

The 2007 SS America Project Report Addendum

By Ken Merryman
Project Manager

Overview: The 2007 America Project, which took place September 7-10, 2007, was again shorter than we like on planning and preparation due to being approved one week before the start date, although we have been doing this long enough that we can put together the details of an *America* Project very quickly now. The two big tasks were to fix the upper engine room starboard side wall and securely install the large spindled support posts on the open after deck. The engine room wall collapsed over the winter of 2005-2006 and the spindled posts fell down again shortly after the quick fix we did on them in the 2004 project. We also buttoned down a loose corner on the purser's office, replaced the steel plate that connects one side of the steel arch near the social salon, and installed a tacking strip on the base of the crew quarters divider wall. Although seeing the *America* fall apart is very disappointing and fixes are never as good as new, we had another successful repair project and helped to maintain more of the *America* structure for many years to come. If it were not for these projects the *SS America* would be a drastically different looking wreck than it is now.

The work was done using two boats the *Black Dog* and the *Heyboy* and eleven participants (front L to R) Paul Imsland, John Connoly, Bill Wallace, Rick Schmidt, (rear L to R) John Ortiz, Phil Kerber, Ken Merryman, Christy Anderson, Brian Anderson, Ken Knutson and Steve Daniel. Our thanks to all of the participants and a special thanks Brian Anderson for making the *Black Dog* available, to Kristy Anderson for buying food and doing the cooking, and to Tom Brueshaber for rounding-up and preparing the project materials.



(See project photos at the end of the report section.)

2007 Repair Tasks

This year's project was a short focused set of tasks. We only had a couple of weeks to plan it so keeping it simple was important. Basically we had one full work day and a setup day and teardown day. Our first day was cut short by bad weather. The *Heyboy* was stuck at the Hat Point Marina dock for a couple of hours when some unexpected and short-lived 35 knot winds pasted her to the dock in a corner slip with very little maneuvering room due to the low water level this year. *Black Dog* managed to cross to the island, but it was too windy and rough to work until the evening. Once we were on site the weather improved, but we had to moor both boats pointed into the wind to sit well in the northwest rollers. All tasks were completed to some extent. This year's tasks were the following:

1. The starboard upper engine room divider wall (between the engine room and the two engineer's quarters) buckled in one of the doorways and was bent over farther into the upper engine room. This wall is a light weight non-load bearing wall. The damage was probably the result of the deck being pulled off of the area a few years ago. We put back most of the decking in 2001 – at least all of the pieces we could find, which has maintained the integrity of the other walls of the chief engineers quarters, but it still left some of this wall unsupported. This was a fairly easy fix to pull the wall back into place and add an additional header board to the top and a pair of oak sisters on the sides of it to maintain its integrity. We maintained the original header since it had just pulled out of the top of the wall.

