS CONESTOGA qualifies for listing under the National Register of Historic Places Criteria D and is significant in the areas of Archaeology – Historic based upon the archaeological site’s likelihood to yield information import to history. The tug’s remains can provide information about its conversion from a commercial private vessel to a militarized naval asset, life aboard the vessel and information about the vessel’s wrecking event and site formation process. USS CONESTOGA is one of only a handful of ocean going tugs associated with the New England coal trade that have been located and is also undergoing archaeological assessment. The tug is

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one of the best remaining examples of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century American built militarized tug that participated in World War I. A great deal of information can be learned from USS CONESTOGA's archaeological remains in regards to its conversion from a tug built for the New England coal trade that was converted into an armed naval tug. Although some details about what elements were altered during the vessel's conversion and what types of armament were placed aboard USS CONESTOGA are included in historical documents, little information has been located that accurately reveals how these changes were accomplished and how much the vessel was structurally altered. A thorough archaeological study of the site will provide information about how substantial these changes were and will answer the question of how easy it would have been to demilitarize these tugs and return them to fleet operations after the war. Archaeological study of USS CONESTOGA can provide information about its crew as well as what life was like serving aboard this ocean going tug during and after World War I. As none of USS CONESTOGA's crew survived its loss, there are no accounts of the events surrounding its sinking and all the personal effects were left behind. This examination would provide insight into the last hours of USS CONESTOGA and bring to light how and why the tug sank. Lastly, USS CONESTOGA's archaeological remains provide a valuable opportunity to study a shipwreck's site formation processes from its initial wrecking event to its current disposition. The initial discovery of the shipwreck by remote sensing surveys in 2009 and subsequent visual surveys in 2014 and 2015 serve as valuable benchmarks from which to monitor and study the effects of the natural environment upon an early 20<sup>th</sup> century steel vessel. Data obtained from these studies can better equip archaeologist and cultural resource managers with information on shipwreck corrosion rates and the effects of northern Pacific oceanographic forces to guide and prioritize future maritime heritage resources surveys in the NOAA Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary.

### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

USS CONESTOGA was constructed for an entirely different purpose other than for military service. The vessel began its career as the steel hulled oceangoing tug CONESTOGA built for civilian commercial operations in support of the New England coal trade. On 3 June 1903, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company contracted the Maryland Steel Company of Baltimore, Maryland to build them a new tug at their Sparrow's Point Shipyard in Baltimore, Maryland. The contract stated that the new tug was to be similar to Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company's 170 foot long tug *Carlisle* launched by Neafie and Levy Ship & Engine Building Company of Philadelphia in 1901 (Maryland Steel Company; *The Iron Age* 24 January 1901:48). The company's new oceangoing steel hulled tug was to be based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and employed to tow coal barges along the Eastern seaboard. CONESTOGA's keel was laid down in early 1903 as hull #41. Work progressed and the *Marine Review* on 10 September 1903 reported it was being plated up (*Marine Review* 1903:20). It was launched on 12

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November 1903 and delivered to the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company on 6 February 1904. By March it was on the job towing coal schooner barges up and down the coast. A second new tug, the 157.7 foot long *Lenape* built in Camden, New Jersey, also joined the fleet with CONESTOGA in 1904 (*Baltimore American*, 13 November 1903; *Johnson's Steam Vessels* 1917:144).

A *Marine Engineering* article on the CONESTOGA from August 1904 detailed the tug's dimensions and provides a record of its structural and internal details including the engine and deck machinery at the time of its launch. CONESTOGA's overall length was 170 feet and 163 feet 6 inches between perpendiculars. The molded beam was 29 feet and depth of hold 15 feet. The tug's loaded displacement was 950 tons with a registered tonnage of 612 gross and 420 net (*Marine Engineering* 1904:365). The ocean going tug had a riveted steel hull with one deck, a deck house that ran most of the vessel's length, a pilothouse and two masts. The interior hull space from the keel to the turn of the bilge was covered in Portland cement with the floor plates receiving two coats. CONESTOGA's form was plain with a substantially built hull needed to withstand the heavy working forces of pulling barges and navigating with them in tight harbors. CONESTOGA was built in excess of the American Bureau of Shipping specifications making it strong and safe and fit for oceangoing service. Its official number was 200624 with signal letters K.S.V.L. (*Marine Engineering* 1904:366-367).

CONESTOGA's hull was divided by four watertight bulkheads. The lower deck contains the engine room and boilers with the crew's quarters placed in the bow forward of the machinery space. The 92 foot long by 18 foot wide steel deckhouse on the main deck has the dining room, galley and heads along with the officers' quarters. The pilot house sat above the deckhouse near the bow and, in addition to the wheel house, it included the captain's stateroom. The tug was outfitted to run with 19 crewmembers and officers. Two 16 foot long metal lifeboats sat on the upper deck to be used in emergency circumstances (*Marine Engineering* 1904:367).

CONESTOGA's single propeller was driven by one triple expansion steam engine with cylinders of 18, 28 and 45 inches in diameter. The pistons' 30 inch stroke generated 1,000 horsepower. Two 12 foot 6 inch long coal fired Scotch boilers supplied 170 pounds of pressure to the engine. The coal bunkers held 280 tons of coal. A full complement of pumps for fire systems, feed water, sanitation and wrecking purposes were connected the main engine. A smaller donkey boiler supplied steam for auxiliary systems or when the main boiler was not under pressure in port. The tug was supplied with electric lighting throughout by one 80 amp and one 4 amp generator. The deck machinery is comprised of one steam gypsy with a Hyde engine, a Hyde steam windlass, a Williamson steam steering engine and a large towing engine in the deckhouse's aft end. Heavy wooden towing bitts at the stern round out the equipped needed for its role as an oceangoing tug (*Marine Engineering* 1904:367).

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### NEW ENGLAND COAL TRADE

The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company needed additional resources for towing coal barges after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century so it increased its fleet of barges and tug boats. The construction of CONESTOGA was part of that effort to expand its role in the New England coal trade. At the time of the CONESTOGA's launch the company was a major player in the coal market. CONESTOGA's role was straightforward; it would tow coal barges from one port to another with a short turnaround in port for refueling and resupplying before starting another trip. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company was a subsidiary of the Reading Company who traces their roots back to the 1830s when a transportation network was needed to move anthracite coal from the eastern coal fields of Pennsylvania to Philadelphia. Over the next hundred years the company grew into one of the major players in the coal trade with customers throughout southeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware. To reduce production and shipment costs the Reading Company was also involved in coal mining, iron production, canal and sea-going transportation and shipbuilding making it an industry giant. The Reading Company, a holding Company for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company, was one of the early railroad affiliates that became involved in shipping coal by water. The Pennsylvania and Reading Railroad Company also operated under the trade name Philadelphia and Reading Transportation Line. They began operations with small schooners and experimented with steam colliers in 1860s eventually building 14 small iron steamships for the coal trade in 1874. The small size of those early steamers was an impediment and soon invested in building tugs and barges that resulted in the company being one of the largest and longest lasting fleets on the east coast (Morris 1984:73-74).

The waterborne transportation of coal was an essential element of the industrial revolution and after the Civil War coal demand grew to heat homes, fuel the railroads, steamships and factories along with generating power for electric generators and trolleys in New England and beyond. Another new reason why coal was in need was to purify steel in preparation for the construction of buildings. High quality anthracite coal was the favored fuel for industrial and home use and the coal fields in northeastern Pennsylvania was the source for the black gold. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad was one of the first entities to exploit those coal reserves on a commercial scale and to invest in not only mining but shipping and distribution. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was increasing wealth in the United States and that in turn led to an appetite for growth and luxury all fueled by coal (Brouwer 1996:32).

At the time of CONESTOGA's launch in 1903 a transition was under way on what was the most cost effective method of transporting coal. The shift was moving away from using sailing schooners to using unpowered schooner barges and barges towed by oceangoing tugs. The

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downfall of the large multi-masted schooners began with the first use of towed barges in the 1870s in Long Island Sound but it took time for shipbuilders to perfect techniques to strengthen hulls of barges and tugs to withstand ocean stresses. A tug would not just pull one barge, often times it towed three or more requiring a powerful engine and strong deck equipment. Hulls moved away from wood to iron and steel making them sturdier and able to move larger loads (Morris 1984:2, 12). In the 1880s, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company made a shift to focusing on using tugs and barges and starting in 1896, and continuing through 1912, the company would go on to build eleven seagoing tugs, all built on similar hull lines and each named for key Pennsylvania towns and rivers serviced by the railroad (Brouwer 1996:32).

The Reading Company, through the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company, moved coal from its coal fields in interior Pennsylvania to its coal docks on the Delaware River at Port Richmond, Philadelphia where it was loaded on barges and shipped to New England ports from New York to Maine. A 1905 newspaper stated that the Philadelphia and Reading Company owned or controlled over half of the remaining coal fields in the state amounting to 102,000 acres with 2,450,000 tons of coal (*The Wilkes-Barre Record* 14 July 1905). The massive movement of coal centered on a transportation system using rail to move it from the mines east to the water. The coal trade was massive and by 1910 there were 4,418 vessels engaged in the coal trade that cleared from Philadelphia with 50 percent of them being schooner barges. By 1912, almost 5 million tons of coal left Philadelphia to fuel a growing country (Morris 1984:75). Competition to the coal docks at Philadelphia came mainly from Baltimore, Maryland and Norfolk/Hampton Roads, Virginia.



Figure 010. USS CONESTOGA during its career in the New England coal trade (Naval History and Heritage Command, U.S. Navy photo # NH 89793).

