INVESTIGATIONS OF A NINETEENTH CENTURY STEAMBOAT WRECK IN BAYOU TECHE, LOUISIANA-A POSSIBLE CIVIL WAR GUNBOAT

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INVESTIGATIONS OF A NINETEENTH CENTURY STEAMBOAT WRECK IN BAYOU TECHE, LOUISIANA - A POSSIBLE CIVIL WAR GUNBOAT

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ABSTRACT

In July 2006, Coastal Environments, Inc. initiated study of the remains of an unidentified wooden vessel sunk in Bayou Teche at the town of New Iberia, Louisiana. The wreck, designated the New Iberia Shipwreck (16IB80), was discovered in 2005 during bulkhead construction. Fieldwork included intensive probing of the buried and submerged wreckage, coupled with excavations. The wreck consists of the lower hull of a vessel measuring about 95 ft long and 18 ft wide. Hull construction recorded on the wreck mirrors that used in nineteenth century steamboats. Historical and archaeological evidence supports the identification of the wreck as a sidewheel steamboat named Teche lost in Bayou Teche in 1868. The Teche was built in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1860 and originally named Sam Sugg and later renamed Tom Sugg. During the Civil War, the Tom Sugg was converted first into an armed Confederate "cottonclad" and later into a U.S. Navy tinclad named USS Tensas. The wreck has been nominated to the National Register of Historic Places and subsequently placed on the Register on December 24, 2008.

INTRODUCTION

In November 2005, construction of a bulkhead along the banks of Bayou Teche in the town of New Iberia, Louisiana, uncovered timbers from a submerged and buried shipwreck. The bulkhead was part of a proposed marine sewage pump out facility being constructed at this location by Mr. Paul J. Allain, with funding from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Division of Wildlife and Fisheries. The wreckage was discovered on the first day of construction when the contractor recognized a piece of boat structure in the material being removed from Bayou Teche with a bucket dredge. Mr. Allain notified the Louisiana Division of Wildlife and Fisheries and the Louisiana Division of Archaeology of the discovery. In July 2006, the Louisiana Division of Wildlife and Fisheries issued a contract to Coastal Environments, Inc. of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to conduct archaeological and historical research on the wreck site to determine its National Register eligibility.

The wreck, designated the New Iberia Shipwreck and Louisiana archaeological site 16IB80, is located on the western side of Bayou Teche at the foot of Weeks Street in New Iberia (Figure 1). Coastal Environments' study of the wreck involved archaeological field examination in conjunction with historical research on the navigation history of Bayou Teche, on reported vessel sinkings in the bayou, and on the history of ownership, settlement and use of the piece of property adjacent to the wreck site. A full report on the results of this research was presented to the Louisiana Division of Wildlife and Fisheries in 2007 (Pearson et al. 2007).

EXAMINATION OF THE NEW IBERIA SHIPWRECK SITE

The archaeological fieldwork on the wreck was conducted by a crew of four persons from July 17 through July 22, 2006. The techniques involved in the examination of the wreck were dictated by the natural conditions existing at the site. The vessel remains lie immediately adjacent and parallel to the west bank of the bayou and are completely buried by sediment as well as partially submerged beneath the waters of Bayou Teche. The maximum water depth over the submerged portion of the wreck was about 3 feet; however, the waters of Bayou Tech are murky and silt laden and essentially provide for zero visibility. These site conditions are not at all unusual in Louisiana and researchers have developed field techniques adapted to these conditions. Typically in these settings, probing, using either metal, hand-held probes or hydraulic probes, is used as an initial effort to delineate buried and submerged remains. Once information on the extent and configuration of buried remains is obtained, decisions as to where, or if, to place excava-



Figure 1: The location of the New Iberia Shipwreck site, 16IB80.

tions are made. The zero visibility conditions make any underwater work more difficult and time-consuming, but not impossible.

The examination of the New Iberia Wreck generally followed these established steps. Preliminary probing of the site suggested that the wreck lay against and parallel to the bank of Bayou Teche. The wreckage appeared to rest on the gently sloping bank of the bayou, immediately adjacent to a steep bluff rising to a height of about eight feet above the bayou (Figure 2). An initial step in the fieldwork involved establishing a baseline across the wreck site that would serve as a point of reference for mapping. Fortunately, a string line was already in place at the site that had been established by the construction contractor in November 2005. This string line marked the waterside edge of the proposed bulkhead and both ends of the string had been surveyed in and tied to shoreline survey points. The string line was positioned near the estimated center of the wreckage and ran roughly parallel to its long axis. Ultimately, this baseline was extended for a distance of 100 feet along the bank of Bayou Teche. The shipwreck was built following the English system of measurement (i.e. feet and inches), so that system was used in this study.

Once the mapping baseline was established, systematic probing of the area of the wreck was conducted to determine the extent, configuration and condition of buried and submerged remains. This probing was conducted with 5- and 7-foot-long metal probes. As shown in Figure 3, 13 lines of probes were placed across the buried wreckage. Probes were generally taken at 1-foot-intervals along these transects and extended entirely across the wreck or, on some transects, from the bayou side of the wreck to the base of the steep bluff located 10 to 15 feet west of the mapping baseline. Most of these probe transects were positioned at 5-foot-intervals along



Figure 2: View of the New Iberia Shipwreck site (16IB80). Bayou Teche is in the foreground. The red tape marks the perimeter of the hull and the two individuals are standing on the centerline (keelson) of the wreck. The low bluff adjacent to the site and the narrow beach at the base of the bluff are noted, as is the large pile of logs, limbs and brush that cover the bow portion of the wreck. (View to the west, photograph taken 7/22/2006).