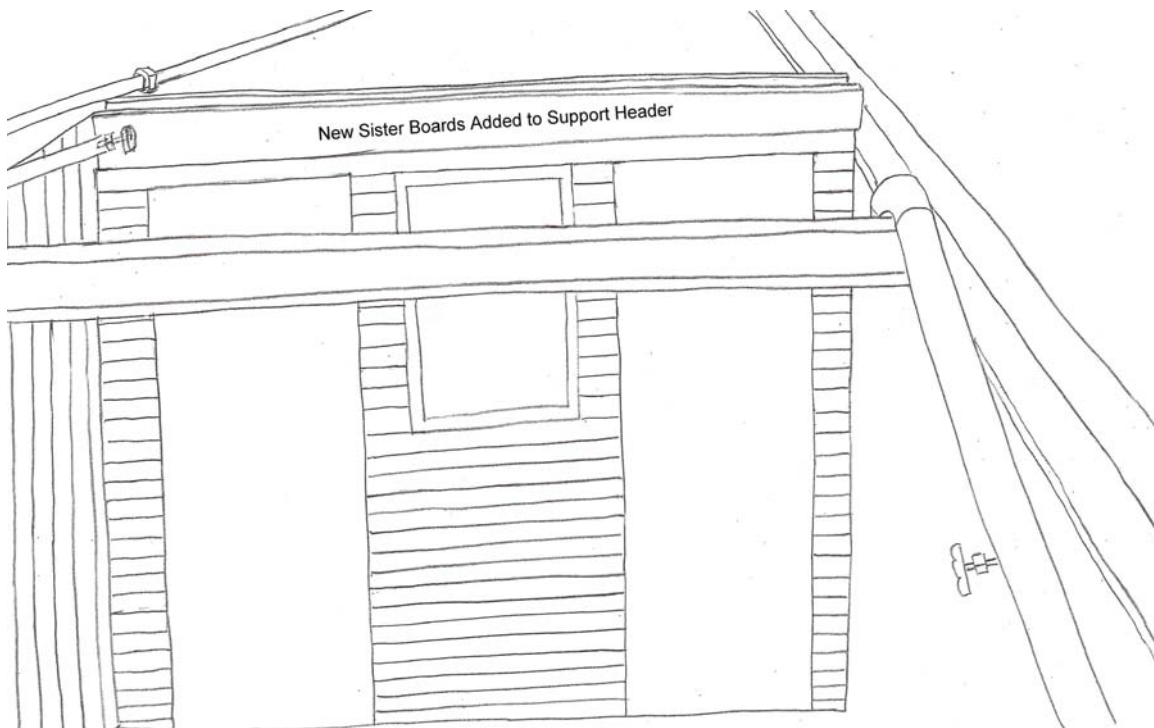
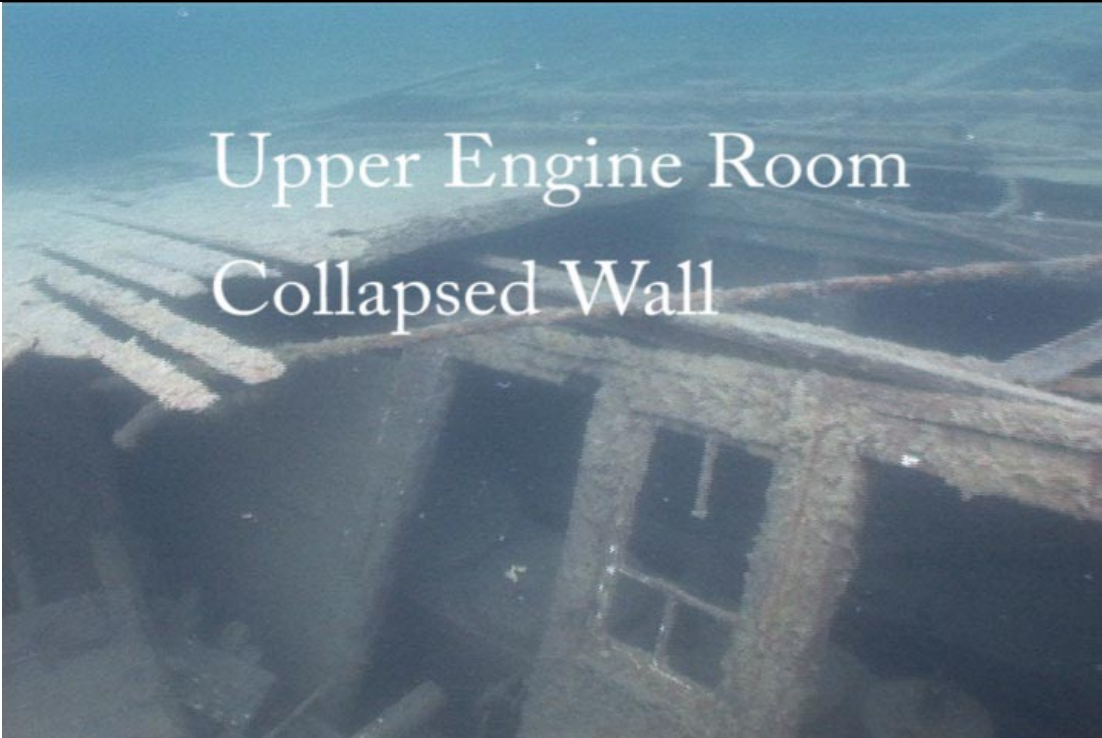