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Between 1904 and 1917, CONESTOGA operated in the coal trade towing barges up and down the coast from Philadelphia to ports such as Portland, Maine, Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Boston, Massachusetts (see Figure 010). The barges it moved were mostly schooner barges. A schooner barge is defined as a vessel that was normally towed from port to port by a tug, but differed from a regular barge, in that it had masts and some sails. The sails were reduced in size from a traditional schooner and were there to assist with the passage under tow but also in case of emergencies. The excessive demand for coal spurred on competition between schooners under sail and schooner barges under tow. A schooner barge could have been purpose built or be adapted from older wooden and iron vessels such as schooners, clipper ships, barks, or steamships. The only function for the schooner barge was to fill its hold with coal so any vessel type could be used as long as it was seaworthy enough. Schooner barges were cheaper to build or acquire, required less crew and reliably arrived and departed on a schedule. A tug could tow several schooner-barges in one trip, like a locomotive hauls freight cars, making the investment in the tug and barges cost effective. A major advantage of the tug and barge system was that you only needed to continually employ the crew of the tug unlike with a steamship or sailing vessel. While the coal barges are being loaded or offloaded in port the tug can return back home or pick up another tow and does not need to wait. The high cost tugs were kept constantly employed and only paused long enough in port to refuel and take on water or supplies. As early as the 1880s schooner barges emerged on scene after a worldwide depression caused the layup of many deep water sailing vessels. Businessmen saw an opportunity with the large number of cheap hulls and purchased them for use as schooner barges. The construction of new schooner barges or reuse of older vessels, caught on and the rise of schooner barges in coastal trade resulted in the decline in use of sailing vessels for the coastwise coal shipment along with lumber, phosphate rock and other bulk cargo.

Between 1890 and 1919, the larger Reading Company owned ninety-nine 2, 3, or 4 masted schooner barges with many of them specifically built for them by the Robert Palmer and Son shipyard in Noank, Connecticut. CONESTOGA was not the only tug with the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company used to pull barges, the fleet needed many tugs to meet the market's demand for coal. The company continued to grow their business and even built another tug a year after the CONESTOGA's launch also at Maryland Steel Company yard at Sparrow's Point, the *Monocacy* (hull #57). In 1909 the company owned 15 tugs, 62 barges, two steamers and one schooner (Penton Publishing Co.1910:146-147). In 1915, the Reading Company's fleet was made up of 73 barges and 12 oceangoing tugs (Morris 1984:105, 136-137).

During CONESTOGA's thirteen years with the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company its monotonous routine was covered in the shipping news section of many newspapers. Its arrival and departure along with the names of its barges was chronicled giving a view of its routes and record of what barges it towed. At its homeport in Philadelphia CONESTOGA picked up a tow

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of full coal barges and headed north. Each barge typically carried a load of 1,500 tons of anthracite or bituminous coal and with the numerous tug and barge combos each year it was possible to move over 2,200,000 tons of coal or other dry cargo. It was company policy to limit the maximum number of barges each tug moved to three to alleviate potential problems in transit (U.S. House of Representatives 1912:54-56).

CONESTOGA delivered its barges to ports including Portland, Portsmouth, Boston and Newburyport. It would either drop off all of its barges at a particular city or only drop off one or two and continue on to another port with the remaining ones or even new ones that did not originate in Philadelphia. The return trips would include empty barges or ones filled with other cargo instead of coal. The barges CONESTOGA towed included *Draper*, *Herndon*, *Rutherford*, *Merriam*, *Phoenix*, *Pennypack*, *Lincoln*, *Temple*, *Yardley*, *Oley*, *Enterprise*, *Tunnel Ridge*, *Paxtang*, *Ephrata*, *Maple Hill*, *Burnside*, *Suffolk*, *Hammond* and *Hercules* to name a few. The buyers of the coal CONESTOGA transported are hard to uncover but two newspapers articles did state that the barges were for the Boston and Maine Railroad and Consolidation Coal Company. In 1905, CONESTOGA made the quickest round trip between Philadelphia and Boston in 5 days and 22 hours. This broke the previous record of 6 days, 7 hours and 10 minutes (including loading and discharging of 1,654 tons of coal) made in 1879 by the steamer *Harrisburg*. The newsworthy trip was described in the 13 July 1905 edition of the *Nautical Gazette*.

[CONESTOGA] left Philadelphia 11 a.m. May 9, 1905, with three loaded barges, one Class "A" and two class "D," their aggregate tonnage of cargo being 4,350. Two of these barges were for Boston delivery, and one for Newburyport, about 45 miles further east from Boston. The loaded barges were delivered, two light barges picked up at Newburyport Bar, a third light barge picked up at Dutch Island Anchorage, and the tug Conestoga arrived back at Port Richmond, Philadelphia, with a light tow of three barges at 9 a.m., May 15, having made the round trip, towing three loaded barges out to Eastern ports and three light barges back to home port, in 5 days, 22 hours (*Nautical Gazette* 1905:21).

Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company's main competition while CONESTOGA was still active was from large wooden multi-masted schooners. A tug towing three full barges could transport 4,500 tons per trip while a large coal schooner could carry 3,500 tons. The ability to move more coal at a time combined with a smaller crew and not relying on the wind for power untimely caused the fall of the coal schooner and growth of the tug and barge system.

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DEVELOPMENT OF THE AMERICAN OCEANGOING TUGBOAT

The adaptation of the harbor tug for use in oceangoing routes was the key component of making the tug and barge system profitable to the New England coal trade along with other bulk cargo shipping. "The employment of tugs towing barges coastwise was the inevitable outgrowth of the development of big, seaworthy towboats capable of handling large sailing vessels in exposed waters. Instead of remaining welcome helpmates to the coastal sailing marine, tugs became their bitterest rivals" (Bunting 1971:324). Without a tug design suitable for coastal and oceanic transit the movement of large amounts of good could not have occurred and the growth in cities not accessible to railroads would have been hampered. CONESTOGA is an example of an early 20th century oceangoing tug whose design enabled it to support the coastal shipment of coal as well as support for United States Navy operations during and after World War I.



Figure 011. USS CONESTOGA, shortly after launching being fitted out at the Maryland Steel Company prior to navy service (Mystic Seaport, Steven Land Collection)

The first steam powered tug the *Charles Dundas*, was built in Great Britain in 1802. The tug soon showed its usefulness and the United States started using them in the 1830s. Tugs assisted sailing ships while entering and departing port as well as maneuver when weather and tides were unfavorable. Tug design moved from paddlewheel to propellers in the 1840s and from wood to iron and steel hulls by the turn of the century. Technological advances in propulsion systems followed alongside with hull design. The first tugs used compound, triple and quadruple

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expansion steam engines and then progressed to diesel engines making them stronger, more powerful and easier to operate with less crew (Foster 1993:9)

Tugboats and towboats were the ". . . most numerous and versatile ship type on U.S. waterways" as of 1927, with some 700 of them in New York harbor alone in 1927 (Hardy 1927:145). "Local climatic and geographic conditions are responsible for slight differences in design, powering, etc. but otherwise there is a broad similarity between all American sea and harbor towboats, irrespective of their duty, which distinguishes them from similar vessels in any part of the world and which leaves no possible doubt as to the country of their origin" (Hardy 1927:146).

Oceangoing tug design around the country is characterized by a strongly built bluff hull of either wood, iron or steel with a power engine and deck machinery set up for towing. Tugs typically have a long 8 to 10 foot high deckhouse extending for two-thirds of the length of the hull with a round forward end and a square or round aft end. A tall wheel house sat above the deckhouse to allow the captain and crew a view of their tow and entire surroundings. Behind the houses are a single smoke stack, machinery space and lifeboats. Tug engines are powerful and driven by a large diameter propeller. The triple expansion coal or oil steam engines were eventually replaced by diesel engines to improve efficiency (Hardy 1927:146). The easily recognizable tug profile developed between 1840 and 1880, and has subsequently changed only in small details of proportion and rig.

While all tugboats are roughly of the same design and built to serve as additional motive power for other vessels, they are divided into several types based on their use with small differences reflected in their specific work requirements and operation areas; oceangoing, harbor, fireboats and shallow draft towboats or pushboats. The two main types were oceangoing tugs, like the CONESTOGA, of 150 to 250 feet in length with 2,500 horsepower engines employed to handle tows of barges and long distance offshore towage work and harbor tugs of all sizes up to 105 feet in length with 600 horsepower engines. The harbor tug was the most numerous type of tug under American flag by the 1920s at 80% but it was limited to protected or inland waters and smaller jobs close to home (Hardy 1927:147-148).

The most common way tugs provided assistance to or towed vessels varied but typically it was on the end of a hawser or long cable/rope attached to the tug's stern. Tugs could also secure themselves to the vessel's side for precision work closer to port or in difficult conditions. CONESTOGA was outfitted with a towing engine at its stern. Instead of the tow line being directly secured to a bitt or winch the line went from the tow to a towing engine. This machine maintained constant pressure on the line and helped compensate for sudden tightening and slackening of the towing cable due to wave action, thus preventing undue shocks to both tug and

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tow. A towing engine was crucial for oceangoing tugs that paid out large amounts of line and were subject to heavy seas over long distances.

The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company built 15 almost identical oceangoing tugs between 1896 and 1917. All of them were named for Pennsylvania towns and rivers served by the railroad. The success of the tug and barge combo is evident by the company's large investment in operating its own vessels instead of chartering them.

Name	Builder	Launch Date	Dimensions in feet (length x width)	Fate
<i>Tamaqua</i>	Cramp Shipyard (PA)	1896	158.5 x 29	Unknown
<i>Catawissa</i>	Harlan & Hollingsworth Shipyard (DE)	1897	158 x 29	Scrapped in 2008
<i>Gwynedd</i>	Neafie & Levy (PA)	1896	88.2 x 19	Unknown
<i>Gettysburg</i>	Harlan & Hollingsworth Shipyard (DE)	1898	158 x 29	Scrapped
<i>Valley Forge</i>	Harlan & Hollingsworth Shipyard (DE)	1898	158 x 29	Unknown
<i>Swatara</i>	Neafie & Levy (PA)	1899	157 x 29	Scrapped 1936
<i>Cheltenham</i>	Neafie & Levy (PA)	1899	84.3 x 19	Unknown
<i>Ogontz</i>	Neafie & Levy (PA)	1899	84.3 x 19	Unknown
<i>Lykens</i>	Neafie & Levy (PA)	1899	170 x 29	Scrapped 1934
<i>Penllyn</i>	Neafie & Levy (PA)	1901	86.3 x 20.6	Unknown
<i>Carlisle</i>	Neafie & Levy (PA)	1901	157 x 29	Scrapped 1940
<i>Conestoga</i>	Maryland Steel Co. (MD)	1903	170 x 29	Sunk off CA 1921
<i>Lenape</i>	John Dialogue & Son (NJ)	1904	157.7 x 29	Unknown
<i>Monocacy</i>	Maryland Steel Co. (MD)	1905	158 x 29.1	Sunk off Philippines 1944
<i>Germantown</i>	Harlan & Hollingsworth Shipyard (DE)	1912	158.8 x 30.1	Scrapped in 1936

Table 1. The 15 tugs built for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company between 1896 and 1917 (*Johnson's Steam Vessels* 1917:144; Colton 2015)

CONESTOGA, as with most tugs, served uneventfully except for a few mishaps, such as grounding on 18 December 1904 that disabled the rudder stock and damaged the steering gear after hitting a rocky shoal off Fishers Island, New York while towing three coal-laden barges from Philadelphia to Boston. One of its barges, the 3-masted schooner barge *Alburtis*, was fatally stranded while the other two cleared the island and survived the ordeal (*The [New London] Day*, 19 December 1904:6). Two years later CONESTOGA collided with the steam trawler *Spray* near Boston in August 1906 while towing three barges. The tug suffered no significant damage to its strongly built steel hull besides a few dents (*Boston Journal* 6 August 1906).