the baseline (i.e., at 45 feet, 50 feet, and 55 feet, etc.), however, some lines were offset to avoid large pieces of cement debris scattered along the bank. The 1-footinterval of probing along these transects was occasionally altered when submerged or buried objects, such as bricks or cement slabs, prevented penetration by the probe. A line of probes was also made at 2-foot-intervals along the mapping baseline, although, again sometimes this spacing had to be altered when impenetrable objects above the wreckage were encountered. Additionally, a series of probes were placed at the down-stream end of the wreckage to delineate buried structure there and occasional probes were made along the bayou-side perimeter of the wreck for the same reason. The water surface of Bayou Teche was used as a datum for depth measurements during probing. The water level was marked on the first day of probing and any fluctuations in the water level were noted several times a day and these fluctuations were taken into account when probe depth measurements were made. As it turned out, the water level in the bayou varied less than three inches over the course of the probing.

The location and the depth to presumed vessel structure from the surface of Bayou Teche were recorded

for each of the more than 250 probes taken at the site. Generally, the wooden boat structure was easy to identify in the probing and the evidence collected indicates that the wood of the remaining structure is well preserved. As shown in Figure 3, the systematic probing revealed that the wreck consists of a single piece of wooden structure representing the lower hull of a large vessel. The remaining hull measures about 18 feet wide at its widest point and extends for a distance of about 85 feet along the bank. The identified bow of the vessel is at the up-bayou end of the site. The bow portion of the wreck could only be minimally examined because a large pile of logs, tree limbs and brush covered this location. However, probes taken through the brush pile did delineate the perimeter of the wreckage to within a foot or so of what is believed to be the bow (see Figures 2 and 3).

The probing provided information on the overall configuration of the wreckage. Excavations were undertaken to collect more precise data on the condition and integrity of the sunken and buried structure, on the methods of construction used, on the stratigraphy at the site, and to collect samples of wood, fasteners and other artifacts as deemed necessary. Two methods of excavation were employed. One involved hand digging using



Figure 3. The locations of probes, hand-dug excavations (hatched), and test trenches (gray) at 16IB80. The outline of the extant buried and submerged hull structure is shown in red.

shovels and trowels and the other entailed removing sediments with a pump that produced a powerful jet of water. The use of each technique was dictated by the varied conditions existing at the site. In these discussions and in the accompanying illustrations, the hand-dug excavations are identified as "Excavation Units," while those dug with the jet pump are termed "Test Trenches."

A series of four hand-dug units were excavated to expose areas of the buried structure. The placement of these units was directed by the results of the probing, but their positions were also restricted by site conditions. Specifically, all of the units had to be placed above or immediately adjacent to the water level where sediments were stiff enough to allow hand removal and to maintain side walls. The area thus available consisted of the narrow, gently sloping beach between the base of the bluff and the edge of the bayou. No effort was made to insure that these excavation units were exactly square or uniform in size. This was impossible to do because all of the hand-dug excavation units quickly flooded or were eventually expanded into the water, factors that resulted in the collapse of unit walls as excavations proceeded.

Two of the hand-dug excavation units, Excavation Units 1 and 2 were positioned along the identified port, or left, side of the hull between 19 feet and 30 feet on the mapping baseline (see Figure 3). These units were placed at or just above the water level in hopes of maintaining water-free excavations that would allow visual observation of the buried wreckage. Both excavations flooded soon after they were begun and a pump was used to keep them clear of water so they could be dug by hand. Both of these units encountered the side of the hull and yielded valuable information on the construction of the vessel. Subsequently, two more excavation units, identified as Excavation Units 3 and 4 in Figure 3, were dug. These units, also, were placed near the edge of Bayou Teche where it was possible to conduct excavations with the use of a pump. These two units exposed additional structural elements of the wreck in the area along and adjacent to what turned out to be the keelson.

In addition to these hand-excavated units, a jet pump was used to dig a series of three narrow trenches across the hull to obtain additional structural information (Figure 4). These trenches, shown in Figure 3, were positioned to follow floor timbers extending across the bottom of the hull. Ultimately, they exposed structural elements such as floors (timbers extending across the bottom of the hull), strakes (timbers extending along the length of the hull), chine clamps (timbers extending along the join of the bottom and sides of the hull), fut-



Figure 4: Chip McGimsey (left) and Charles Pearson (right) preparing to use the jet pump. (View to the north, photograph taken 7/20/2006).

tocks (the "ribs" of the hull), and a variety of types of fasteners, all of which were recorded and mapped relative to the baseline (Figure 5).

The jet pump was also used to dig Test Trench 4 that followed and permitted mapping of the keelson and elements adjacent to it from Excavation Unit 3 (at about 44 feet on the baseline) to the aft end of existing keelson, located at about 12 feet on the baseline. In the vicinity of 22 feet on the baseline, Test Trench 4 was expanded to the port (left) side of the keelson to examine construction details in that area (see Figure 3). Finally, the jet pump was used to dig Test Trench 5 that exposed an area of the hull around the identified stern of the vessel (see Figure 3).

VESSEL CONSTRUCTION

The probes and subsequent excavations revealed that the wreckage consists of the lower hull of a large wooden vessel measuring about 95 feet long and 18 feet wide. The bottom of the hull is flat along most of its length and it has slightly flaring sides, although only the very lower portions of the sides were recorded in a few locations. The sides of the hull extend upward for a foot or so from the bottom in some places, but in others the sides are entirely missing or have collapsed outward from the hull. Probes could be extended across the entire width of the hull only in the down-bayou one-third or so of the wreck, from about 8 feet to 38 feet on the mapping baseline (see Figure 3). From this point to the bow, the western side of the wreck is buried beneath approximately eight feet of sediment that forms the steep bluff that was impossible to probe through.