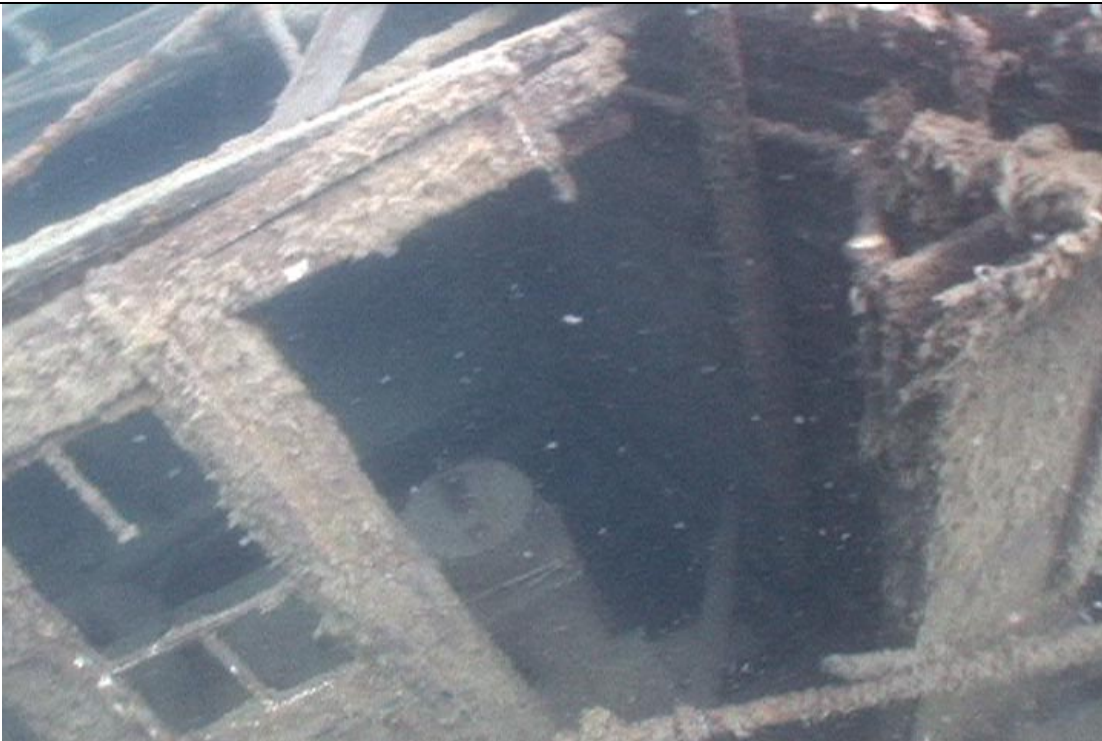