### WORLD WAR I AND THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The outbreak of World War I on 28 July 1914 did not affect CONESTOGA at first. The fighting was away from America's shores and there seemed to be no direct danger to CONESTOGA or

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the New England coal fleet. This would change when Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare in early 1917 and the United States entered the war with the Allies on 6 April 1917. Germany's U-boats now became the greatest threat to merchant and naval ships in the Atlantic and their actions came at a time when the United States military was unable to defend against it. The American military had shipped its men, supplies and naval forces to Europe leaving home waters vulnerable. Merchant shipping were being sunk by German submarines and there was little Allied forces could do to combat the threat. The first Battle of the Atlantic spurred the U.S. military to quickly assess its strategies and orchestrate a massive shipbuilding endeavor to support naval operations abroad. Programs to quickly build destroyers and submarines commenced, along with Emergency Fleet-built cargo ships to carry supplies across the Atlantic. Another deficiency the Navy required addressing was fleet auxiliaries, those vessels used for moving and tending other ships, harbor duties and moving naval fuel, ammunition and supply barges. This need was filled with the acquisition of private vessels like CONESTOGA, a large well-built, well-maintained, and capable tug that could be used for a variety of duties.

By 1917, the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company was operating a large number of oceangoing tugs including CONESTOGA. The United States looked to shipping companies for a variety of vessels to supplement the fleet until new ones could be launched. On 14 August 1917, the Secretary of the Navy notified the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company that the government would acquire three of its tugs to use for the war effort. The United States Navy purchased CONESTOGA on 14 September 1917 for \$315,000, outfitted it for naval service at the Philadelphia Navy Yard and commissioned it the USS CONESTOGA (SP-1128) on 11 November 1917 (United States Navy Dept. 1920:270-271).

The main addition to USS CONESTOGA to make it ready for wartime "distant service" was a single 3-inch 50 caliber naval gun mounted on a deck forward of the wheel house. The deck it sat on was added to accommodate the gun and was not there during its civilian use. It also received two .30 caliber machine guns. After the work at the Philadelphia Naval Yard was completed USS CONESTOGA was moved to New York Navy Yard for additional overhaul and repairs. A survey of the tug found that there were several repairs that needed to be completed before it was fit for duty including new boiler tubes, realignment of the tail shaft, refurbishment of the thrust, main, crank pin and eccentric strap bearings and overhaul of the generator (United States Navy Dept. 1920:270-271; Navy Yard, Philadelphia memo 31 October 1917; U.S. Naval Radio Service message 19 January 1918; Bureau of Ordnance 3 October 1917).

Two other oceangoing tugs were also purchased for military use from the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company at the same time as CONESTOGA, the *Monocacy*, commissioned as the USS *Genesee* (SP-1116) and *Lykens*, commissioned as the USS *Lykens* (SP-876). The tugs were to be used as minesweepers or tugs in overseas duties (*Shipping* 21 December 1918:23).

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The acquisition of CONESTOGA and other tugs was in response to the anti-submarine efforts needed to protect merchant shipping.

The United States government secured tugs for military use through construction contracts for new ones or a requisition purchase of civilian tugs. The civilian tugs were either considered temporary and turned back over to civilian use after the war or considered permanent and were kept by the government for post war use. The Navy ordered the construction of 25 new Allegheny class oceangoing tugs between May 1917 and June 1918, AT 19 through AT-40. They roughly measured 156 feet in length and only AT-19 and AT-20 had been launched prior to war's end. Through a requisition purchase the next group of tugs, including USS CONESTOGA, was used not only during World War I but afterwards during the interwar period. Between May 1917 and June 1918 the Navy acquired seven "permanent" ocean going tugs as follows: one Delaware class (AT-53), 2 Conestoga class (AT-54 and AT-55), one Lykens class (AT-56), one Sea Rover class (AT-57), one Undaunted class (AT-58) and one Challenge class (AT-59). The tugs ranged from 128 to 170 feet long. There were an additional four "permanent" oceangoing (AT) tugs that were re-classified after the war as district or harbor tugs (YT). The final group of oceangoing tugs was those purchased by the government on a temporary basis for wartime use only. Seven of these ocean going tugs were not retained in service beyond early 1920. Due to the need for oceangoing tugs during World War I, the military pushed the boundaries for what was considered suitable for ocean operations and they operated smaller tugs ranging from 108 to 125 feet in length as oceangoing tugs. There were six of these smaller tugs with three of them sold back for civilian use post war, one that continued to operate with the Navy until 1946 and one that sank in 1918. In total, the Navy employed 49 oceangoing tugs during World War I to support fleet or convoy operations around the globe (Roberts 2016).

As of January 1918, the status of the Navy tugs were as follows, "Three in route, 1 with submarines, 2 bound for Gibraltar for assignment to the Italian Government, 2 escorting submarine chasers, 6 ready at New York, 1 en-route to Hampton Roads from Puget Sound, 6 fitting out for submarine chaser escort duty, 9 with home fleet, 1 in Haiti, 10 in navy yard, but noted suitable for high-sea work, 2 noted to be icebound in the St. Lawrence" (U.S. Congress Hearings 1921:83). USS CONESTOGA was most likely included in the 6 ready at New York. For a brief period in early 1918 the tug was employed to assist with duties as a dispatch boat around New London, Connecticut and Newport, Rhode Island before being sent abroad.

During World War I USS CONESTOGA was assigned to the submarine force and participated in towing and escort duties along the Atlantic coast along with transporting military supplies and guns under the command of Lieutenant (junior grade) Carl Olsen, United States Naval Reserve Forces (USNRF). Its crew consisted of 5 wardroom officers and 25 men (United States Navy Dept. 1920:270). The tug also provided convoy escort services to submarine chasers traveling

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from New London, Connecticut to Bermuda and the Azores off Portugal (Navy Department 1969; *Los Angeles Herald* 20 May 1921). The convoy system was the main defense against German U-boats and while it did not stop or defeat the threat it was still an effective action to reduce the crisis and decrease the number of ships sunk. The convoy system grouped military and merchant vessels together during transit between ports and they were accompanied by armed escorts that provided additional protection. Military vessels of all sizes were sent as convoy escorts and proved to be the best way to protect shipping. USS CONESTOGA's role as an escort was not a high profile job but it was an essential one to allow the flow of Allied goods in and out of the United States and Europe.

Once in the Azores USS CONESTOGA cruised with the American Patrol Detachment (Navy Department 1969). The American Patrol Detachment was a naval unit assigned to patrol and police the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico during World War I. The unit's main goal was to guard American and Allied merchant shipping from German submarines (Venzon 2012:172). The other Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Co. tugs, USS *Genesee* and USS *Lykens*, followed in similar paths during the war as USS CONESTOGA. USS *Lykens* performed towing duties along the Atlantic to Bermuda and the Azores while USS *Genesee* was homeported in Queenstown, Ireland in 1918 and then operated off the Azores, France and in the Mediterranean in 1919 (Roberts 2016). The status of Navy tugs in February 1918 included 12 in British waters, 6 in French waters, 2 in the Azores, 16 in the Mediterranean (U.S. Congress Hearings 1921:86).

USS CONESTOGA's deployment to Bermuda and the Azores was both to escort vessels and transport supplies to the British base at Bermuda, but also in response to the establishment of U.S. Naval base 13 at Ponta Delgada on the island of São Miguel after the United States' entry into World War I. The Azores, a group of nine islands in the North Atlantic, including São Miguel, located 850 miles west of Portugal, were (and are still) a strategic point in the route to the Mediterranean. The U.S. military set up a base in the Azores to forestall any German attempt to establish a submarine refueling base there to limit their reach in the Atlantic. The U.S. naval forces were also there to patrol the waters and keep them clear so that Allied submarine, subchasers, and other craft can use the port for mid-ocean coaling and obtaining supplies while en-route to British or French waters. Some of the American destroyers had a 2,000 mile working radius and required a fuel-oil base in Newfoundland and the Azores to help them cross the Atlantic. ". . . had it not been for the Azores either on our eastward bound expeditions in sending our small craft across, or westbound, when the armistice was completed and we were sending them home, it would have been a very difficult problem for use to have accomplished at all" (U.S. Congress Hearings 1921:258, 1243, 1453).

The U.S. presence in the Azores was also key for naval aviation. During the war the base housed Marine Corps flying boats and seaplanes for anti-submarine work and was part of an American

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push into the Mediterranean. The base consisted of R-6s (Curtiss twin-float seaplanes), N-9s (single-engine, single-float), plus HS-2 flying boats along with a few hundred infantrymen, artillery, support ships and submarines. The U.S. Marine Corps 1st Aeronautical Company at Ponta Delgada was the first completely equipped and trained American aviation unit to serve overseas in World War I. Starting early in 1918, the company flew anti-submarine patrols and tracked merchant shipping in the Atlantic (United States Marine Corps Association and Foundation).

