The shipwrecks of the Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore area are nearly as well known as the rock formations that give the area its name. Rock cliffs dominate much the shoreline, but the shore marks the boundary between two very different environments, the land and the underwater world.

The underwater resources of the Lakeshore are valuable because they are so representative of a wide range of vessels. They have also been relatively well preserved because they have been spared the human pressures of population and industry. It is the undisturbed quality of the park’s shipwrecks that has focused the attention of historians and sport divers here, and ultimately has resulted in creation by the State of Michigan the Alger Underwater Preserve to ensure their further preservation and enjoyment. The following wreck descriptions are sequential from west to east and include wrecks outside the boundaries of the park.

Bermuda - The 150 foot wooden canal schooner is located in 20 feet of water in Grand Island’s Murray Bay. Shipwreck research has proven her actual name, yet she is still known locally as the Dreadnought, Arnold, or Granada. She was carrying a cargo of 488 tons of iron ore when she sank in Munising Bay with a loss of three hands on October 15, 1870. The cargo of 488 tons of iron ore was 95 feet of water with her deck at the 85 foot level. She is the most intact wreck in the area, offering experienced divers many hours of underwater exploration. (Buoyed) Loran 31632.2 - 47431.4

Smith Moore - After colliding with the James Pickands the 230 foot wooden steam barge sank July 13, 1889, as it was being towed in by the M.M. Drake. The most dramatic and well known wreck in the preserve, it rests just off Sand Point in about 95 feet of water with her deck at the 85 foot level. She is the most intact wreck in the area, offering experienced divers many hours of underwater exploration. (Buoyed) Loran 31647.2 - 47442.2

Herman Hettler - This wreck includes interesting timbers, rudder, anchor and chains, valves and other items, at an average depth of 25 feet. The 210 foot wooden steamer sank after piling up on the Trout Point reef during a snowstorm on November 23, 1926. The cargo of 1,100 tons of coal washed overboard. (Buoyed) Loran 31604.5 - 47438.1

Manhattan - After striking Grand Island, the 252 foot wooden hulled freighter sank October 26, 1903, after burning to the waterline in a freak accidental fire in the cabins. Her hull is largely intact with scattered timbers and the huge rudder. She rests on a rocky shelf in about 20 feet of water, protected by the island. (Buoyed) Loran 31648.3 - 47438.1

Michael Groh - A mile northeast of Sand Point and 3 miles west of Miners Castle are two sections of wreckage in 10 feet of water. Prior to wrecking on November 22, 1895, with 325,000 board feet of lumber bound for Cleveland, the steam barge had been involved in numerous accidents. Location: 46 27°30’ north and 86 75°87’ west.

Mary M. Scott - Also known as the Sandpiper, this 100 foot long wreck is the bottom of a schooner that was laden with iron ore from Marquette. The canal schooner went ashore November 2, 1870. She was named for the wife of one of her owners. The ship was 138 feet long, 26 feet wide, with a depth of 11 feet and weighed 361 tons. The wreck lies approximately 500 feet off the Sand Point channel buoy in about 15 feet of water amid constantly shifting sand. Location: 46 27°54’ north and 86 36°37’ west.

Elma - The Elma lies in 8 feet of water east of the Groh and about 2 miles from Miners Castle. The entire bottom of this schooner barge is often visible among shifting sand. She wrecked on September 26, 1895. Towed as a consort by the Birckhead, the 160 foot long Elma broke loose in a storm near Whitefish Point. Seeking refuge at Grand Island, huge seas broke away the rudder and the load of lumber washed overboard. Of nine on board, only one casualty was recorded. Location: 46 47°57’ north and 86 35°53’ west.

George - Located near Mosquito Beach, the ship was the victim of a typical fall gale. She was loaded with 1,330 tons of coal en route to Marquette when she ran into an intense snowstorm. Lying in 15 feet of water at the mouth of a cove, about 120 feet of the hull is visible. All eight crewmen and one woman survived by rowing a yawl to Grand Island after the 200 foot ship had her sails ripped off by the wind and ran aground on October 24, 1893. Loran 31604.5 - 47430.6

Wabash - At Chapel Beach lies the remains of the schooner Wabash, broken and scattered with its cargo. Towed by the powerful tug Samson, the Wabash was among a consort trying to make it to Grand Island in a raging snowstorm on November 15, 1883, when she ran aground. Crew members were rescued by the Samson. The Wabash and its cargo were a total loss.

Superior - One of the most tragic of the Pictured Rocks accidents was the loss of this steamboat at Spray Falls on October 29, 1856. The 191 foot long side wheeler had two decks, the upper one entirely for passengers. In heavy seas, she lurched off course. Attempts to lighten the load were unsuccessful and as she took on water the boiler fires were extinguished. Foundering on the rocks, passengers were washed overboard and had to swim in frigid water to the rocks. Survivors endured wind, cold, and snow, struggling several miles to the nearest habitation at Munising Bay and Grand Island. Between 35 and 42 people died in the wreck. Depth of the wreck is 10 to 30 feet; visibility is 30 to 50 feet.
Kiowa - Off Twelvemile Beach in about 40 feet of water lies the steel remains of the ocean going steamer Kiowa, a World War I “laker.” About 80% of the ship’s hull and most of the machinery may still be seen at the site, though all of the superstructure is gone. The Kiowa was one of 498 ships of the “Frederickstad Design” built between 1917 and 1920. Heading down lake with a cargo of flax seed, it was caught in a gale and began taking on water. By December 1, 1929, she was helpless and fetched up in 30 feet of water before a strong northwest wind. Loran 31499.8 and 47425.1

Mary Jarecki - The first wreck east of Twelvemile Beach is this wooden bulk freight steamer, victim of a July 4, 1883, stranding. The ship, heavily laden with iron ore, ran off its course and ground ashore in fog off the mouth of Hurricane River. Today, the remains may still be seen resting on the bare sandstone bottom just outside the breakers near the trail to the lighthouse. The long oak keelsons, studded with iron treenails, are just above water. No lives were lost in the incident.

Oneida Chief - This was a two masted wooden schooner of 127 feet length and 252 gross tons. Slightly smaller than the Oneida Chief - This was a two masted wooden schooner of 272 and 277 feet in length, with iron ore, the ship ran aground, filled with water and was abandoned in heavy seas. Lifesavers from Grand Marais rescued 17 men from the ship.

The Gale Staples was upbound on October 1, 1918, laden with coal for Port Arthur. Driven by high winds, she veered off course and grounded on the reef. All hands were eventually rescued. Pieces of these two ships can be seen on the beach just west of the Au Sable Light Station. Numerous other pieces of these wrecks are lying on the reef in shallow water.

Union - Another ship lost on the reef is the steam barge Union, though little of its history is known. It made four trips to Marquette in 1873 before its demise. On September 25 it was running down the lake carrying 432 tons of ore for the Elk Rapids Iron Co. when it ran into a northeasterly fall storm. The location of the wreck is still a mystery.

Saveland - Another wreck in the Grand Marais area is the Saveland, built in 1887 and 1888. The Brooklyn, standing 15 - 20 feet of water.

State law prohibits the recovery, altering, or destruction of abandoned property which is in, on, under, or over the bottom lands of the Great Lakes, including those within a Great Lakes bottom lands preserve. Shipwrecks lying on the surface are protected by federal law. Please leave these remnants of the past for others to enjoy.