The probe transects do show that the remaining hull structure is somewhat deeper in the bow than it is along its central and stern portions. This is particularly evident in the profile taken at 75 feet on the baseline that clearly depicts the upward curving side of the hull. It is presumed that this upward curvature in the sides of the hull becomes more pronounced toward the bow. Unfortunately, the large pile of debris in that area prevented the placement of probe transects that might record this.

The probing and the trench excavations show that the wreckage rests on the sloping bank of Bayou Teche and has been covered by sediments since it was lost or abandoned at this location. Figure 6 presents a plan and profile of Test Trench 3 that illustrates the lay of wreckage and, also, shows structural features recorded in this trench. Test Trench 3 extended from the keelson, near the center of the hull, to the outside edge of the hull on the starboard (right) side. Along this starboard side, the bottom of the hull is about 3 feet below the surface of Bayou Teche and is buried by approximately 1.5 feet of muddy sediment. Some of the sediments covering the wreck represent natural accumulations of clays and silty clays deposited by Bayou Teche. However, a substantial amount of this covering material is derived from deposits associated with the now eroding and partially artificial bluff that covers a large portion of the western side of the shipwreck. This is particularly evident along the narrow beach at the base of the bluff, where a large quantity of bricks and brick fragments, clam shells (Rangia cuneata), pieces of cement, coal, and numerous metal objects have accumulated and now cover the wreck. This material has either eroded out of the artificial fill that forms the present bluff, or represents debris dumped over the bluff. The fact that the eight-foot-high bluff buries much



Figure 5: Cross section of a typical nineteenth century, western river steamboat hull showing many of the features identified on the New Iberia Shipwreck (Pearson et al. 2007:Figure 4-6).



Figure 6: Plan and profile views of structure recorded in Test Trench 3.

of the wreck reveals that it is a man-made deposit, placed here after the wreckage was in place. Most of the fill forming the bluff seems to have been deposited in 1910 when a railroad spur was extended along the bank of the bayou in this area (Pearson et al. 2007).

The hand excavations and the trenches exposed a sufficient amount of the buried vessel to obtain a reasonable idea of its method of construction. The skeletal framework of the hull consists of a series of crossing timbers known as floors that measure 2.5 inches wide (sided) and 3.5 inches high (molded) and a series of lon-

gitudinal timbers that extend along the long axis of the hull consisting of a central keelson, several strakes attached to the tops of floors and bilge keelsons attached where the bottom of the hull joins the sides. The locations of these various elements are shown in Figure 6. The floors, in combination with pieces extending up the side of the hull, known as futtocks, comprise what are known as the frames of the hull (see Figure 5). The frames in the aft (stern) one-third of the hull use single floor timbers, while "paired" frames, consisting of two floor timbers attached together, are found in the central portion of the hull. As seen in Figure 6, where paired floors exist, one extends completely across the hull, while the second extends only to the second strake, located about midway between the center and edge of the hull. The forward third of the wreck could not be examined, so the type of frames used there is unknown. The use of paired floors provides greater strength to the hull frames and they were often used in flat-bottomed river boats like steamboats and barges, but commonly they were employed only in particular areas of the hull, such as in the vicinity of the engines or boilers, or toward the bow where greater hull strength and rigidity was required (Bates 1981; Kane 2004). Several samples of wood were collected from the wreck and submitted to the Center for Wood Anatomy Research, U.S. Forest Service, for identification. The floors, as well as all other structural elements on the wreck from which samples were taken (i.e., strakes, keelson, deadwood, futtocks, and hull planks), are made from the wood of some member of the white oak group (subgenus *Leucobalanus*), probably the white oak (*Quercus albus*) itself.

The keelson of the hull was exposed in several locations. The keelson rests on top of the frames and runs fore-and-aft down the centerline of the hull. The keelson represents the principal longitudinal timber in the hull, and, typically, it is among the largest timbers in a vessel's framing (see Figure 5). Figure 7 presents a plan and a profile along the portion of keelson recorded in Excavation Unit 3. Here, the keelson measures 3.5 inches wide (sided) and 6 inches high (molded), however the top of the keelson is somewhat rounded, possibly from deterioration or erosion of the wood, so the original dimensions may have been slightly greater. The keelson is attached to the underlying frames with iron rods known as "drift pins," that are driven into the aft and longest of the paired floor timbers. These drift pins measure approximately one-half inch in diameter and their heads are "clinched," that is the tops of the pins are flattened over a washer-shaped ring.



Figure 7: Plan and profile views of the area around the keelson recorded in Excavation Unit 3. The purpose of the notches seen on the underside of the keelson in the profile is unknown.

The keelson forward of about 28 feet on the mapping baseline consists of a single timber, but aft of this point it is comprised of two thinner timbers joined one on top of the other. The point where this change occurs is at the same location where the change between single and paired floors occurs. All of the frames forward of the "laminated" portion of the keelson are made with two floor timbers, while those under the laminated keelson (approximately the stern one-third of the hull) consist of single floors. In addition, along the laminated portion of the keelson, two fasteners could be felt on the top of the keelson at each floor frame. One of these fasteners is a round drift pin and the other is a square-headed spike. It is suspected that the spike was used to attach the upper piece of the laminated keelson to the lower piece, while the drift pin was used to connect the entire keelson to the underlying floor.