A U.S. base at neighboring Gibraltar along with the stationing of a small force of four K-class American submarines at the Azores provided a base for forward operations against enemy submarines. While there was not much wartime action in the Azores, with U-boats only sinking less than a half dozen ships off the islands, the Allied footprint provided a vital way point to Europe and North Africa that was reinforced and used again during World War II. At the end of World War I on 11 November 1918, USS CONESTOGA was still attached to the U.S. Naval base No. 13 in the Azores and continued with escort and towing duties until being repositioned back to the United States in mid-1919.

After war's end there was the opportunity to reflect on the United States' efforts including successes and failures. Congressional hearings were held before the Senate sub-committee of the committee on naval affairs in 1920 to discuss lessons learned. Rear Admiral William S. Sims stated that the Navy made multiple requests for a constant supply of oceangoing tugs during the war because of the urgent need for them in the submarine zone. It was felt that if torpedoed or mined ships could beach themselves or be rescued quickly then the tugs could salvage them and they could be repaired and put in service again. This would be a quicker process instead of building new ships and a cheaper option. Sims continued on to write that after a year of being entered in World War I only four tugs had been sent and two of them had been specifically allotted to Italy. Eventually, nine more tugs were sent but none before 23 April 1918. The response to this demand for tugs was the requisition of a dozen civilian tugs including USS CONESTOGA as there was insufficient number of existing tugs to meet the war needs (U.S. Congress Hearings 1921:4, 80, 82). Overall it was felt that,

Apart from the tremendous value of tugs as an auxiliary antisubmarine craft (through their ability to thwart submarine losses by towing ships in before sinking), we had to have them for many other essential purposes—for example, moving our naval ships about in harbors, handling barges, assisting the Army in discharging our troops in harbors without docks, etc. . . The supply was always less than the demand (U.S. Congress Hearings 1921:86).

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USS CONESTOGA arrived back in New York on 26 September 1919 as was assigned to harbor tug duty in the 5<sup>th</sup> naval district at Norfolk, Virginia. The tug served that role for a year, assisting the naval yard with towing services as well as general fleet support. In July 1920, USS CONESTOGA was part of a fleet wide re-classification system of giving hull numbers to all vessels so it in turn was assigned hull AT-54. AT was the designation giving to oceangoing tugs. The tug's assignment in Norfolk was short as it was again ordered to a new duty area but this time in the far Pacific, the naval station at Tutuila, American Samoa. It was designated as station ship Samoa with its home yard being Pearl Harbor, Hawaii for service and repairs. To ready the tug for its trip to Tutuila, via California and Hawaii, it underwent alternations and fitting out at Norfolk. The work to prepare USS CONESTOGA included getting the tug in good material condition with a suitable battery power along with salvage equipment to meet the Tutuila station needs. Two 7 ½ kilowatt generating sets were installed to provide adequate onboard power. The base in Samoa also requested that USS CONESTOGA be fitted with an appropriate cabin and two staterooms, equipped as Governors quarters, for entertaining distinguished officers that frequently visit the station. Its role in Samoa was to be a general tug boat and utility boat at the naval station which included a variety of tasks including towing, salvage and general harbor work. It was relief for the tug USS *Fortune* (Chief of Naval Operations memorandum 17 January 1920; Navsta Tutuila memorandum 3 March 1920; Navsta Norfolk memorandum 21 July 1920; Secretary of the Navy memo 17 July 1920).

The U.S. naval base in Tutuila, American Samoa was an important strategic location in the Pacific for American military forces during the interwar period. USS CONESTOGA was assigned there to assist the station's everyday operations. The base, located on Tutuila Island near Pago Pago, dates back to 1900 and was the, "only United States naval establishment south of the equator" (Thompson 1988:sec.8 pp.1). The base's early years was comprised of building up the island's infrastructure to support it being a coaling location to allow naval ships a place to stop and refuel and resupply while steaming in the Pacific. Pago Pago has a natural deep-water harbor with one of the most sheltered anchorages in the region. American Samoa was a vital location on the supply route from the U.S. and Hawaii to Australia and New Zealand. Eventually during World War II, the naval base at Tutuila became a training and staging location for the Allies' South Pacific campaigns (Thompson 1988:sec.8 pp.6). The remains of the U.S. Naval station at Tutuila are listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district because of its significance in the area of Government, Pacific Islander and Military/U.S. Navy.

USS CONESTOGA departed Norfolk on 1 December 1920 for its passage to the Pacific. Its movement orders from the Commandant of the Fifth Naval District to the tug's commanding officer were as follows, ". . . take in tow U.S. Navy 500 ton steel coal barge #468, and proceed with the vessel under your command to Samoa, via Panama Canal, San Diego, Cal., and

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Honolulu.” The tug was also ordered to stop in Guantanamo, Cuba on its way where it would load fueling equipment for barge #8 onboard barge #468. Historical documents state that the coal barge was to eventually be dropped off in San Diego or Honolulu before continuing its trip (Commandant Fifth Naval District memorandum 21 September 1920; Commandant Fifth Naval District memo 16 November 1920; OPNAV memorandum 4 December 1920).

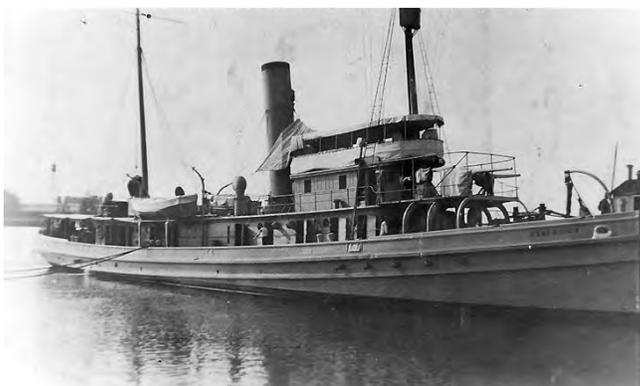


Figure 012. USS CONESTOGA in San Diego prior to its loss (Naval History and Heritage Command, U.S. Navy photo # NH 71299).

### USS CONESTOGA's DEMISE

USS CONESTOGA arrived in San Diego, California on 7 January 1921 and it was found that the tug needed additional repairs and modifications before steaming across the Pacific. During the forty-two day layover in San Diego photographs of the crew serving aboard the USS CONESTOGA were taken, likely by a local photographer that sold souvenir albums to the crew. On 17 January 1921, USS CONESTOGA departed San Diego for Mare Island Navy Yard in Vallejo, California, while the USS *Whippoorwill* also departed San Diego for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii with the navy barge No. 468 in tow. On 21 March 1921, USS CONESTOGA's status was reported as completed by the Mare Island Navy Yard Commandant's Office correspondence to the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet in their weekly status report. The deck log of the USS *Dreadnaught* on 25 March 1921 reported USS CONESTOGA was moored along the sea wall at berth J. USS CONESTOGA then departed at 9 a.m that same day. The navy orders stated USS CONESTOGA was to sail from Mare Island for Pearl Harbor, Hawaii and then on to American Samoa. It was under the command of Lieutenant Ernest Larkin Jones with a crew of 55 men (see Figure 011). Lieutenant Jones had been commander of the tug since March 1920. USS CONESTOGA exited San Francisco Bay and was never heard from or seen again. It is unclear if the tug was towing a barge or not as naval records are conflicting on this question.

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From the Confidential Correspondences of the Navy 1919-1927 it was reported on May 2, 1921, "Captain Marshall stated that she had orders to tow a lighter to Hawaii and then go on from there by herself," whereas the record on May 5, 1921, states "For information, Capt. Marshall stated that the *Conestoga* had no barge in tow when she left Mare Island (Schwemmer 2016:2-3)

USS CONESTOGA was outfitted with a radio but there was never a distress call or any call made by the tug. The radio's sending radius was 150 miles and the receiving radius was 1,200 miles (Assistant for Material memo 5 May 1921). The U.S. lightship *San Francisco* (LV 70), stationed outside the Golden Gate at the approaches to the main ship channel into San Francisco, reported that the weather at 8:00 am on 25 March 1921 was clear skies with choppy to rough seas, a temperature of 54 degrees and wind direction west northwest at force 6 (strong breeze over 28 -34 miles per hour) with clear blue skies. By 4:00 pm the light vessel crew recorded the conditions as clear blue skies with a strong gale blowing and rough seas. The temperature was 54 degrees with the wind direction west northwest at force 8 (fresh gale over 40-48 miles per hour). By 8:00 pm the conditions had improved slightly with a moderate gale, wind direction west northwest at force 7 (moderate gale over 34-40 miles per hour) and temperature of 52 degrees. The last record at midnight noted no change in the sea state from the 8:00 pm report with wind direction west northwest at force 7 and a temperature of 50 degrees. The lightship *San Francisco* recorded 18 vessels passing it on 25 March but only mentioned one by name and it was not the USS CONESTOGA (LV-70 *San Francisco* deck log 25 March 1921).

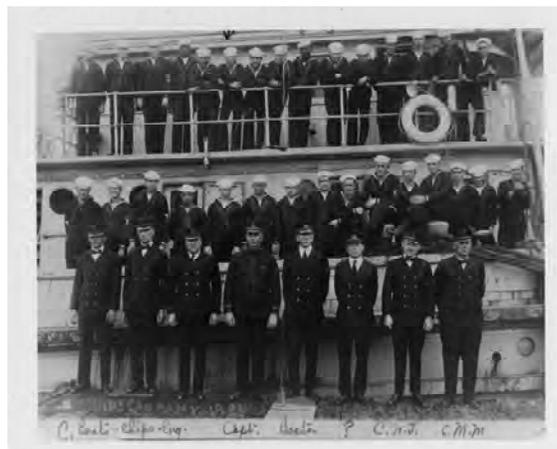


Figure 013. Photo take in San Diego in 1921 showing a portion of USS CONESTOGA's crew lost with the tug (Naval History and Heritage Command, U.S. Navy photo # NH 71503).

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It is plausible that, based on the known location of USS CONESTOGA's archaeological remains, the tug ran into trouble shortly after leaving the Golden Gate, likely due to heavy seas while crossing the San Francisco Bay bar. USS CONESTOGA in a probable sinking condition headed toward the shelter of the Farallon Islands where there was a lighthouse and a US Navy radio station but suddenly sank with all hands. The vessel seems to have sunk stern first and the rudder is sharply turned to starboard.