Illustration 1: The view of the wall from the starboard side amidships looking toward port.

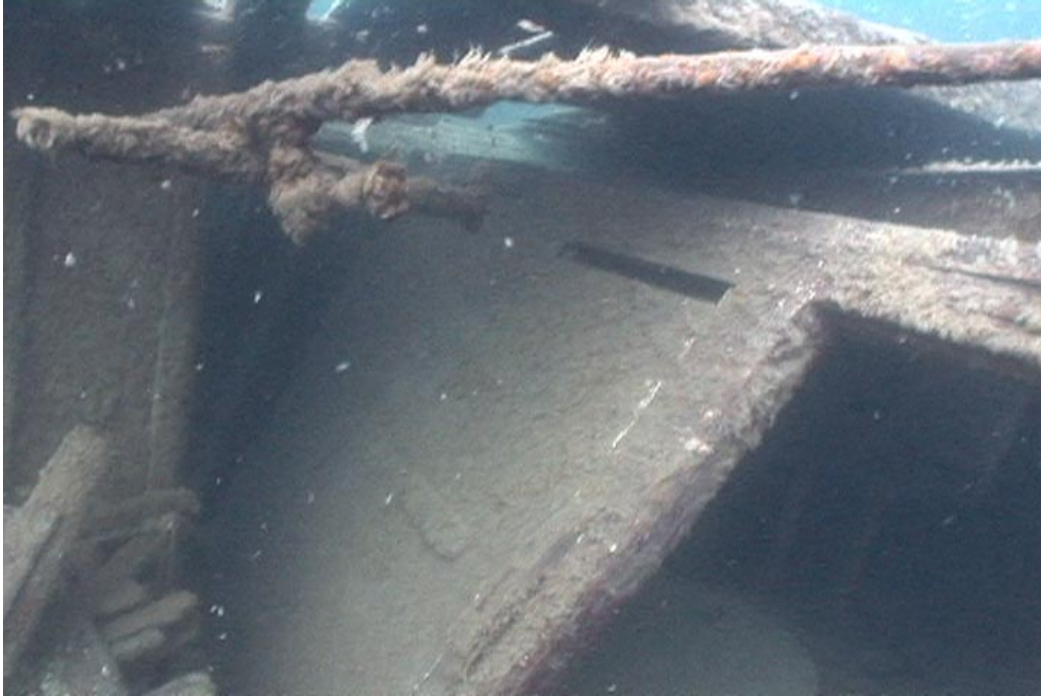


Upper Engine Room Collapsed Wall

Top view of the collapsed wall before project



The wall broke at the corner of the forward door header.



The broken wall leaned into the upper engine room.



After project repairs the wall is upright and in place. By spring the new oak will discolor to the same color as the surrounding wood and will be scarcely noticeable as an addition.

2. The bottom of the steel arch on the starboard side of the ship opposite the social salon was loose because the threaded rod fasteners we added on the last project had come loose. We added a new stronger plate and replaced all bolts with bolts and locks to keep it from happening again. (No illustrations for this minor task.)
3. Three of the four posts on the open after deck had fallen down again. We fixed these on the last project, but apparently didn't do a good enough job. We were unable to find one of the posts. This time we moved the base of the posts so the posts were perpendicular to the deck as they would have been originally, then shimmed them into place so they actually can bear some of the load of the collapsing boat deck. We also added battens to attach the posts to the beams they supported to insure the beams don't move out of position and the posts don't slip off the beams. Now the posts not only look like they once did, they also give the boat deck three more legs to stand on.