Several planks, measuring two inches thick and five inches wide, and oriented parallel to the keelson, are attached to the top of the floor frames between the keelson and the sides of the hull. Test Trenches 2 and 3 revealed the presence of three of these planks. Identified as "strakes," these planks are spaced about 22 inches apart in Test Trench 3 (see Figure 3). Strakes, also known as "streaks" or "stringers" (Bates 1981; Kane 2004:106), are long, thick planks that extend along the length of a boat hull to provide longitudinal strength and stability. In steamboat construction, it was common to use three or four floor strakes between the central keelson and the side of the hull (see Figure 5). The floor strakes on the New Iberia Shipwreck are attached to the underlying floors with one or sometimes two iron spikes or with short drift pins.

The construction techniques used along the "chine," or the point where the bottom of the hull meets the sides, were observed at several locations, but most clearly in Excavation Unit 2. Figure 8 presents plan and profile drawings of the structure recorded in this unit, while Figure 9 presents a photograph of the boat structure uncovered in the unit after most of the water had been pumped out. The method of construction recorded in this excavation unit reflects what was found elsewhere along the sides of the hull. As seen in Figure 8, the outer end of the floor is cut at an angle on its top to accept an upright piece known as the second futtock. These upright futtocks form the framing, or "ribs," for the side of the hull. As shown in the profile in Figure 8, the remaining piece of second futtock rises only a short distance above the bottom of the hull. Originally, this futtock would have extended up to the level of the main deck of the hull, a distance of three or four feet. The bottom of this second futtock is the same size as the floor, 2.5 by 3.5 inches,

but it appears to begin to narrow slightly towards its top. All of the other second futtocks recorded on the hull are identical to this one.

Attached to the ends of the floors and the second futtocks is a two-inch-thick, triangular-shaped piece of wood identified as the first futtock, but traditionally known as a "cocked hat" because of its shape (Bates 1981:30; Kane 2004:101). The cocked hat joins the floor to the second futtock and these three pieces together; the floor, first futtock and second futtock, comprise a "frame" (see Figure 5). The cocked hats are attached to the floors and the second futtocks with spikes. As seen in Figures 8 and 9, the cocked hats on the two forward frames in Excavation Unit 2 are attached to the bow side of the floors, while the other one is attached to the aft (stern) side of the floor. It appears that Excavation Unit 2 just happened to expose that location in the hull where the position of the cocked hat shifted from one side of the frame to the other. Changes in construction of this type, where the placement or orientation of a structural piece is reversed or shifted slightly, are typical in boat and ship construction. Commonly, these changes occur at logical transitions in the overall pattern of construction, such as at the middle of the hull or at the point where the sides or bottom of the hull begin to turn inward toward the stern or bow. It does appear that Excavation Unit 2 is located at the point where the generally straight side of the hull begins to turn inward toward the narrower stern.

The juncture of the floor and second futtock is known as the "chine" and it represents the sharp angle at the turn of the bilge of the hull. As seen in Figure 8, the outboard end of the floor and the lower, outer end of the second futtock are cut at an angle to accept a hull plank, known as the chine plank. The orientation of the chine plank is parallel to the inside face of the cocked hat. This angled, or "soft" chine, at the juncture of the bottom of the hull with the sides, is characteristic of nineteenth century western river steamboat construction (see Figure 5). This is in contrast to the "hard" chine, or right angle joint, found on many other types of flat-bottomed craft, such as barges. In addition to the chine plank, a remnant of hull plank was attached to the outside of the upright futtock. No precise measurements were obtained on either this hull plank or the chine plank, but elsewhere on the wreck hull planks are two inches thick and range from five to eight inches wide. In addition, the bottom hull planks, which are attached to the underside of the floors, are intact in this unit, as they were everywhere else on the hull where the bottom was exposed.

The chine represents a weak point in the hull and in steamboats it was typically strengthened with a long internal timber nailed on top of the cocked hats. This tim-



Figure 8: Plan and profile views of structure recorded in Excavation Unit 2.

ber, known by several names, including bilge keelson, chine clamp and bilge strake, is missing from the portion of hull exposed in Excavation Unit 2, except for a small fragment that extended out of the wall of the unit from the direction of the stern of the vessel (see Figure 8). However, the bilge keelson was recorded in other areas of the hull where it is a large plank measuring two inches thick and eight inches wide (see Figure 6). Although the bilge keelson is missing in most of Excavation Unit 2, the fasteners that originally attached it to the underlying cocked hats and floors are still in place (see profile in Figure 8). These fasteners included round iron drift pins as well as square-shanked spikes. Another structural element exposed in Excavation Unit 2 is a small, triangular piece of wood identified as a "chock" in the photograph shown as Figure 9. This piece measures 2.5 inches thick, the three sides measure 3.5 by 5 by 7 inches, and it rests on top of the floor in the angle formed by the floor and the second (side) futtock. This chock essentially filled the gap on top of the floor adjacent to the cocked hat and provided a wider face against which the bilge keelson could rest. No examples of similar pieces have been found in the published literature on the construction of nineteenth century steamboats, barges or other similar flat-bottomed river craft. However, it is generally recognized that published information



Figure 9: Photograph of the boat structure exposed in Excavation Unit 2.

on many details of construction of these types of craft is lacking, because few written records were kept, few plans were made, and building was generally by "eye" and experience.

The spacing between the three floors in Excavation Unit 2 is 15 inches, meaning the floors are placed on approximately 18-inch centers. This floor spacing is generally the same as recorded elsewhere on the vessel, where it varied between about 14 and 16 inches. It is suspected that some of the variation is due to inaccuracies in the underwater measurements and to distortions in the hull caused by lying on a sloping bank. The floor spacing recorded on the New Iberia Shipwreck is typical of what is found on nineteenth century steamboats (Kane 2004).