When USS CONESTOGA failed to reach Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, by its expected arrival date of 5 April no alarm was raised at first since it was a long trip between California and Hawaii. It was not until later in April that it was clear there was something wrong and the tug had not been sighted or heard from. News began to report fear about the tug being lost and efforts to find USS CONESTOGA were extensive. The Navy and Air Force mounted two large air and sea searches, one off Hawaii and one off the Mexican coast near San Diego (following the discovery of a battered lifeboat with a letter "C" attached to it those waters) but no traces of the tug were found. Fifteen surface vessels, including cruisers and destroyers, and all available aircraft from Pearl Harbor along with over forty surface vessels and aircraft from the Pacific fleet participated in the operations. Newspapers reported false sightings of USS CONESTOGA such as the *Sacramento Union* who wrote that the Navy received word the tug was riding out a gale 500 miles from Hawaii when last spotted in early April (*Sacramento Union* 3 May 1921). Rumors like this contributed to the search's focus off Hawaii. The submarine R-14 even joined the search for USS CONESTOGA. While 150 miles southeast of Hilo, Hawaii the sub ran out of oil for the engines causing its crew to fix an emergency makeshift foresail mast attached the loading king post with bunk frames for the top boom and mainsail from the radio mast. The foresails were made from hammocks and mainsail from blankets sewed together to sail the submarine back to Hilo, Hawaii (*Los Angeles Herald* 17 May 1921; *Sacramento Union* 18 May 1921; Deck log USS R-14).

Unfortunately, the search efforts were nowhere near the tug's sinking location. The only report of debris near San Francisco came in May when a woman found a life preserver on Moss Beach near Monterey, California with USS CONESTOGA written on it. She reported the find to Admiral Halstead in San Francisco but the District Commandant responded to this letter by stating that the life preserver probably fell overboard on the tug's trip north to Vallejo. There was no follow up efforts to ascertain more information about the life preserver (Hamilton letter 27 May 1921; District Commandant memorandum June 1921).

By 28 May 1921, over 300,000 square miles had been swept by sea and air but the two month long exhaustive search did not turn up any information. The USS CONESTOGA's loss occasioned probably the largest search undertaken by the U.S. Navy for a missing ship up to that

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point. In the end the tug was declared lost at sea on 30 June 1921 and stricken from the Navy List (Navy Department 1969:61; *Sacramento Union* 29 May 1921).

### CONCLUSIONS

USS CONESTOGA is one of 18 U.S. Navy ships lost with all hands between 1780 and 1921 as well as the last of only four U.S. Navy ships lost in peacetime without a trace in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (*All Hands* 1958:20-21). Its disappearance was national news for many weeks and was covered in newspapers around the country. Up until NOAA survey located the USS CONESTOGA in 2014, the tug's whereabouts remained one of the top "unsolved" mysteries in the history of U.S. naval peacetime losses. USS CONESTOGA represents three different aspects of American history, the development and use of the ocean going tug that filled many roles in times of peace and war, the dependence on maritime commerce to provide fuel for the industrial revolution and growing United States military presence around the globe during and after World War I.

Prior to World War I almost all navy ocean going tugs were acquired from the private sector, such as USS CONESTOGA, with only 48 assigned AT numbers when the numbering system was instituted in 1920. USS CONESTOGA was given the number AT-54 and at the time of its loss there had only been five more ocean going Navy tugs assigned AT classification. Of those 49 AT tugs (the numbering system began at AT-10) their disposition is as follows: 26 were sold between the 1920s and 1940s, 8 were scrapped between the 1930s and 1950s, 6 were cancelled during construction in 1918, 3 were wrecked (including USS CONESTOGA), 2 were scuttled, 2 were transferred to the Maritime Commission for disposal, 1 was struck from the Navy register and 1 transferred to the Coast Guard. In addition to USS CONESTOGA, the other two AT tugs wrecked were the *Mohave* (AT-15) that grounded off Nantasket, Massachusetts in 1928 and then sold as a hulk and the *Koka* (AT-31) grounded in 10 feet of water near San Clemente Island, California in 1938 and abandoned. USS CONESTOGA is the only "AT" tug completely lost and not accessible for salvage or other anthropogenic impacts (Colton 2016).

Despite the large number of oceangoing tugs built a relatively small number have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Currently, there is no similar vessel type to the USS CONESTOGA listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including no oceangoing tugs used in World War I, either in the form of a shipwreck or floating historic vessel. The closest comparable property to the USS CONESTOGA listed on the National Register of Historic Places is the 158 foot long steel hulled oceangoing tug *Catawissa* built in 1898 for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad Company for towing coal barges along the east coast. The tug was later acquired by the Navy in 1943 where it served for one year before being sold back into commercial service where is used to clean oil tanker tanks until 1995. The *Catawissa* (ex *New York*, ex *CGR-1902*, ex *USS Esselen* (AT-14), ex *ATO-147*, ex *Beth Tank Ship No.2*, ex *Tank*

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*Master No. 1*) was listed on the National Register in 1996 but scrapped in 2008 and no longer exists. *Catawissa* would be of a similar type to USS CONESTOGA's early career in the coal trade but not comparable to its later involvement with the Navy.

Name	National Register or Landmark	Shipwreck or Vessel	Launch Date	Length (ft)	Hull	Use Type	Military Use
<i>Sport</i>	Nat Reg	Shipwreck	1873	57	steel	Inland	no
<i>T.H. Camp</i>	Nat Reg	Shipwreck	1876	64	wood	Inland	no
<i>Ottawa</i>	Nat Reg	Shipwreck	1881	151	wood	Inland	no
<i>Arthur Foss</i>	Landmark	Vessel	1889	111.6	wood	Ocean	WWII
<i>Edna G.</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel	1896	110	steel	Inland/Harbor	WWI
<i>Catawissa</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel (scrapped)	1897	158	steel	Ocean	WWII
<i>Admiral Dewey</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel	1900	95.7	wood	Harbor	no
<i>Urger</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel	1901	73	steel	Canal	no
<i>Baltimore</i>	Landmark	Vessel	1906	84.5	wrought iron	Harbor	no
<i>Hercules</i>	Landmark	Vessel	1907	151	steel	Ocean	no
<i>Standard Oil Co. No. 16</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel	1907	100	steel	Harbor	no
<i>Sandman</i>	Nat Reg	Shipwreck	1910	59	wood	Harbor	no
<i>K. Whittelsey</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel (scrapped)	1929	91	steel	Harbor/Canal	no
<i>Luna</i>	Landmark	Vessel	1930	100	wood	Harbor	WWII
<i>W.O. Decker</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel	1930	52	wood	Harbor	no
<i>Huntington</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel (scrapped)	1933	109	steel	Harbor	no
<i>Chancellor</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel	1938	76.7	steel	Canal	no
<i>City of Oakland</i>	Landmark	Vessel	1940	100	steel	Harbor	WWII
<i>Nash</i>	Landmark	Vessel	1943	114	steel	Harbor/Ocean (U.S. Army)	WWII
<i>Major Wilbur Fr. Browder</i>	Nat Reg	Vessel	1943	115	Steel	Harbor/Ocean (U.S. Army)	WWII

Table 2. Tugs listed on the National Register of Historic Places or as a National Historic Landmark (National Park Service).

There are 14 tugs listed on the National Register of Historic Places and 6 listed as a National Historic Landmark. Of those three have been scrapped and no longer exist but they have not been removed from the National Register yet. Sixteen properties are floating vessels and four are shipwrecks. Military use is represented in the 20 properties but the only one that has use during World War I is the *Edna G.* and the tug operated in inland waters and harbors. The four historic

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tugs considered oceangoing, in addition to the scrapped *Catawissa*, are *Arthur Foss*, *Hercules*, *Nash* and *Major Wilbur Fr. Browder*. The tug *Arthur Foss* was built in 1889 in response to the Alaskan gold rush. It later towed lumber and grain laden ships along the West Coast and in the Columbia River until being requisitioned into the Navy during World War II where it was sent to Wake Island in the Pacific. In 1946 it returned to private ownership and remained in service until 1970 when it was purchased by Northwest Seaport who today operated the tug as a museum ship in Washington. The tug *Hercules* was built in 1907 for service towing lumber ships along the West Coast and out to Hawaii. It also pulled railroad car floats across San Francisco Bay in the 1950s until being acquitted as a museum ship in 1975. It is now part of the San Francisco Maritime National Historic Park collection. The tug *Nash* was built in 1943 for the Army and classified as a LT class large Army tug. It participated in World War II and the Normandy landings in 1944. After the war it returned to the U.S. and assigned to the Army Corps of Engineers and maintained the St Lawrence Seaway. It is now owned by the H. Lee White Marine Museum in New York. Lastly, *Nash's* sister ship, *Major Wilbur Fr. Browder*, was built in 1943 and also participated in the D-Day invasion before joining the Army Corps of Engineers. In 1947 it was sold to private interested who operated it on the Great Lakes until its current role as a museum ship in Wisconsin. None of the previous four oceangoing tugs participated in World War I. The Historic Naval Ships Association website lists one additional surviving ocean going tug that was involved in World War I, the *John Purves*, but it is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1919 and served as a temporary floating radio station for the Navy in the Caribbean during the war. It then moved to private hands and served on the Great Lakes before being pressed into the Navy again. During World War II it was a floating weather station in the Aleutian Islands, Alaska. Post war the tug came back to the Great Lakes where it is a museum ship in Wisconsin today (Colton 2016).

USS CONESTOGA would fill in the gap in the National Register of Historic Places and represent a steel hulled commercial oceangoing tug used in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as a steel hulled oceangoing tug employed by the Navy during and after World War I to support military operations at home and abroad. It is significant to United States' maritime history, military heritage and the archaeological record at the national level.

