



The 71-foot tugboat Steven M. Selvick plunges into Lake Superior between Miners Castle and Grand Island June 1, 1996.

Accompanied by a flotilla of a dozen small pleasure craft and a tour boat with spectators, the scuttled vessel has become an attraction in the Alger Underwater Preserve. (Mining Journal photo by Jerry Bielicki)

Going, going ... gone

Historic tug puts up fight before sinking to bottom of Munising Bay

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Twenty-three summers ago, on a windy Saturday morning on Munising Bay, I was working as a bureau reporter and photographer for The Mining Journal, covering an event that was quite unique.

Underwater preserve advocates in Alger County were intentionally sinking a Great Lakes tugboat as an underwater dive attraction for intermediate to expert divers.

Today, the tug sits on the bottom of Lake Superior about 65 feet below the surface, where it is indeed a dive attraction, while it also provides fish habitat and remains part of the Alger Underwater Preserve.

What follows is my newspaper story from that day, published June 2, 1996 in the Mining Journal of Marquette.

MUNISING – A part of Great Lakes maritime history sank into the future Saturday as the tugboat MV Steven M. Selvick plunged below the icy waters of Munising Bay.

The 1915 tug was towed to a point 1,600 yards off Grand Island's Trout Point and was sunk intentionally by officials from the Alger Underwater Preserve. It was the first time a vessel has been sunk to enhance Michigan's underwater preserves.

The sunken relic is expected to serve as an educational and recreation attraction for divers for years to come.

"The Selvick truly represents the maritime past and in its new role, the maritime future," said Pete Lindquist, a preserve member instrumental in orchestrating the tug's sinking.

As the tugboat was being pulled into place, a small flotilla of about 20 boats gathered to witness the event.

The tiny ship's flag was lowered for the last time and ceremoniously folded. A bottle was smashed across the bow of the boat and the tugboat's namesake wished her farewell.

"I hope I have the pleasure to come back here and dive on it myself," said Steven Selvick.

But the 71-foot tug, which had been used during construction of the Mackinac Bridge, wasn't ready to surrender to the seas just yet.

After a scuttle valve was opened in the bottom of the tug, the boat began taking on water more slowly than expected.

Officials positioned a boat alongside the Selvick and started to pump lake water onto the tug and into the engine room.

Eventually, the back end of the boat began to slump into Lake Superior as water sloshed across the Selvick's deck.

A second tug that had been used to pull the Selvick out into the lake pushed the floundering boat into the wind and waves and the stern of the Selvick flooded over.

It was then only a matter of seconds before the tugboat tipped her bow to the sky, gasped her last breaths of air into the waters and sunk to a depth of 70 feet.

Turquoise swirls bubbled up from the depths, while on the surface one ship blew its horn to mark the occasion.

While a few people cheered, others stood watching silently.

"I think we were all in awe," one man said.

"It was like a funeral," said Raeann Viau of Munising, who had helped clean oil and grease from the tugboat over the past two years, readying it for sinking.

"It went down fast once that fantail went under, she went quick," said Gregg Bush, a diver from Sault Ste. Marie.

Bush, like Viau and Hugh Wyatt of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, said they plan to return to the Selvick to dive on the sunken hull.

Wyatt said he drove to Munising to witness the sinking out of historical curiosity.

"When you dive on these ships you become interested in their history," Wyatt said.

Like many others who watched the Selvick go down, Bush thought the sinking was a historical event in itself.

"You can dive on it several times, but you can only see it go down once," he said.

The Selvick was first given the name of "Lorain" when it was constructed in Cleveland in 1915. It was powered by an 1889 steam engine.

Later, the tugboat was re-fitted for diesel power and renamed the "Cabot."

The tug was finally renamed the Selvick when it was purchased by Selvick Marine and Towing Company, of Sturgeon Bay, Wis. in 1988.

The company donated the tug to the preserve for sinking in 1994.

For more information on the Steven Selvick and the Alger Underwater Preserve, visit the [Shipwreck Tours](#) of Munising website.

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