Test Trench 5 was a square-shaped area where the jet pump was used to expose the extreme stern portion of the remaining hull (see Figure 3). This test trench cleared an area extending from the end of the remaining keelson to what proved to be the stern edge of extant hull

planking. This portion of the wreck was disturbed when construction at the site began, including the removal of a large piece of timber comprising portions of the keelson and sternpost. Despite this disturbance, several construction features of interest were recorded in this area. As seen in Figure 10, the keelson is broken off about four feet forward of the end of existing hull planks. The last floor remaining in the hull appears to be what is known as a "half floor" in that it does not extend entirely across the hull but was butted against the side of a keelson-like timber, identified as the "deadwood section" in Figure 10. Although now lying flat, this floor, and the bottom of the boat's hull, originally angled upwards as shown in the profile in Figure 10.

The piece identified as a "deadwood section" in Figure 10 appears to be a timber that lay beneath the true keelson. Deadwood consists of timbers that are stacked on top of the keel to build it up at the bow and the stern. The deadwood fills the space in the narrowing ends of



Figure 10: Plan and profile views of structure recorded in Test Trench 5.

the hull and provides a face against which frames can be set. In addition, the deadwood provides a strong bulwark to which the bow stem and the sternpost are attached. The keelson originally extended farther toward the stern and over the top of the deadwood. Although now missing, iron drift pins that once attached the keelson to the top of this piece of deadwood are still present (see Figure 10). A piece of plank, approximately the same thickness as the hull planking, is attached to the bottom of this piece of deadwood. This plank can be said to represent the "keel," although it appears to have been flush or almost flush with the bottom hull planking. The lack of a true keel, or the use of only a plank for a keel, was not unusual in nineteenth century river steamboats (Kane 2004).

The large piece of boat structure recovered at the start of dredging in November 2005 came from the very stern of the wreck (Figure 11). This piece consists of a single large timber that measures 8 feet, 10.5 inches long and 4.5 inches wide and represents the stern-most portion of the wreck. Attached to this piece are a short section of the sternpost and the lowermost, port-side hull plank, known as the "garboard strake" (Figure 12). This large timber that can best be described as stern deadwood, but it also served as the keel, recognizing that the keel on this vessel was negligible, if one existed at all. Originally, this timber extended from the "deadwood section" shown in Figure 10.

A short, six-inch-long section of the sternpost is attached to the aft end of this large timber. The sternpost is vertical and a tenon extends from its bottom into a mortise cut into the lower extension of the deadwood piece. A butterfly-shaped iron piece, known as a "fish plate," is inset and bolted into either side of the sternpost to strengthen its attachment (Figures 12 and 13). As shown in Figure 12, the forward end of the sternpost on the port side is cut out on the outside to receive the garboard strake. The starboard side of the sternpost is so deteriorated that this feature was not discernable.

Several iron drift pins extend upward at least nine inches above the top of this piece of deadwood, revealing that one or more timbers were originally attached to its top. Just forward of the sternpost, an iron bar projects at an angle from the aft end of the deadwood timber. This bar apparently extended through the sternpost and helped attach it to the deadwood timber.

Four remnants of futtocks, or frames, are attached to the port side of the deadwood timber. These frames are spaced about 12 inches apart and they become thinner toward the stern to accommodate the gradually incurving garboard strake. These frames, called "side frames" or "cant frames," fit between the deadwood and the hull planking. The one piece of hull planking still attached to these frames, the garboard strake, is two inches thick and is set into a grove or rabbet cut into the side of the piece of deadwood. The strake is attached to the cant frames and the deadwood with large iron spikes and drift pins.

In November 2005, an iron rudder gudgeon was recovered near the large piece of stern deadwood (Figure 14). Although the gudgeon was not attached to the piece of recovered timber, there is no doubt that it came from it. The gudgeon contains a socket and two flaring arms that attached around the sternpost. It would have been one of a set of two or three gudgeons attached to the back of the sternpost that served as supports for the rudder. The rudder had pintles attached to its forward end that fit into the sockets at the rear of the gudgeons, allowing the rudder to swing freely.

THE IDENTITY AND AGE OF THE NEW IBERIA SHIPWRECK

The New Iberia Shipwreck consists of almost the entire lower hull of a flat-bottomed wooden vessel with a model (incurving) stern and bow. The stern is quite "sharp," ending in a narrow sternpost. The shape of the stern and the discovery of an iron rudder gudgeon near the stern indicate the vessel was fitted with a single rudder. The hull measures 94.5 to 95 feet long, including the large piece of stern deadwood recovered in 2005. The maximum breadth of the bottom of the hull is estimated to be about 18 feet. Only remnants of the very lower portions of the sides of the hull were found in excavations so their original height is unknown. However, flat-bottomed steamboats and barges traveling Bayou Teche after about 1840 had relatively shallow hulls, rarely more than about six feet deep and more often on the order of three feet to four feet deep (Birchett et al. 2001). Thus, it can be reasonably estimated that the sides of the New Iberia Shipwreck were about four feet high. Assuming this depth of hull and the slight flare of the sides recorded in Excavation Units 1 and 2 and Test Trench 3, it is postulated that the maximum breadth of the hull on the main deck was about 20 to 21 feet. In summary, then, it is estimated that this vessel originally measured about 95 feet long, 20 feet wide and had a depth of hull of three to five feet.