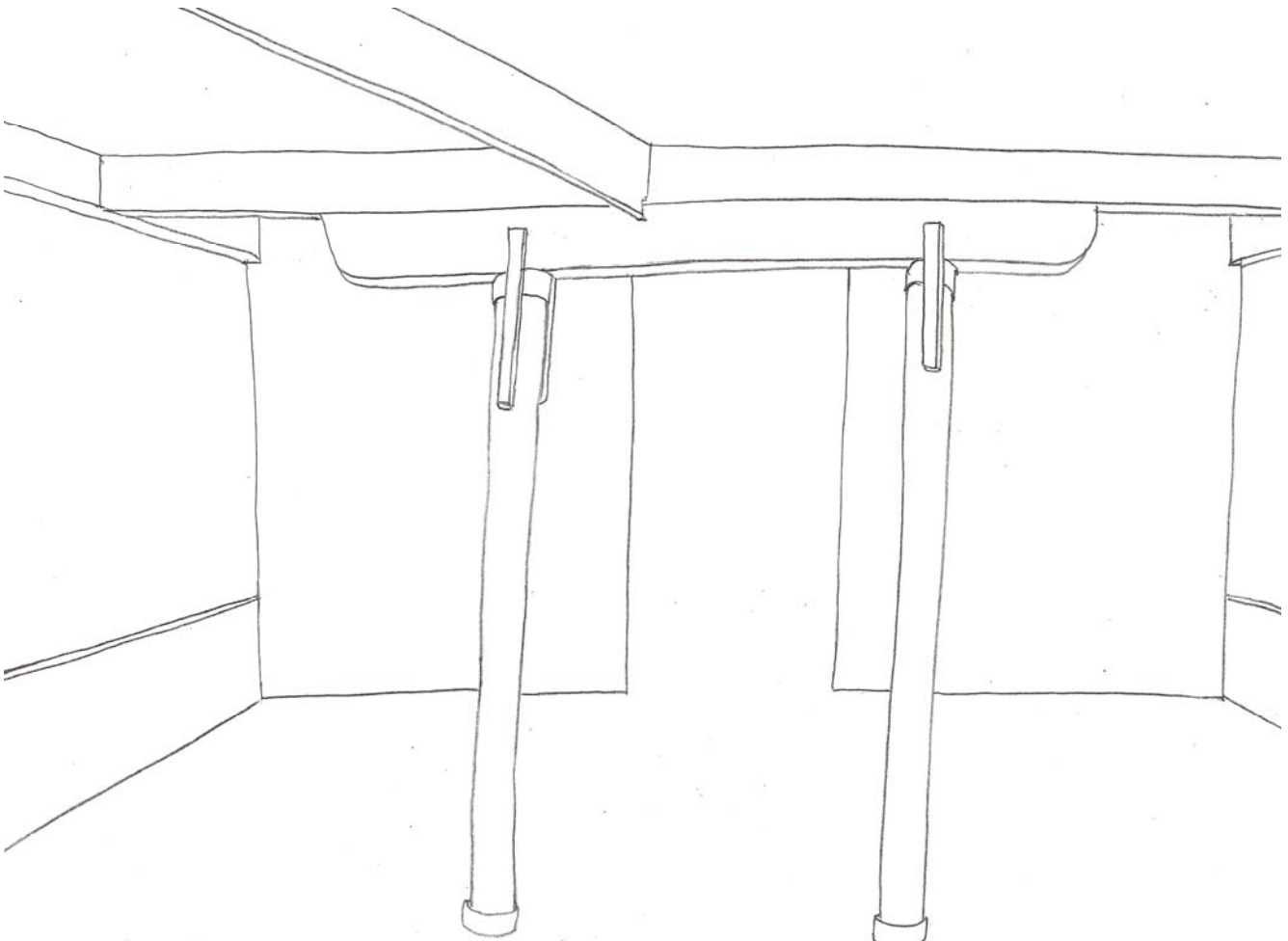
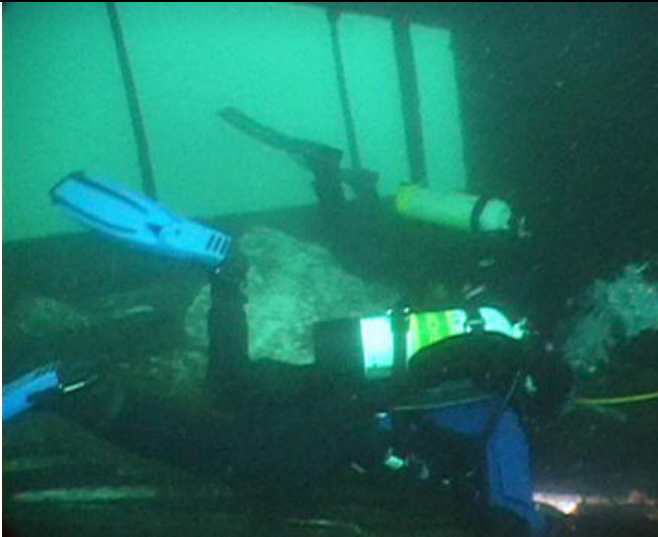
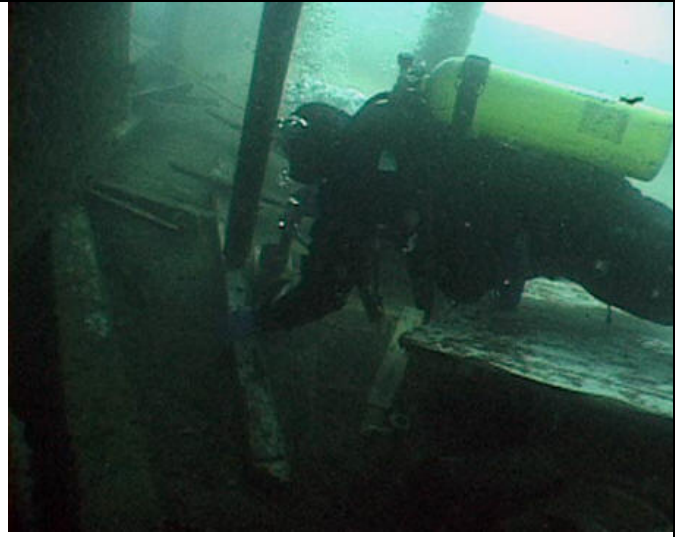


