

## **NEWS RELEASE - September 22, 2005 - Southampton, Ontario**

### **Southampton Beach Shipwreck identified as the War of 1812 brig "General Hunter"**

The shipwreck found buried on a popular stretch of Southampton beach has been identified as the British naval brig "General Hunter" which fought in the War of 1812. Shipwreck Project Director Ken Cassavoy says research at the U.S. National Archives in Washington, confirmed the identity late last week.

Following the major excavation of the wreck in 2004, the ship's hull and the artifacts from the site clearly indicated it was a naval vessel. The most likely candidate was suggested to be the "General Hunter" built in 1806 at Amherstburgh and captured by the Americans in the Battle of Lake Erie in 1813. After the war, in 1815, with name shortened to "Hunter," the ship was sold into private U.S. hands then purchased by the U.S. Army as a transport vessel. The ship was believed lost near Southampton in 1816.

Cassavoy says the details of the hull recorded during the excavation and the artifacts found during the work indicated the Southampton wreck had been a warship in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The dimensions of the wreck and the artifacts, especially the military buttons, provided compelling evidence pointing toward the "General Hunter." Now Cassavoy says the document found in the U.S. archives verifies the wrecking in 1816 in the Southampton area and provides other details which convince them of the wreck's identity.

In the document, located by Washington researcher Jonathan Deiss, U.S. Army Major General Alexander Macomb writes to the U.S. Secretary of war on September 7, 1816, stating, "...I am sorry...to inform you that the Government Transport Brig "Hunter" was cast away on the Canadian shore in returning from Michmilmackinac on the (19<sup>th</sup>) of last month in a violent gale....all the crew reached (Detroit) in safety. I have dispatched two boats to save the rigging, anchors and cables and to burn the wreck so as to secure the iron of the hull..."

Attached to this letter from General Macomb is a Declaration by the ship captain and two seamen sworn before a Notary Public. In the Declaration, the crew members relate the details of two days running before a series of storms until they are wrecked on the Canadian shore on August 19, 1816. The crew declaration ends with, "...the crew of eight men...and two children passengers got on shore by the wreck of the mainmast...we were compelled to leave the brig on the east side of Lake Huron, about one hundred miles from the rapids of St. Clair...surrounded by rocks and buried in quick sands, her seams open..."

Southampton is 100 nautical miles or 115 statute miles north and east of the St. Clair rapids. During the excavation the project team noted that the wreck had been salvaged and the hull burned. They also noted severe hull damage at the port bow which almost certainly relates to the mast coming down on the ship in that area. The wreck lies buried on a sand beach with surrounding waters filled with rocks. Cassavoy says all this, combined with the compelling artifactual and hull evidence from the wreck excavation leaves little room for doubt about the ship's identity. The team is hopeful that additional research at the U.S. Archives will provide some details on the boats which were ordered north from Detroit to burn and salvage the wreck. The research work is funded by the Symons Trust Fund at Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario.

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