

125° 33.05'W 48° 56.02'N

The Big Beach Mystery Shipwreck

Imagine the storm that swept this sailing ship to her final resting place over 100 years ago!

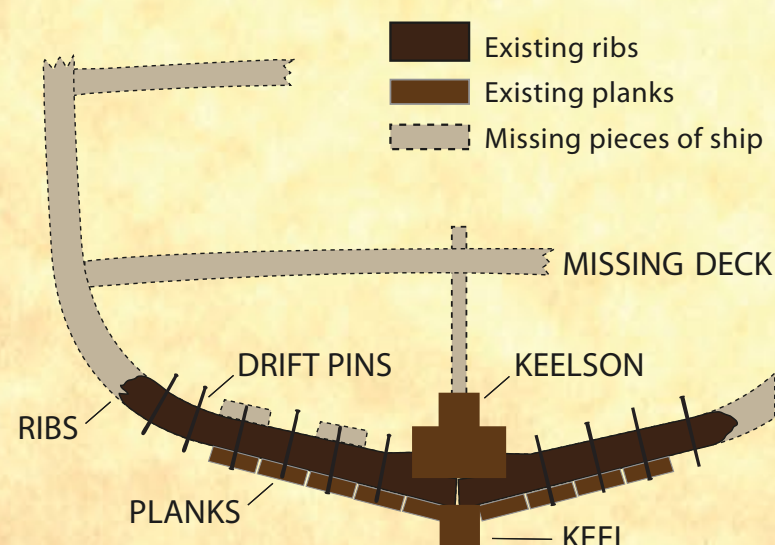
Her name is lost in time but as early as 1896 the bottom timbers of a ship were reported lying ashore in this area.*



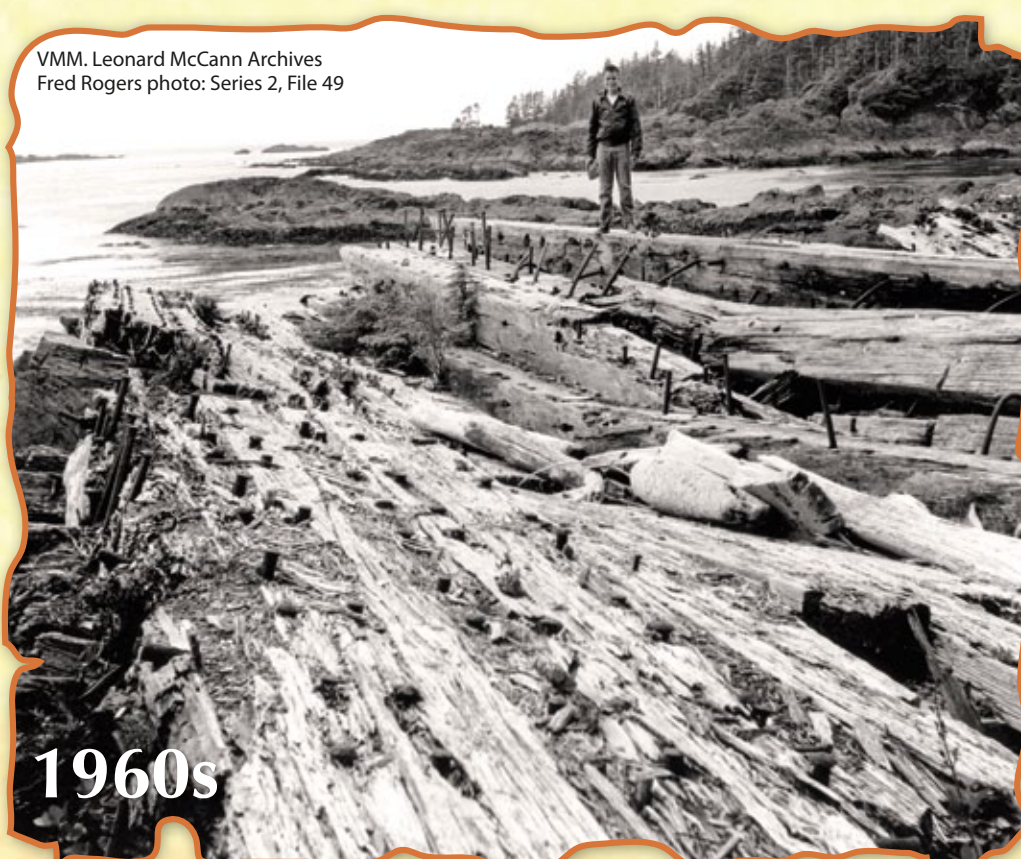
2014

Trees grow where masts once held sails on this historical artifact.

Over the years many clues as to this ship's identity have been lost to souvenir hunters and time itself. **Please take only pictures.**



Cross-section of shipwreck hull



1960s

Boy standing on keelson; note drift pins still fit tightly to the hull. Today drift pins mark the thickness of missing planks.



Judging from her timbers of Douglas Fir, wooden peg and iron "drift-pin" fastenings, this ship was probably constructed somewhere on the Northwest Coast of the Americas in the mid to late 1800s, and would have measured approximately 46 metres (150 feet) in length. As only the very lowest portion of her hull survives, it is next to impossible to determine what kind of rigging she would have carried.

Judging from her position it is clear that this ship was likely driven ashore in a southeast gale and stranded, an all-too-common fate in these waters.

For now, she keeps her secrets close; from where she hailed, to where she was bound, and who it was that sailed her.

Graveyard of the Pacific

Since the late 18th century the coastal waters of British Columbia, and in particular the Westcoast of Vancouver Island, has been the final resting place of hundreds of stricken ships and sailors. This litany of maritime disasters has earned it the name and reputation of "Graveyard of the Pacific".

The majority of these losses were recorded by survivors, would-be rescuers, or helpless witnesses, but some simply sailed off the pages of history and into the realm of mystery.

Such is the case of the Big Beach mystery shipwreck you see before you.

Tantalizing clues as to her possible identity have been found in the vicinity, including lifebelts from the Samoena and Llama, and a lifeboat from the Bergen. There are numerous reports of vessels missing in these waters during the most likely time period of the loss. They include the Lamorna, Velentura, Maxwell, Nineveh, Mat-tawan, Triumph and Amethyst.

* 1896 British Colonist Newspaper reported First Nation eye-witnesses seeing the "bottom timbers of a ship driven up" when they were walking on a beach from Ucluelet to Esowista. Verbal history also recounts that this wreck was already present when pioneer families such as the Thorntons first settled here in 1910.



Image F-02230 courtesy of the Royal BC Museum, BC Archives
Photo by Princess Maquinna passenger William Kelly

Powerful Pacific storm

November 25, 1915: The Chilean registered **Carelmapu** was a 1400 ton iron ship, bound for Seattle from Honolulu in ballast, when she came to grief off Schooner Cove (25km north of here). Note the port lifeboat being launched; it was smashed to pieces and all were lost. Of the 24 passengers and crew aboard, only five survived, plus the ship's dog "Nogi".