### WRECKSITE MANAGEMENT

USS CONESTOGA is located outside of California state lands and waters approximately 20 nautical miles southwest of Point Bolinas, California and 3.1 nautical miles southeast of Southeast Farallon Island off the coast of California and within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. "Pursuant to the property clause of Article IV of the U.S. Constitution, the United States retains title indefinitely to its sunken State craft unless title has been abandoned or transferred in the manner Congress

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authorized or directed.”<sup>1</sup> “[T]itle to a United States or foreign sunken State craft, wherever located, is not extinguished by passage of time, regardless of when such sunken State craft was lost at sea.”<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. Government has retained title and ownership of the USS CONESTOGA, which, as a state craft, is subject to sovereign immunity in accordance with international and U.S. law. Since the wreck is a sanctuary resource, the primary authority for its protection is the National Marine Sanctuaries Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 1431 *et seq.*) as well as the implementing regulations and management plan for the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary. The USS CONESTOGA is also subject to the provisions of a number of federal laws and policies for historic preservation including, but not limited to, the National Historic Preservation Act (54 U.S.C. §§ 300101 *et seq.*), the Antiquities Act (16 U.S.C. §§ 431 *et seq.*), section 6(c) of the Archaeological Resources and Protection Act (16 U.S.C. § 470ee(c)), and the Sunken Military Craft Act (10 U.S.C. §§ 113 *et seq.*).

Because 56 crewmembers perished during its loss, the USS CONESTOGA wreck is considered a military grave under the Sunken Military Craft Act and the President’s Statement on Sunken Warships (2001). Accordingly, the wreck may not be disturbed without permission from the U.S. Government. In addition, since the wreck is located within the Greater Farallones National Marine Sanctuary and subject to sanctuary regulations, a sanctuary permit would be required prior to conducting any prohibited activity, including “[p]ossessing, moving, removing, or injuring, or attempting to possess, move, remove or injure, a Sanctuary historical resource.”<sup>3</sup> *See also*, Interagency Agreement between NOAA and the Department of the Navy (June 2015) (NOAA and Navy agree that NOAA continues to be the manager of sanctuary resources that are also sunken military craft and NOAA will consult and cooperate with Navy on sanctuary permit applications for activities directed at sunken military craft).

In accordance with its authority and responsibility under section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, NOAA nominates the USS CONESTOGA to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Listing the USS CONESTOGA will serve to: elevate and promote this sanctuary historical resource as part of the Nation’s maritime heritage; provide notice of the need to protect nationally important sanctuary resources; better coordinate resource management with other federal agencies and potential users; and increase research and educational opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> President’s Statement on Sunken Warships and other State craft, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents Volume 37, Number 3 p. 195 (Jan. 22, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 195-196.

<sup>3</sup> 15 C.F.R. § 922.112(a)(7).

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Correspondence 001. Interagency Agreement between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the United States Department of the Navy on Cooperation under the Sunken Military Craft Act dated 6/10/15.

Correspondence 002. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration press release on the discovery and identification of the USS CONESTOGA dated 3/23/16.

Correspondence 003. Navy History and Heritage Command press release on the discovery and identification of the USS CONESTOGA dated 3/24/16.

Correspondence 004. Letter to the Keeper of the National Register from Dr. James P. Delgado, Director, NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Maritime Heritage Program regarding the nomination of the USS CONESTOGA.

Hawse Hole With Anchor Chain

Bow / Stem

USS CONESTOGA AT 54  
Site Drawing 2016  
Greater Farallones  
National Marine Sanctuary