The frames in the hull consist of rectangular, sawcut floors, cocked hat futtocks and second futtocks. The frames in the aft one-third of the hull use single floors, while paired floors are found in the central portion of the hull. Paired floors may have been confined to the "dead flat" portion of the hull, i.e., the mid portion of



Figure 11: The large portion of stern deadwood with attached sternpost shortly after its discovery in November 2005. The identities of principal components are provided.



Figure 12: Plan and profile views of the large piece of stern deadwood recovered from the wreck in November 2005.



Figure 13. The large piece of stern deadwood showing the "fish plate," the remaining piece of sternpost, the garboard strake and the keel/deadwood. (Photograph taken 7/22/2006).



Figure 14: The iron rudder gudgeon recovered from the New Iberia Shipwreck site.

the hull where the bottom is entirely flat and the sides are straight. The chine at the edges of the hull is angled, or "soft." The pieces of deadwood recovered from the stern of the wreck suggest that the vessel had no true keel; in its place was a plank no thicker than the other hull planks. The keelson consists of a central timber attached to the top of the floors. In addition to the keelson, other longitudinal timbers found on the wreck include floor strakes and bilge keelsons. The exterior of the hull is planked with two-inch-thick planks.

The techniques of construction used in the New Iberia Shipwreck reflect exactly the techniques used in building flat-bottomed river vessels, particularly steamboats, from about 1830 to the early years of the twentieth century. This was a period when efforts were made to reduce the weight and draft of western river steamboats so they could travel more efficiently on the often shallow waters of the Mississippi River drainage (Hunter 1949; Kane 2004). Prior to the 1830s, most western river steamboats had relatively deep, rounded hulls and were built with large, often hand-hewed, framing timbers. After about 1830, western river steamboat builders began to produce long, flat-bottomed hulls using smaller, saw-cut rectangular framing timbers (Petsche 1974). Every effort was made to reduce the weight of the boat, principally by decreasing the size of the timbers used in the hull. Steamboats of this period often used paired floors in part of the hull, particularly in the forward half (Kane 2004). This is also the period when the distinctive "cocked hat" futtock began to be extensively used. The narrow stern of the hull and the use of a single rudder

indicate the New Iberia Shipwreck was a sidewheeler, rather than a sternwheeler.

It was originally thought that both the identity and age of the New Iberia Shipwreck would be easy to determine. This was because the vessel was so large that it was thought it would surely be recorded in the rather voluminous literature on boat losses along Bayou Teche. Unfortunately, this has not been as easy as initially thought. No records have been found that positively identify a boat wreck at the specific location of the New Iberia Shipwreck. However, as discussed below, it has been possible to identify the wreck, with some degree of certainty, as that of a sidewheel steamboat known as *Teche* that sank on Bayou Teche in 1868.

A variety of historical records listing steamboats lost on Bayou Teche were examined in the effort to identify the New Iberia Shipwreck. These included the several thousand enrollment records issued to steamboats at New Orleans between 1804 and 1870 (Work Projects Administration 1941-1942) and numerous primary and secondary accounts of steamboats sunk on Bayou Teche, including maps depicting wrecks in the bayou produced by Captain Emile Trinidad (1868) and William D. Duke (1870, in Wilby 1991) prior to clearing of the bayou by the Corps of Engineers in the 1870s (Pearson et al. 2007). All sternwheelers were eliminated from consideration given the archaeological evidence that the New Iberia wreck was certainly a sidewheeler. Relying on these sources, the best candidate for the wreck is the steamer known as Teche that sank on Bayou Teche in 1868. The Teche was a sidewheel steamboat built in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1860 that, over its short eight-year life, had a varied and interesting career as commercial steamer, Confederate "cottonclad" gunboat, and United States Navy armed "tinclad." Every secondary historical source examined states that the steamboat that became the Teche was originally named Tom Sugg. However, this is not true. The first and only enrollment document for this steamer, issued in Cincinnati on October 20, 1860, clearly states that the name of the boat was "Sam Sugg" (National Archives 1860). This document notes that the vessel was "new" and was owned by two men from Des Arc, Arkansas; William Harvey and T. C. Sugg. This enrollment further notes that the Sam Sugg was a sidewheeler with a burden of $62^{39}/_{95}$ tons, a length of 90 feet, a breadth of 22 feet, a depth of hull of 3 feet, 6 inches, and had a "pink stern," referring to a very pointed and sharp stern. The town of Des Arc is located on the White River and it is likely that the Sam Sugg, with its small size and shallow draft, was constructed specifically to work on the shallow waters of the upper White River above Des Arc.

Nothing is known about the activities of the steamer Sam Sugg after its launch in October 1860 until the summer of 1861, by which time the steamboat had been renamed Tom Sugg and was one of several light draft steamers serving the commercial interests of the upper White River (Huddleston 1976). In July 1861, Captain E. H. Fletcher of the Confederate Army reported the he and a contingent of Confederate troops transferred from the large, 237-foot-long steamer Sovereign to the "little Tom Sugg" at the town of Powhatan, Arkansas, in order to proceed to his command on the upper White River (Huddleston 1976:12). By 1862, military action was reaching the White River. That year, Lieutenant John W. Dunnington, commander of the Confederate gunboat Pontchartrain on the Mississippi River, was named a Colonel in the "Provisional Army" by General Thomas Hindman and placed in command of defenses along the White River. One of the actions taken by Lt. Dunnington was to line the Tom Sugg with cotton bales and mount "an 8-inch Columbia at her bow" (Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies 1885:37). The Tom Sugg was one of many southern steamers converted to "cottonclads" by the Confederate government during the Civil War. Although many sources refer to the Tom Sugg as a Confederate "gunboat," there is no evidence that the steamer was officially taken into the Confederate Navy. The few extant records that relate to the Tom Sugg's activities as a Confederate vessel imply that the steamer served principally as an armed transport (National Archives 1862).