Illustration 2: The final configuration of the turned posts supporting the boat deck on the open after deck. Note the cleats or battens that were added to the tops of the posts to hold them in place under the beam. The bases of the posts are the original plumbing pipe caps set on shim blocks.



Divers measure support post base location on open afterdeck.



GLSPS diver fastens support post base to open afterdeck while supporting post on a loose board.



GLSPS carpenter and building wizard. Ken Knutson shows off the cleats added to the afterdeck posts to fasten them to the supporting beams.



We added a block to the base of the posts to shim them to the proper length. Note the original metal pipe cap which served as the base for the post.

4. The rounded corner tongue and groove woodwork on the purser's office was peeling off and was re-fastened using screws and angle brackets to hold it in place to the deck and backing boards. The wood of the cabin beams is getting mushy so there isn't much to fasten to anymore. The integrity of the wood varies from board to board depending on whether the board was the heartwood or sapwood part of the tree.



The vertical piece of wood was part of the curved corner of the purser's office and was loose and about to join the heap of loose boards on the deck. We re-fastened it into place using screws and angle brackets to restore the visual integrity of the corner structure.



The dangling corner piece from a different angle prior to the project.

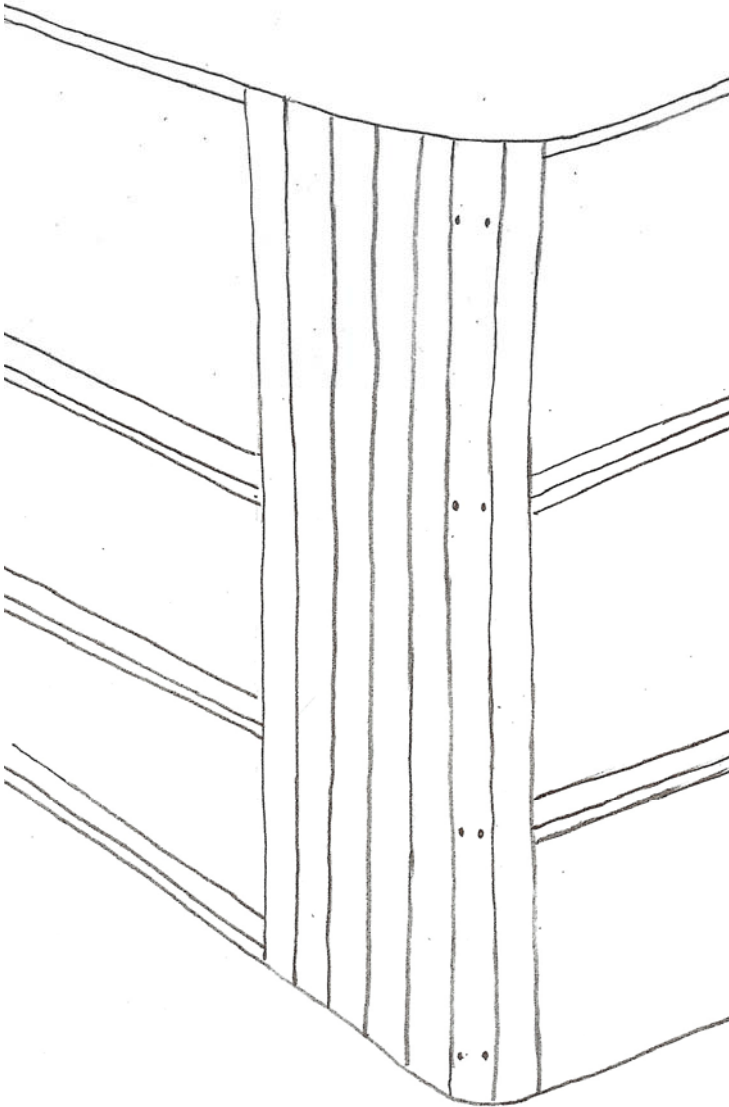


Illustration 3: Sketch artist Steve Daniel documented the completed corner task showing the screws added to fasten the corner piece to the backing boards.

5. The bottom tongue and groove paneling of the longitudinal divider wall in the crews' quarters was loose from the base plate. We added a four inch base board to sandwich it in place to the 2"x4" base plate. The bottoms of some of the paneling boards are getting too soft to fasten each board individually.

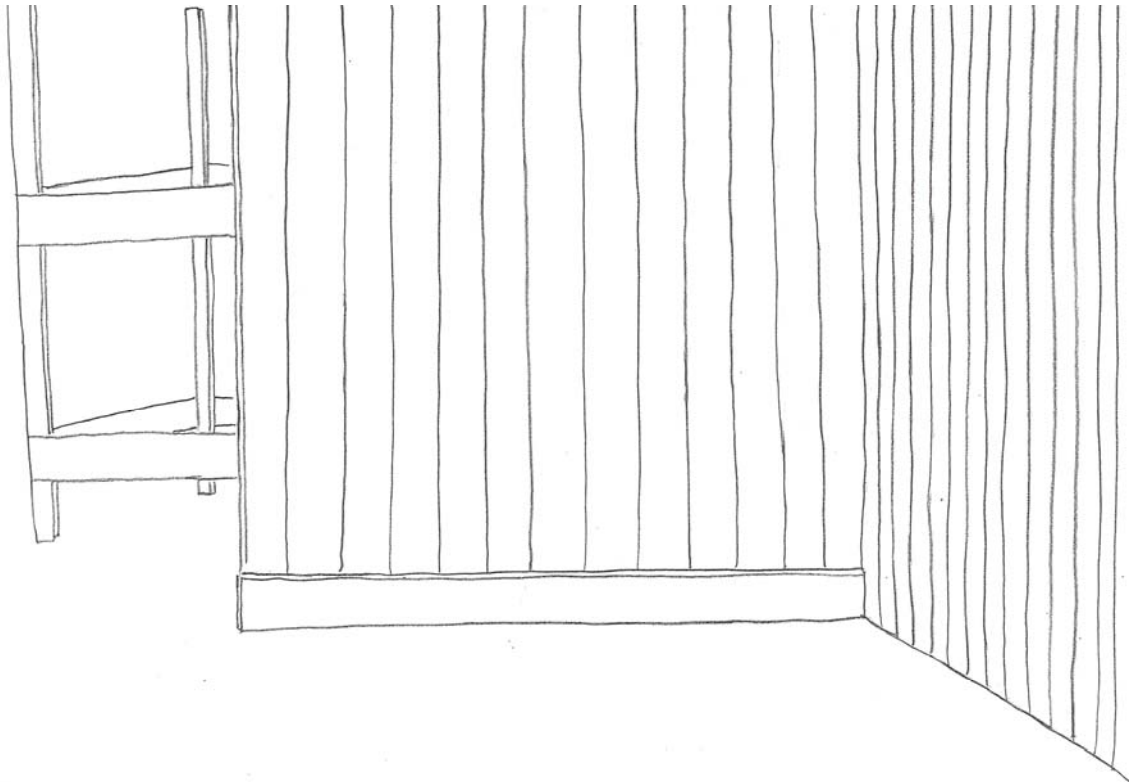
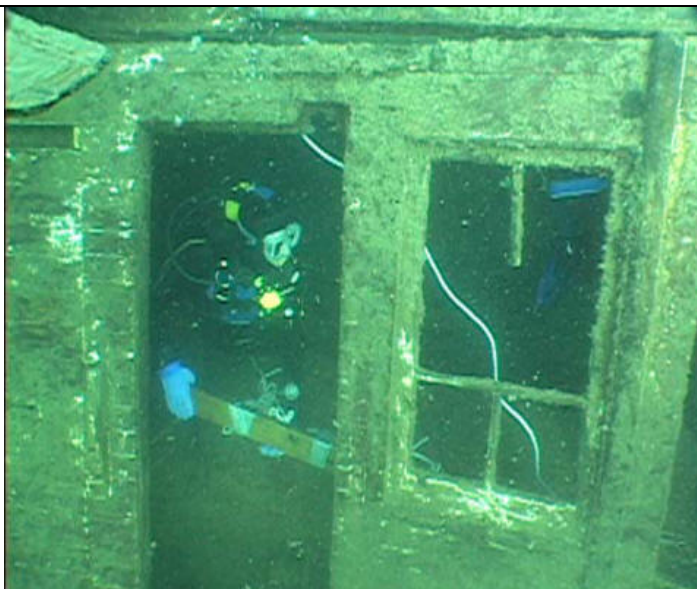