Steam Anchor Windlass H-Bitts

Steel Riveted Plate  
Foremast Deck Collar  
Foremast Running Light

3-inch / 50 Caliber Navy Gun

Steam Steering Engine

Mooring Bitts

Mooring Bitts

Boiler

Boiler

Smoke Stack Collar

A-Frame

Window Frame

Mooring Bitts  
Coal & Porthole

Mooring Bitts

Triple Expansion Steam Engine

Marine Head & Metal Grating

Mast Deck Opening

Mooring Bitts

Steam Towing Winch

Wooden H-Bitt Deck Opening

Mooring Bitts

Steam Gypsy / Capstan

Spare Propeller

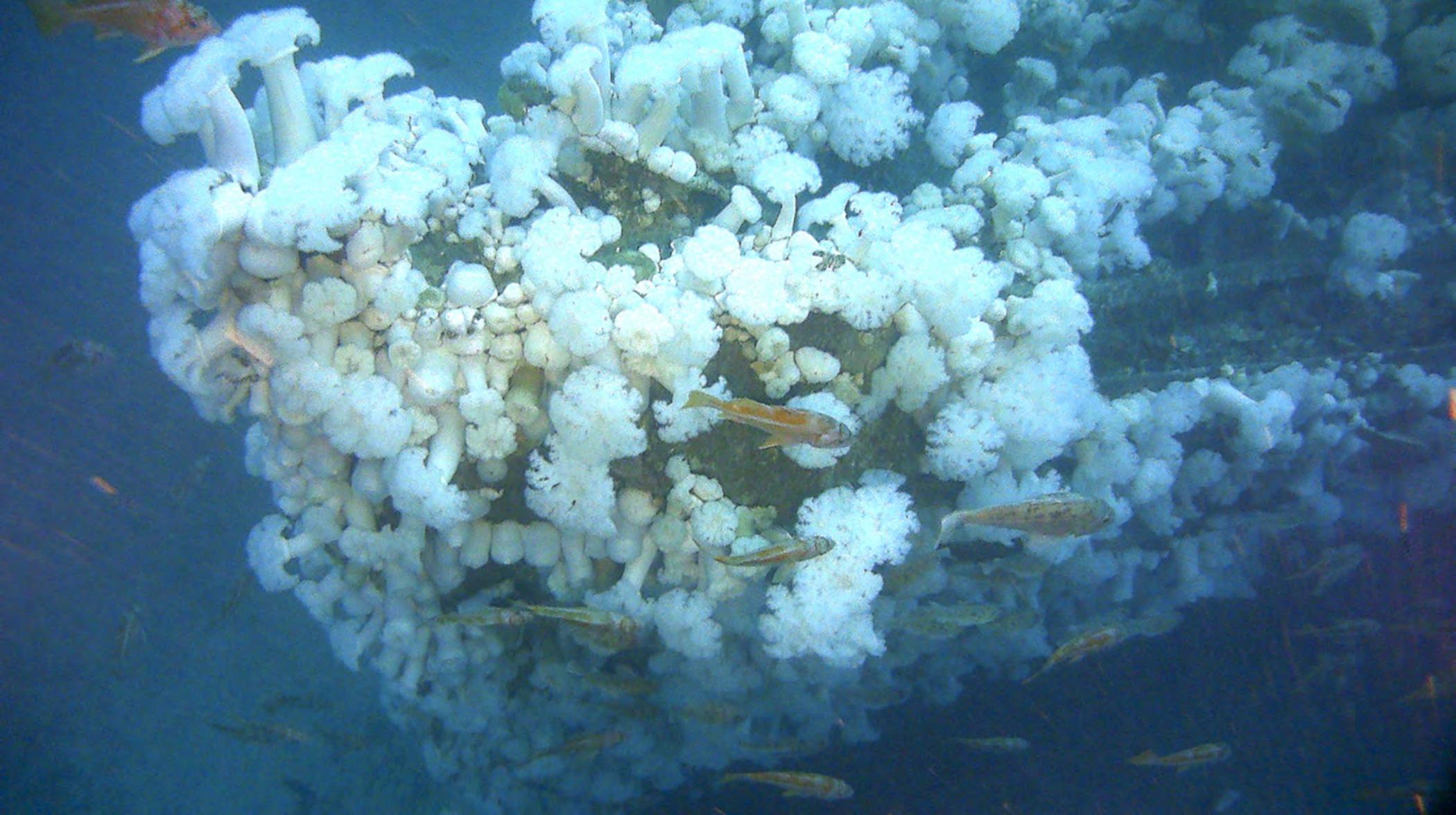
Scuttle

Scuttle

Steering Quadrant

Stern



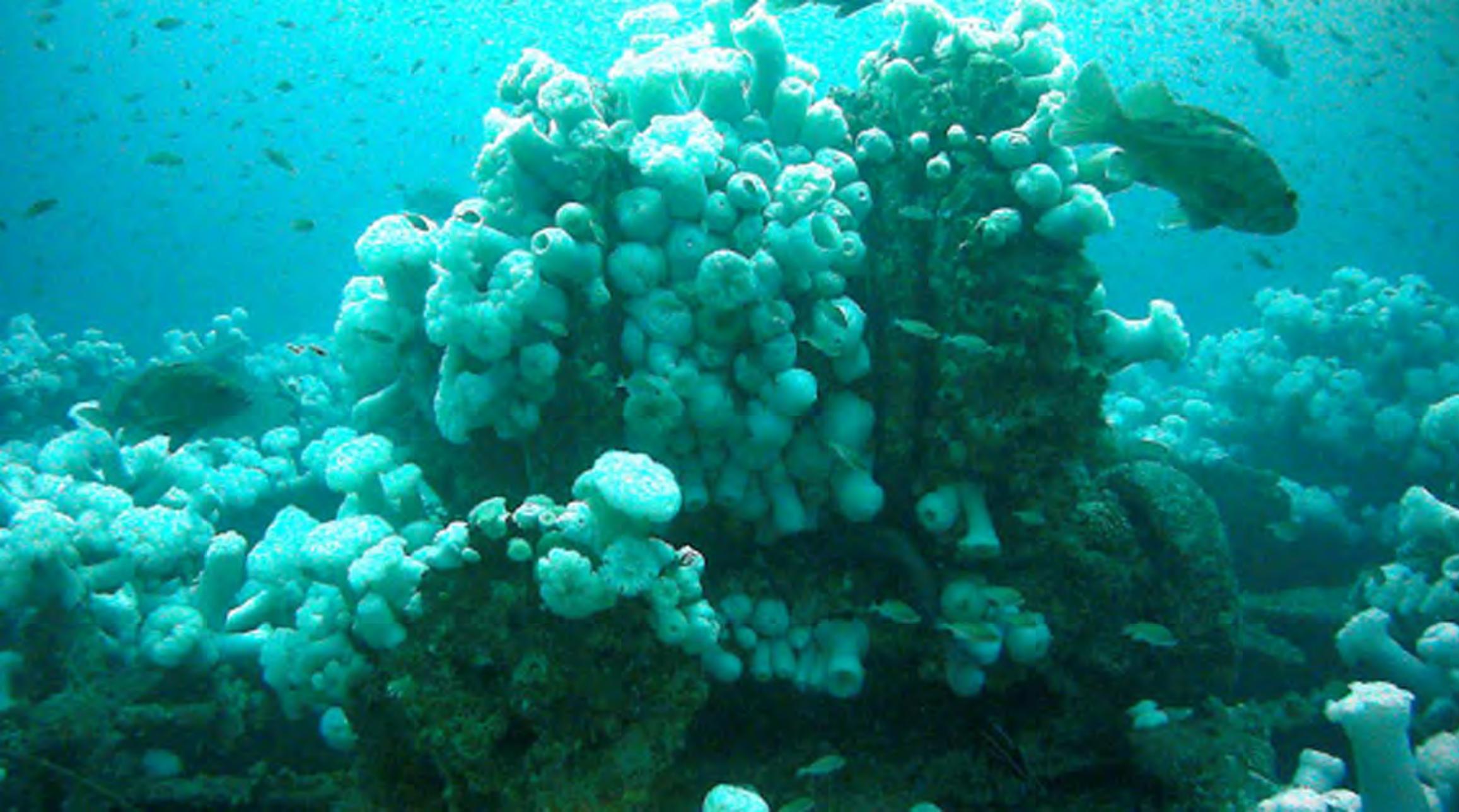


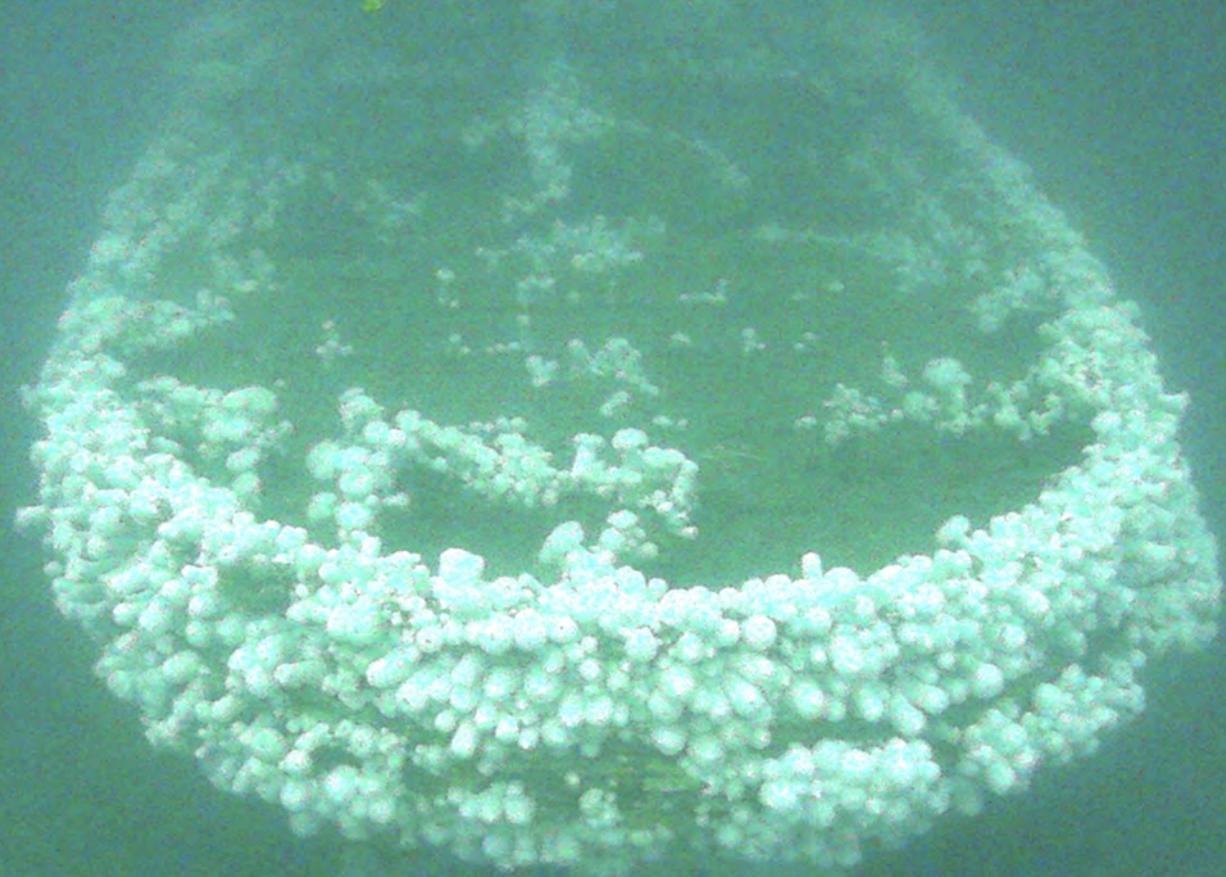


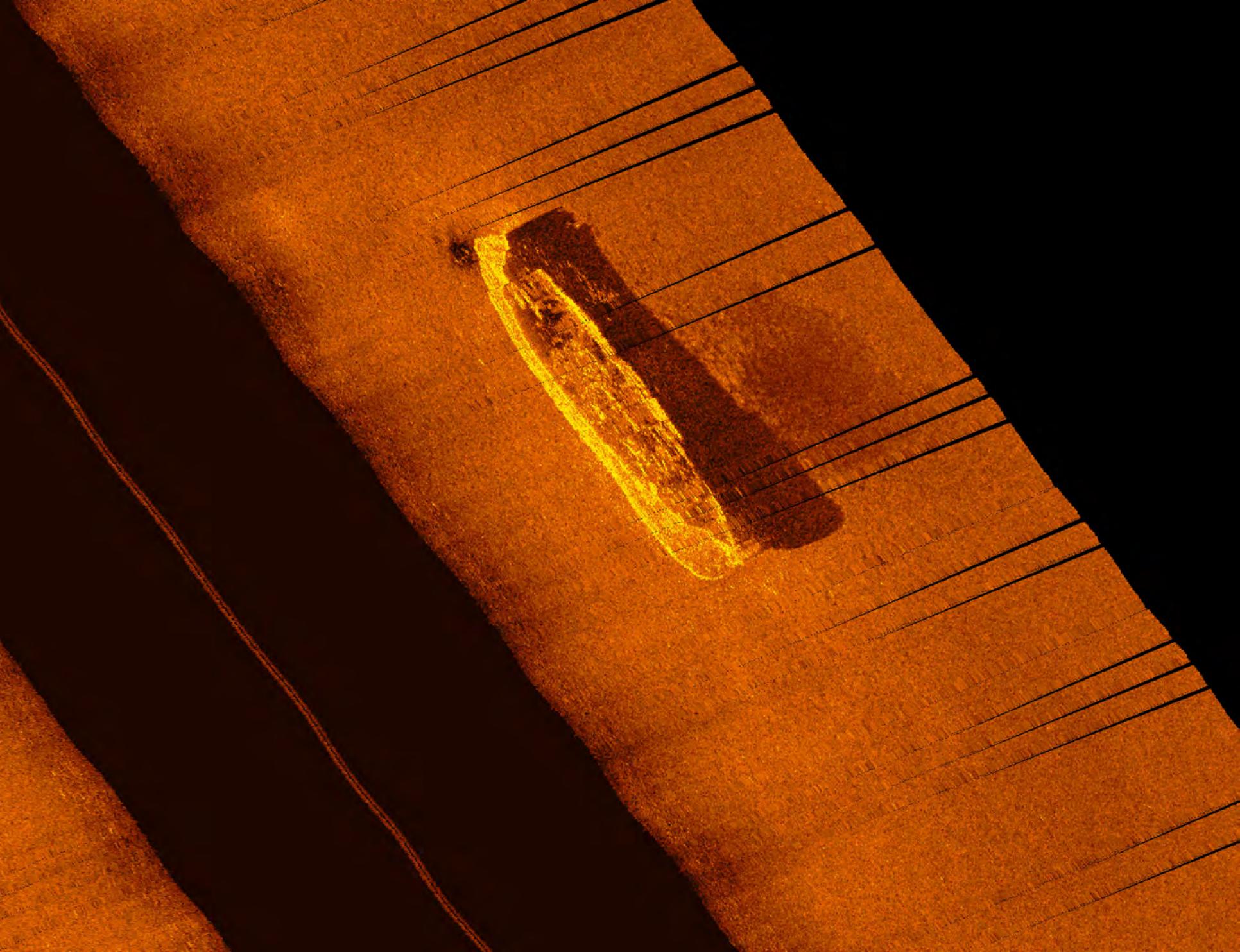




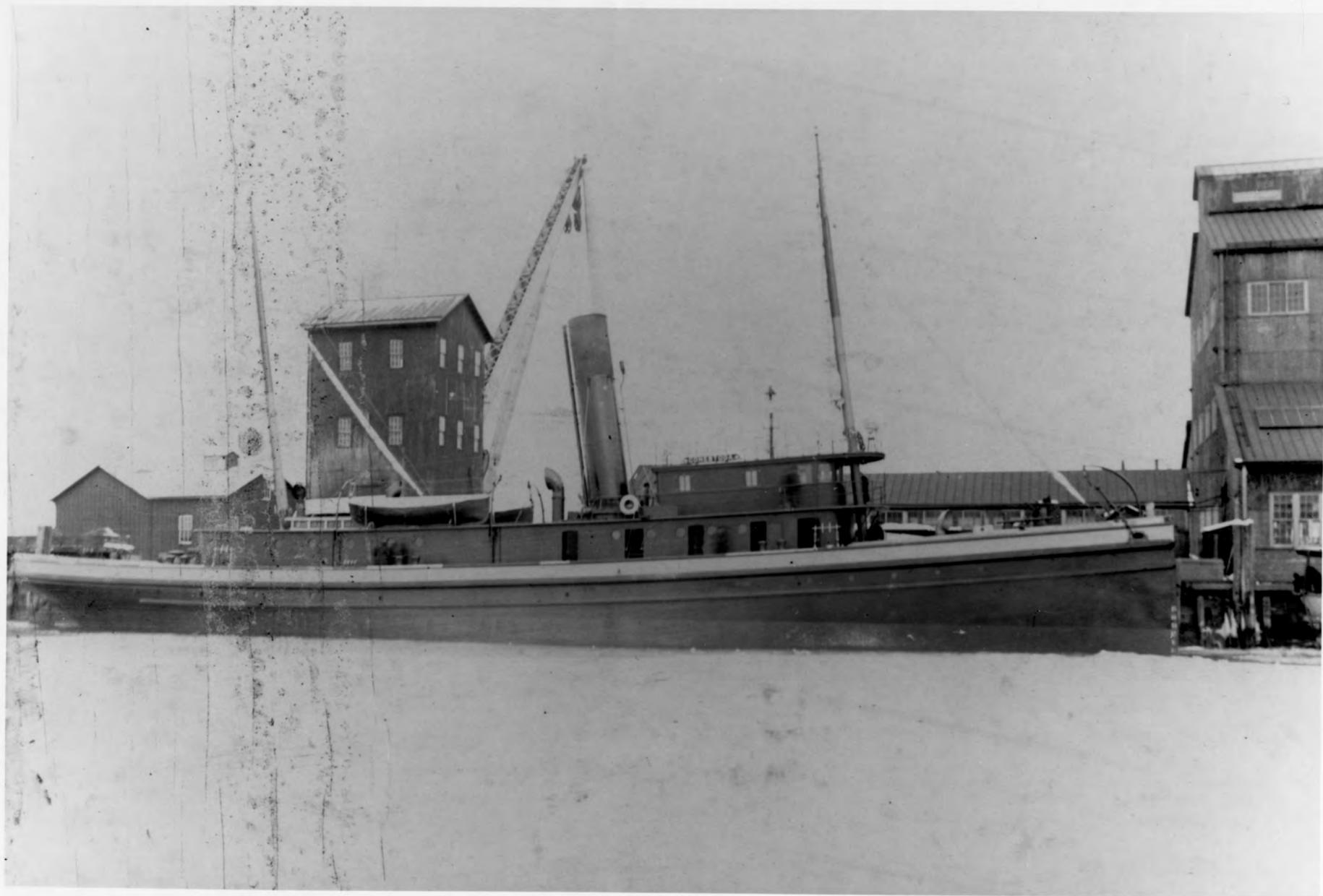


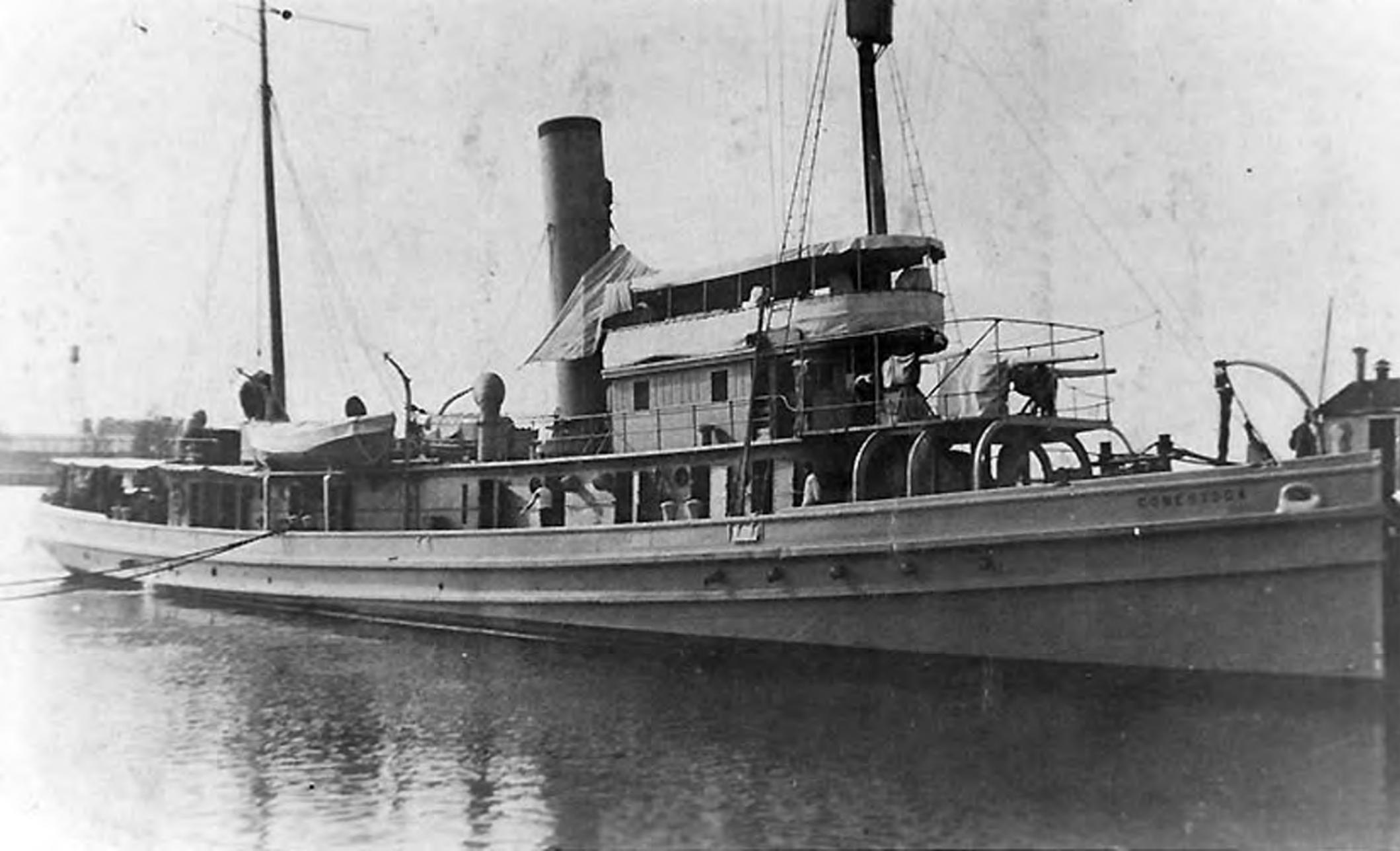


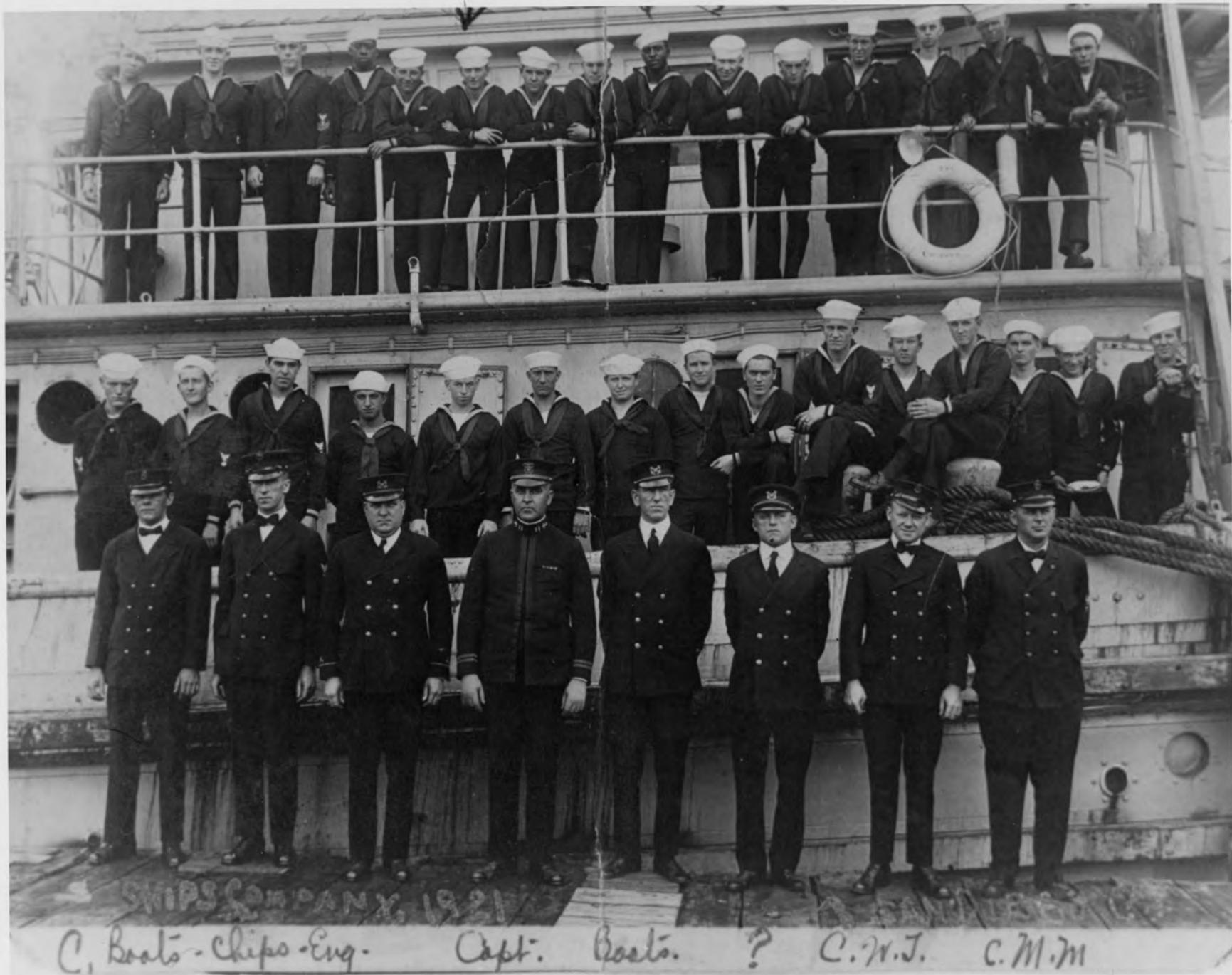












SHIPS COMPANY, 1921

C, Boats - Chips - Eng.      Capt.      Boats.      ?      C. W. J.      C. M. M