The steamer remained in Confederate service until August 14, 1863, when it was captured by the Federal vessel USS Cricket at the town of Searcy on the Little Red River, a tributary of the White River. Lieutenant George M. Bache, commander of the Union gunboats on the White River, was impressed with the Tom Sugg and reported that it was "a fine little side-wheel boat, and I think would make an excellent light-draft gunboat for these rivers" (Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies [hereinafter cited ORN] 1912:355). Lt. Bache made immediate use of the Tom Sugg, employing the steamer to transport men, horses and forage on the White River. He considered the steamer a prize of war, going so far as to refer to it as the "U.S.S. Tom Sugg" in reports (ORN 1912:356). The U.S. Navy was in need of small, light draft boats that could be armed and used for patrol and surveillance along the rivers and streams in the Mississippi River drainage. Admiral David Porter, commander of the Mississippi Squadron, ordered Lt. Bache to send the Tom Sugg to Cairo, Illinois, as soon as possible where it could be converted into an armored gunboat.

The Tom Sugg was taken to Cairo, near the juncture of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, for refitting and in September 1863 Admiral Porter wrote to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles requesting that the "Thomas Sugg" be renamed Tensas, noting "the Sugg turns out to be an excellent vessel, and will make one of our most useful gunboats" (ORN 1912:418). The steamer was acquired by the U.S. Navy from the Illinois Prize Court for \$7,000 and the newly christened USS Tensas was designated Tinclad Number 39 in the Third Division of the Mississippi Squadron (Figure 15) (Silverstone 1989:245; Way 1994:458). "Tinclads" were lightly armored vessels fitted with guns for service on western rivers. Most, like USS Tensas, were former commercial steamers that could be rapidly converted for wartime use. They drew very little water, making them ideal for operations on the region's smaller rivers and tributaries, they were highly maneuverable and they could burn wood as fuel, making them less dependent on resupply than some of the larger, coal burning, river warships. Sidewheelers, like the Tom Sugg/Tensas, were considered more useful than sternwheel boats. By the end of the war, more than sixty of these vessels had been placed in service. As the Tensas, the vessel is described as a "4th rate" gunboat of 41 tons measuring 91 feet, 8 inches long; 22 feet, 5 inches wide and 3 feet, 7.5 inches deep; it was fitted with two, 11inch diameter high-pressure steam engines with threefoot strokes and had two boilers. The boat was armed with two, 24-pounder howitzers (ORN 1921:221-222; Way 1994:449).

In December 1863, Elbert C. Van Pelt, identified as both Acting Master and Acting Ensign, was named commander of the USS *Tensas* and he remained in command until the end of the war (United States Navy 1863:236). The *Tensas* served in the Third Division of the Mississippi Squadron and was involved principally in guard duty at Cairo, Mound City, and Paducah and in patrols on the Ohio and Tennessee rivers (ORN 1914:237, 749; 1917:26, 100, 174). In July 1865, with the war over, the *Tensas* was one of many vessels in the Mississippi Squadron taken to Mound City to be dismantled and sold at auction. The USS *Tensas* was decommissioned on August 7, 1865, and on August 17 Captain Emile B. Trinidad, of New Iberia, purchased the *Tensas* at auction for \$6,200 (ORN 1917:285, 332; 1921:222).

Captain Trinidad brought his new steamer south, renamed it *Teche* and enrolled it in New Orleans on October 13, 1865. In that enrollment document, the *Teche* is described as a steamboat with "one deck, no masts, pink stern, plain head, [and] side wheels." The burden of the vessel is given as 64.54 tons and its dimensions are 95.6 feet long, 22.5 feet wide and 3.6 feet deep (Work Projects

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Figure 15: Identification flags of the vessels serving in the Third Division of the Mississippi Squadron during the Civil War. The USS *Tensas* was one of the "Light Drafts" in this division and the white, red and blue pennant it flew is shown at the bottom of the right hand column (Hoel n.d.).

Administration 1942:6:267). These measurements are slightly different from those given for the steamer when built in 1860 and when serving as a tinclad, but they are almost identical to those of the New Iberia Shipwreck. This enrollment specifically notes that the *Teche* had a "pink stern," just as the wreck at New Iberia has and as the *Sam Sugg* had when newly built. The burden of the *Teche*, 64.54 tons, is close to the 69⁸⁹/₉₅ tons estimated for the hull of the New Iberia Shipwreck as discussed in Pearson et al. 2007.

No photographs or illustrations of the Teche have been located, nor have any illustrations been found showing the vessel when it was the tinclad USS Tensas. The Teche probably resembled the typical small sidewheeler of the mid-nineteenth century as depicted in Figure 16. The boilers were located forward on the main deck, while the paddlewheels were set somewhat aft of the center of the boat. The main deck also housed the engines and other machinery, plus it served as the main storage area for cargo. A range of cabins for passengers and crew was located above the main deck. This deck also contained a dining area and, often, a saloon where passengers could relax. On small steamboats, the pilot house rested on top of these cabins. It is suspected that this was the case for the Teche. However, on larger boats another level of cabins, known as the "texas," was often built on top of the main cabin deck. Figure 16 shows the cabin deck extending all the way to the stern of the boat,

but cabins on a small boat like the *Teche* may not have continued this far aft.

