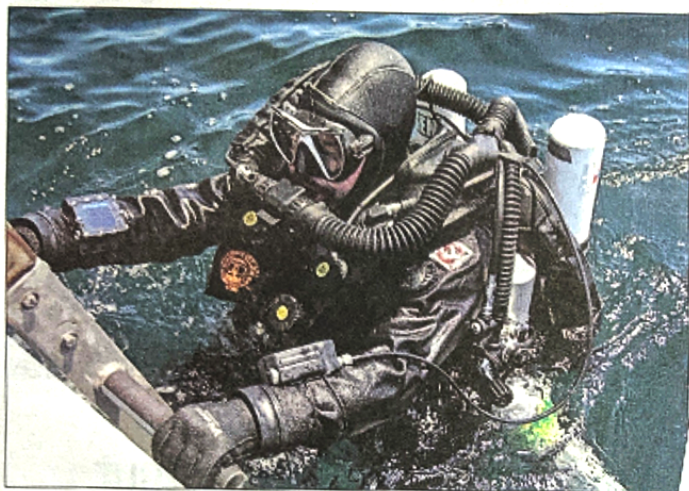


# AROUND THE ISLAND

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ECO-PHOTO EXPLORERS PHOTOS

Clockwise from top left: A team member is geared up for deep-sea diving to search for a sunken ship; *The R.P. Resor*, which sank off the coast of New Jersey and is a popular wreck for New York-based dive boats to visit; Eco-Photo Explorers was formed in 1994 to help promote interest in protecting the environment and local marine life such as the fish and crab pictured.

## Hidden — and wet — history

### Historical Society looks at Long Island shipwrecks

BY RICHARD LOMUSCIO | REPORTER

The wreck of the *USS Ohio* sits on the bottom off Conklin's Point in Southold, right where the North Ferry used to cross many years ago.

This is one of the many wrecks off Long Island that Michael Salvarezza of Eco-Photo Explorers discussed at a presentation June 1 at the Shelter Island Historical Society. Eco-Photo Explorers is a New York-based organization founded in 1994 to help protect the underwater environment by bringing public awareness through the use of underwater photography and exploration.

Mr. Salvarezza said there are thousands of shipwrecks around Long Island, noting that most of the vessels met their fate because of war, bad weather, fire and running aground.

The *Ohio* was built at the Brooklyn Navy Yard in 1817 and served in the Civil War and the Mexican War. It was taken out of commission in 1883 and sold to a man from Maine. A year later, the ship was burned in Greenport

harbor, where it remains in about 20 feet of water and is a popular destination for scuba divers.

The masthead, "Hercules," sits on display in the village park in Stony Brook.

Another wreck that's close by is the British warship, the *Culloden*. According to Mr. Salvarezza, the *Culloden* was on a mission to intercept French ships attempting to get through a blockade in Rhode Island. In January 1781, the ship ran aground in 15 feet of water off Fort Pond Bay near Montauk. The site is now called Culloden Bluff. *The Culloden* takes time for underwater explorers to find since it's usually covered with sand.

Artifacts from the wreck include a cannon at the East Hampton Maritime Museum.

Mr. Salvarezza went on to explain reasons for diving, which include looking at history directly, getting close up with all forms of marine life and having an opportunity to recover artifacts. He showed photos of sea anemones growing all over a cannon, pointing out that some sea life love the wrecks. The

audience also saw photos of an old first-aid pack, "a brass valve" and numerous utensils and bowls. He also showed some recovered ammunition which the Coast Guard now prohibits removing from wrecks as it's unstable.

Notable among the 15 or so other wrecks that Mr. Salvarezza described off the Rockaways, Jones Beach and New Jersey was the *Slocum*. This was a steamer that set out on June 15, 1904 with over 1,000 women and children from a Lutheran church in Manhattan, bound for a picnic two hours away on Long Island's north shore.

They never made it.

The boat caught fire 100 yards offshore, and instead of going to shore, the captain headed to North Brother Island a mile away. It was said he took this course to avoid Hell Gate, a section of the East River that's infamous for vicious currents. An inquiry found the captain guilty and he was sentenced to 10 years in prison. President Taft later pardoned him.

Another story was the disappearance of the 78-foot tugboat *Lizzie D.*

This craft was reported missing in 1922 during the Prohibition era and was said to be heading east. Searchers looked as far as Montauk without any luck. In the mid-1970s it was found on the bottom in 80 feet of water off Long Beach. It was loaded with crates of alcohol. Mr. Salvarezza suggested that the 1922 description of its direction was a ruse.

Because of the number of ships that foundered along the south shore of Long Island, there were 30 life-saving stations. The goal was to create a line from the boat to the shore to help those on board to solid ground. The line was fired to the boat by a "lyle gun," the speaker said.

Mr. Salvarezza said the question always comes up, as to who owns the wrecks.

"It's very complicated and there are many legal issues," he said, noting that wrecks are covered by admiralty law, military craft act, marine sanctuary act and Abandoned Shipwrecks Act, passed in 1988 to protect the objects from treasure hunters and preserve their historical value.