

## Collision in the Straits: The *Cedarville* Tragedy

A Ric Mixter Lecture

*Cedarville* is the largest intact shipwreck in Lake Huron, and yet no one really knows its story. It's one of the most dived shipwrecks in the Great Lakes, resting on its side nearly turned over in about 100 feet of water. How it got there is a captivating and sad tale.

The regular skipper for the stone carrier resigned abruptly, and a shuffle of deck crew brought the first mate to captain and third mate Len Gabrysiak down to wheelsman. 1965 was a busy beginning for US Steel, and *Cedarville* was hauling large chunks of limestone to the hungry furnaces at Gary even before all the ice had cleared the lakes.

Blinded by spring time fog, the wheelsman couldn't see the back half of his ship in the mist, and he was surprised the skipper ordered full steam ahead, guided by radar through the narrow passage under the Mackinac Bridge. Two other saltwater ships were making passage towards the east when *Cedarville* turned for their turn under the span. Len said the deck crew had been watching the radar as a mystery ship went under, but the captain assumed it would turn for Round Passage. *Topdalsfjord* didn't make any radio calls as it turned south instead, and the two ships collided. *Cedarville's* green captain dropped anchor instead of heading for shore, hoping he could get instructions from the head office in Pittsburgh before complicating the mess he was already in.

Ric Mixter is the first to tell the *Cedarville* story on television, and his interviews with the crew and how they tried to save the ship are captivating. Wheelsman Len Gabrysiak's eyewitness account from the pilothouse further adds detail to the speculation on why the captain pulled anchor and tried to cross the Straits rather than beach his doomed ship on the north shore.

With commentary from a German sailor that pulled survivors from the freezing Straits, Ric's lecture on *Cedarville* will captivate audiences anywhere on the lakes, especially those who are part of the millions who have sailed over *Cedarville's* grave on their way to Michigan's #1 tourist destination of Mackinac Island.

Note: *Cedarville's* story is told in much less detail in three of Ric's lectures; "The Wheelsmen", based on his book, "Deep Six", and "Shipwrecks of Lake Huron". If you would like to learn more about the wreck, check out Ric's podcast [www.shipwreckpodcast.com](http://www.shipwreckpodcast.com), watch "Final Run" or read "The Wheelsmen".

Total time is about an hour with time for questions and answers. Ric needs a projection screen but will provide his own projector and amplification for the video. Larger audiences (over 75 patrons) may require use of amplification such as a microphone, amp and speakers of which your facility would be responsible for. In this case, Ric would like to plug into your system using a MAC computer with earphone output for your amplification.

Lecture cost is \$300 plus travel costs from Wixom, MI. Virtual options exist and hotel room and meals are required if more than three hours drive from Oakland County, MI.

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