Captain Trinidad used the *Teche* in the trade between New Orleans and towns along Bayou Teche carrying sugar, cotton, general merchandise and passengers. By 1866, the steamer was owned by Dr. Alfred Duperier of St. Martin Parish, and, by 1867, the *Teche* was owned by the Attakapas Mail Transportation Company, with which Captain Trinidad was associated. The captain of the *Teche* that year was Edmund Castillo, long-time Bayou Teche steamboatman (Pearson et al. 2007). The last mention of the *Teche* in official records is a handwritten notation on its final enrollment document issued in New Orleans on July 12, 1867, stating that the "Vessel wrecked in Bayou Teche in the year 1868" (National Archives 1867). Neither the day nor the exact location of this loss is reported.

The loss of a steamboat like the *Teche* was an important event, typically reported in local newspapers. Therefore, a careful examination of local and regional newspapers for the year 1868 was conducted to see if there was any mention of the loss. The *Planter's Banner*, published in the town of Franklin, was the most important local newspaper at the time and it carried information on the activities of Bayou Teche steamboats. In 1868, the *Planter's Banner* published advertisements for the *Teche* through April 11. Unfortunately, there are no extant issues of the *Planter's Banner* from this date to July 11, af-



Figure 16: View of a small, sidewheel steamboat of the mid-nineteenth century. The steamer *Teche* probably closely resembled this vessel.

ter which no advertisements for the *Teche* appear. Thus, it is suspected that the steamer sank sometime between April 11 and July 11, 1868. Other regional newspapers, specifically the New Orleans' papers the *Bee*, the *Tribune* and the *Daily Picayune* and the Baton Rouge *Tri-Weekly Advocate* were examined for this several month period, but no mention of the loss of the *Teche* was found.

While no contemporary account has been found that would positively identify the New Iberia Shipwreck, several lines of evidence connect it with the steamer Teche. The dimensions of the two vessels are almost identical, both seem to have had the same distinctive "pink stern" shape and the New Iberia wreck is identified as a sidewheeler, as was the Teche. The principal hull elements of the New Iberia wreck are made from white oak (Quercus alba), the most common wood used in steamboat construction along the Ohio River, where the Teche, as the Sam Sugg, was built. Additionally, the Teche was lost somewhere on Bayou Teche, at least putting it in the neighborhood of the New Iberia wreck. Finally and possibly most conclusively, is the relationship of the steamboat Teche with several individuals who were closely associated with the town of New Iberia, where the wreck lies. Captain Emile. Trinidad and John B. Price, principals in the Attakapas Mail Transportation Company that owned the steamer at the time of its loss. both resided in New Iberia in 1868. Edmond Castillo, the last listed captain of the Teche, resided not far up the bayou in St. Martinville, but he was a well-known figure in New Iberia and the landing there would have been the principal up-bayou port for his boats (Pearson et al. 2007).

The New Iberia Shipwreck may have initially sunk where it now lies, but its position close to the bank suggests that it was pulled against the shore to move it out of the channel or to gain access for salvage. Because of their great interest in insuring clear navigation along Bayou Teche, it is presumed that Captain Trinidad, and the other partners in the Attakapas Mail Transportation Company, would have taken measures to insure that their sunken steamer Teche was moved out of the navigation channel quickly and to a location where it was not a hazard. The New Iberia wreck lies at what was the southern end of the nineteenth century steamboat landing for the town. It seems logical that the damaged steamer would have been towed to such a location where Captain Trinidad and the Attakapas Mail Transportation Company had some control and where their boat would be accessible for salvage. In fact, it was not unusual for damaged or wrecked steamboats to be moved to a location where they were accessible and could be either repaired or salvaged and there are numerous examples in Louisiana where the remains of stripped and abandoned vessels exist near and adjacent to landings and docks (Pearson et al. 1989).

The lack of any record of the *Teche* after 1868 suggests the steamer was salvaged rather than repaired after the sinking. If so, after it was pulled against the bank, everything of worth would have been removed. Of particular value were the engines, boilers, and other metal parts that could be used in other boats or for other purposes. If the sinking did occur elsewhere, it is possible that the steamer was partially stripped even before it was moved to New Iberia. It is suspected that the hull was dismantled to below the water level of the bayou. Shortly after this, the hull began to fill with dark gray clay from Bayou Teche. In 1910, the bluff adjacent to the now buried wreck was built up and outward, eventually covering a portion of the remaining hull, removing it from view

and, eventually, from memory. This scenario of the abandonment, salvage, and burial of the wreck of the steamer *Teche* seems perfectly reasonable and fits the historical and archaeological data.

The New Iberia Shipwreck represents just one of hundreds of steamboats that sank on Louisiana waters in the nineteenth century. However, it is one of a very small number that have received any archaeological examination (Pearson et al. 2007). As such, it adds considerably to our knowledge of nineteenth century steamboat construction. The wreck, if it is in fact the steamboat *Teche*. as appears to be the case, must be considered historically important as well as historically unique. The Teche was important to the transportation and economic history of the Bayou Teche region, carrying passengers and goods into and out of the area. In addition, the steamer was associated with some of the more important steamboat captains and owners of the state. Beyond this, the Teche must be considered unique in light of its history as the USS Tensas, a United States Navy tinclad serving on western rivers, and as the Confederate transport and "cottonclad" Tom Sugg on the White River in Arkansas. Further, the remains of the Teche provide construction information on a small, mid-nineteenth century sidewheel steamboat that is of considerable import given that almost all published and archaeological information on steamboats of the period relates to much larger vessels. In light of these facts, the New Iberia Shipwreck has been nominated to and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Further, the bulkhead construction at the wreck site has been altered to avoid the remains and the wreck has been reburied to protect it. The remains of the Teche still lie buried and submerged beneath the murky waters of Bayou Teche, where they have rested for over 140 years.

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