

CHANDLER WELLS

Years ago, I heard that there was an operation to salvage the centerboard from an abandoned schooner barge named *Chandler Wells*. She had run aground in the dark while picking her way through the Beavers. The steamer *Keystone* was towing her, losing her south of Whiskey Island Shoal in the storm of November 20, 1884. She broke up a few days later and was a total loss. Registered in Port Huron, Michigan, she was bound from Manistique, Michigan for Buffalo, New York with a cargo of lumber.

When the schooner barge was left on the reef, two men who remained aboard as watchmen almost perished. These men were later rescued by Tip Miller, a light house keeper from Beaver Island, serving before the Coast Guard was established there.

I wanted to get in on the wreck's centerboard salvage operation for the adventure of it, so I horned my way in. On September 25, 1976 Art Reibel, Jim and Mike Sawtell, and Bob Timms searched the shallow shoals south of Whiskey Island and found the centerboard of the shipwreck.

In early October, a crew of divers began attaching 250-gallon drums and 55-gallon drums to the huge box that holds the ship's centerboard. I was there to wire down some of the 55-gallon barrels with eye screws and fine cable. On October 10th we brought up the centerboard and box and lashed tight to the bottom of our lifting barge. We were ready for the tow to Paradise Bay where the salvaged prize could be stored for the winter and later shipped to Charlevoix in the spring.

CHANDLER WELLS

I tied a yellow Prestone antifreeze bottle with 200 feet of line to the centerboard, and was questioned why? I told them "things can go wrong." We proceeded then, with our barge being towed by Bob Timms tug *Claude L.* As our journey took us over the deepest part of lake bottom – 100 feet deep -- the barge lurched and three barrels popped up, and twirling behind the barge on the surface was the fluttering Prestone jug that I had tied to the centerboard earlier. At that point plan "B" was implemented the next day. Jewell Gillespie brought his tug *American Girl* to the site with a drum wire cable lifting device.

Bob was a little apprehensive about diving down to 100 feet as he had only worked at a maximum depth of 60 feet. I convinced him it was only another 40 feet deeper. So he brought the cable to the centerboard box and started to thread it through while I of course had to take a picture of the barrels that looked like prunes under 44 PSI of additional pressure at that depth. I helped Bob finish and we went back to the surface.

Once the box was brought close-up behind *American Girl*, the tug started the trip to the harbor. I tied my boat *Burr-Is-Bell* to the starboard side of *American Girl* and we could only make about 1 mile per hour, because the wash was striking the centerboard that was riding crossway close behind the tug's propeller. It was getting dark and everyone was getting a little hungry, so I took *Burr-Is-Bell* to the Shamrock, and got some hamburgers and chips which I brought back to *American Girl*, still slowly underway. As I closed-in near the bow *American Girl*, her wash sucked my boat like a magnet to her side, so I just bit the bow line to a nearby cleat. As we came upon shallow water the box would tilt up allowing the wash to go underneath it, and our speed would increase considerably.

CHANDLER WELLS

Much later we were getting close to the Island electric supply cable, and I asked Jewel "What happens if the city goes dark?" His reply was "Then we go straight to Chicago." I left in *Burr-Is-Bell* as they were coming into the harbor, where they left the centerboard and box underwater.

In the spring the salvaged items were taken to Charlevoix, remaining there until Sally Fogg read an advertisement in the classified ads of the Petoskey News Review, mentioning shipwreck wood for sale. The



Dick Burris seated at the Deerwood lodge bar made of *Chandler Wells'* centerboard which he helped salvage from Whiskey Island Shoal in 1976. – Photo by _____

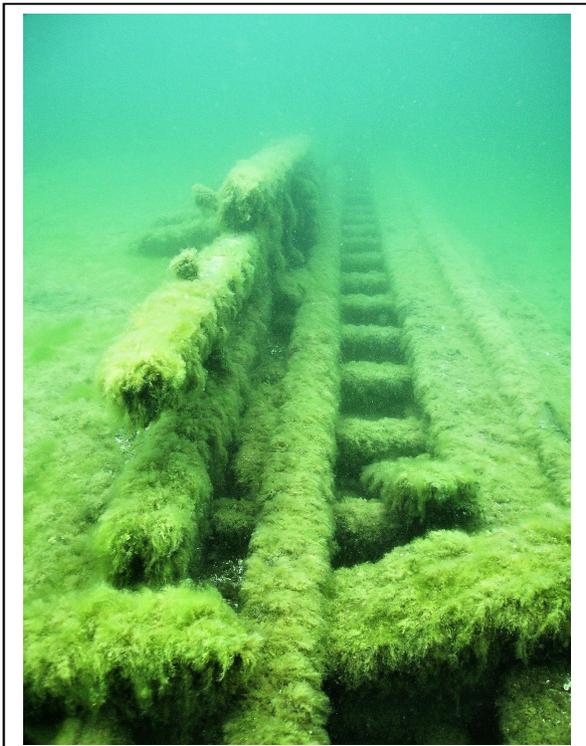


Mural of *Chandler Wells* painted by Kevin Grassmick at the Fogg's Deerwood lodge on Beaver Island. – Photo by _____