Illustration 4: The horizontal base board was added to hold the vertical tongue and groove paneling in place. Some of the paneling boards are getting too mushy on the ends to screw them to the base plate individually, so we decided to use a base board as a retainer.

Additional Project Photos



Rick Schmidt positions beam to support engine room wall in preparation to pull it into place.



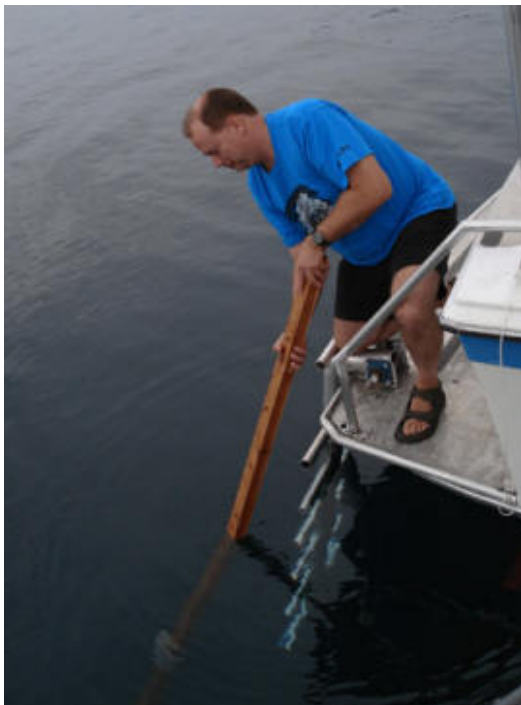
Bill Wallace made an amazing find in the wreckage of the assistant engineer's quarters--an intact globe from a wall sconce. The artifact was recovered and given to the park. The artifact will be used for the Windigo Visitor Center shipwreck display.



Heyboy pasted on the dock wall in 35 knot winds at the start of the project. Foul weather gave us a late start on the first day.



The intact wall scone globe gives us a better idea of what the furnishings of the *America* were really like.



All new wood has to be weighted to make it neutrally buoyant underwater. Phil Kerber checks the buoyancy before sending down the new wall header.



Ken Knutson and Bill Wallace on clean-up duty on the back deck of the *Heyboy* as we cruise back to Grand Portage after a successful project.

Volunteer Hours and Costs Tally

Volunteer Hours

Planning: 25 person hours;

Materials, Food, Equipment Preparation: 12 person hours total;

Travel time: Eleven volunteers a total of 16 hours each;

On site work time: Eleven volunteers – a total of two full days each;

Underwater work time: 38 hours total.

Total Project Costs for 2007:

Materials: \$113 (plus leftovers from previous projects)

Capital Equipment: \$291

Food: \$308

Travel: Donated

Boat Gas: \$622

Boat Usage: Donated by Blackdog Charters and Superior Trips

Total Out of Treasury: \$1334