CHANDLER WELLS

Foggs purchased the centerboard from *Chandler Wells* knowing they would use it in their newly-built lodge called Deerwood. A plaque of the history is on the wall at the lodge, hung over the centerboard bar area. Keith Grassmick hand-painted a mural of the proud vessel passing through the Beaver Island area in its heyday. Spring ice flows, I have noticed, move things on the Great Lakes bottomlands as deep as 60', most likely even more. Windrows of ice work as huge sails, flowing with the wind. The higher the ice, the deeper below the surface it reaches. This movement is like a powerful underwater bulldozer.

CHANDLER WELLS



Chandler Wells in 2008. Photo by Carol Linteau

The shallowest side of the shipwreck *Chandler Wells* was moved by this action in 2016 for the first time in a few years. For many years prior, my GPS reading was on a given spot near the center of one of the shipwreck's side. Going back in 2017, the same GPS coordinate was near the stern of that wreck side, moving it approximately 60 feet. When the weather is a little warmer, I will return to see if there has been more movement this year. Another shipwreck section is 200 feet to the east in a little deeper water and did not change.



Hawse pipe. Photo by Carol Linteau



Knees along the hull. Photo by Carol Linteau

CHANDLER WELLS



Captain Dick Burris at the helm of *El Pulpo*, GPS in hand, enroute to *Chandler Wells*. Photo by Carol Lindeau

CHANDLER WELLS

My long-time buddy “Beans” has shared many dive adventures with me over the years. Once, we goofed around at the bell buoy at the entrance of the harbor, where he posed thumbing me down for a ride to Whiskey Shoal to check out *Chandler Wells* on a calm day. *El Pulpo* was loaded with all of his dive gear, with



Photo by Kal Attie.

just enough room for the two of us, the spare engine, battery and basic boating gear. On other trips aboard his tug *Resolute*, Mike Weede brought a group of divers to the wreck. Split into teams, the divers successfully found all of the wreck sections. Ann Marie Rogers (nee Turner) served as Mike’s crew that summer.

CHANDLER WELLS

Editor's Note

I have been diving *Chandler Wells* for many years since Dick Burris introduced me to this wreck. It has at least three sections which Dick, Mike Weede and others occasionally located from the air in the spring, extrapolating the coordinates to then locate the wreck from their vessels. Dick took me to Whiskey Shoals several times, usually in his trusted "Rubber Ducky" which he named *El Pulpo*, which is Spanish for "the octopus". The inflatable's name was a tongue-in-cheek reference to the dinghy from billionaire Bill Gates' yacht, *Octopus*. Dick was a pro with *El Pulpo*, exploring the lake and islands, even motoring to Cross Village on flat calm days to enjoy lunch with his wife Amy.

On one trip to the wreck, Dick deployed me as his underwater eyes, directing me where to swim and how far, so we could get GPS coordinates on the various sections of the wreck. My challenge was getting back into *El Pulpo* while suited up to dive. I am short and without great arm strength, and I had to take off most of my gear to get back into the boat. After a good long dive, I returned to the inflatable, getting ready for the battle of reboarding. As I approached, I looked up and saw Dick's latest great invention, designed to assist me getting aboard. He'd made a rope stirrup that he'd secured inside the boat, and there was his foot, testing it out above me. Once again, I marveled at his creativity and thoughtfulness. It worked great.



Dick testing his make-shift stirrup on *El Pulpo*. Photo by Carol Linteau

CHANDLER WELLS

CHANDLER WELLS

Built: 1866, in Cleveland Ohio

Dimensions: 175' length

Construction: Wooden Three-masted Schooner

Propulsion: Sail

Cargo: Lumber

Date Lost: 1884

Cause of Sinking: Ran aground in the dark on Whiskey Island Shoal, then broke up in a storm soon afterward. She was sailing from Manistique, Michigan to Buffalo, New York. Port Huron was her home port.

Maximum Depth: 35'

Source: Kevin Morlock, Third Coast Fly Website, 2010