

# Merida Dive Report – [www.n2junkie.com](http://www.n2junkie.com)

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Saturday, September 16, 2023

**Location:** 25 mi [32.2 km] SE of Erieau, Ontario, CAD | 32 mi [51.5km] North of Fairport Harbor, Ohio USA

**Boat:** “Nitrogen Junkie” 25ft [7.6 m] long x 8.5 ft [2.6m] beam Fiberglass, Deep V SportCraft with twin 200 HP Mercury Bluewater outboards, custom aluminum dive ladder, fully loaded electronics

**Participants:** James Moseley and Jack Papes

**Weather:** Sunny, NE Winds 5-10 knots, Wave 1 ft or less

**Dive:** MERIDIA steel hulled bulk carrier. 360 ft [110m] long. Built in 1893. Foundered with all hands in the "Black Friday Storm", October 20, 1916. [www.n2junkie.com/gallery/shipwrecks/lakeerie/merida/](http://www.n2junkie.com/gallery/shipwrecks/lakeerie/merida/)

**Depth:** 60ft – 80 ft [18m - 24m]

**Bottom Temp:** 51 F [10.6 C]

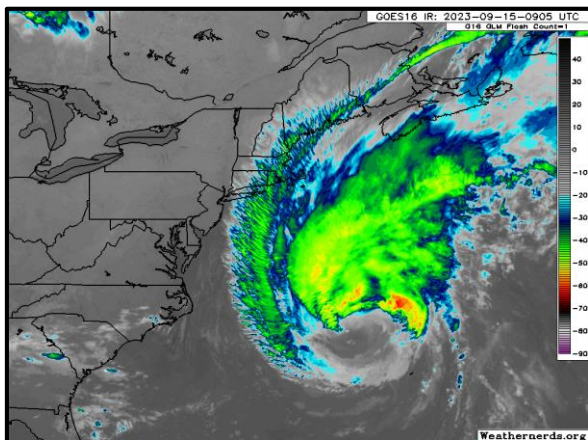
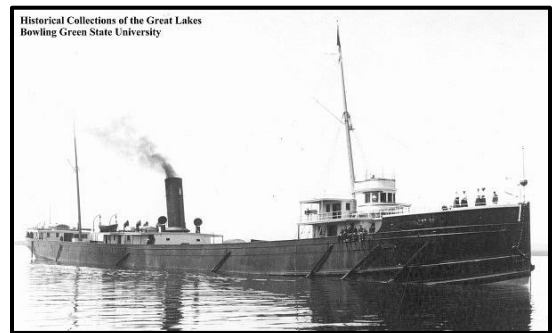
**Surface Temp:** 71 F [21.7 C]

**Thermocline:** ~50 ft [15m]

**Bottom Visibility:** 15-20 ft [5-6m]

**Surface Visibility:** 10 ft [3m]

**Notes:**

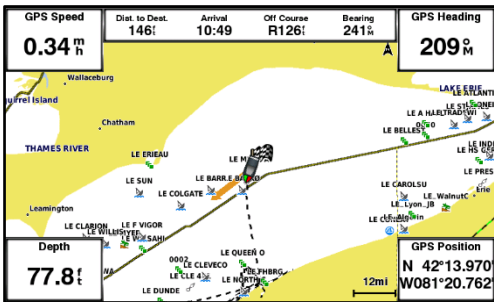


In the early morning hours of September 16, 2023, the post tropical state of Hurricane Lee and her 80 mph [129kph] winds were bearing down on the coast of Maine. For reasons beyond the understanding of this Great Lakes explorer, this vortex 700miles [1100 km] to the northeast laid down the local winds to a level affording us sub 1 ft [0.3 m] seas – a welcome, although rare state on a weekend, affording a small boat comfortable access to the riches to be found in the middle of Lake Erie, 30 miles [48km] beyond the south shore.

I awoke early on this sunny Saturday morning, shook off the fatigue from a busy work week and commenced to pull together my dive gear. The plan to take advantage of the calm water being laid two days earlier.

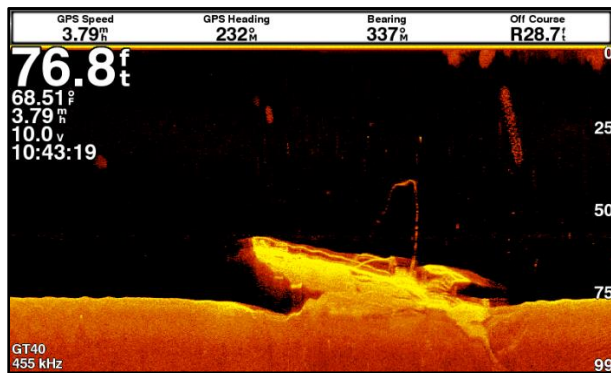
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The forecast called for the winds to diminish as the day progressed, so I advised longtime dive buddy, James Moseley to meet me at my dock in Fairport Harbor, Ohio at 10:00 AM. James resides in North Canton, Ohio about an hour and a half to the south. He was highly motivated to extend the hours on his closed-circuit rebreather which he adopted this season. Little did he know that the quality of this central basin site alone made it well worth his while.

Once loaded, having not visited the Merida before, we took a couple minutes at the dock to confirm that our GPS coordinates were accurate as well as correctly entered in the boat's navigation systems. The primary references here were Georgann & Mike Wachter's book "[Erie Wrecks East](#)" and [www.shipwreckworld.com](http://www.shipwreckworld.com). Both



sources agreed within a few feet. The site lay nearly 32 mi [51.5km] due North of the dock we were tied to.

We were soon underway, comfortably cruising north of 30 mph [48kph] enjoying the sub 1 foot [0.3m] seas, taking care to avoid the hordes of recreational fishermen enjoying the same. It took us a little over 1 hour to arrive at the site,



which showed up on the sonar immediately. We took a couple passes to understand how she lay and strategically anchored midships on the up-wind side, which put the anchor on the soft bottom off the portside on this day. 25 ft [8m] of anchor chain insured a good bite, not that she was going far in the light to nonexistent breeze.

James geared up first and back rolled in off the port gunwale. I followed him 15-20 minutes later. The bottom afforded a reasonable amount of ambient light and about 15-20 ft [5-6m] of visibility, which is a pretty good day in the central basin of Lake Erie this late in the season. I carried my Nikon D300s camera rig, breathing air from a set of double 100 cubic foot [12L] tanks. After checking the anchor, I headed (what I later determined to be) forward along the portside. She is 10-15 ft [3-5m] off the bottom of the lake. Hull damage and the low visibility made for some confusion and a cautious pace, but several bollards, the windlass, a capstan, two anchors, and the forecastle summed up quickly to the conclusion that the bow of the wreck had been achieved.

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Proactively reducing the output of the camera strobes to minimize the backscatter from the abundance of large particles suspended in the water, I took numerous photos of the area before heading aft.



With the advantage of this orientation, coupled with my eyes having adjusted to the dark, the trip aft was much quicker. Our anchor line was adjacent to a deck structure, which is just forward of the boiler. There appears to be room to get below deck here, but I continued aft to examine the boilers and triple expansion engine. The top of the engine is a 1-2 ft [0.3-0.6m] above the deck level. The entire hold around the engine appears to be full of silt, unfortunately preventing exploration of the engine room. I continued aft, taking pictures as I swam past a pump, capstan, and the steering linkage. Descending to the bottom, the rudder is steered hard to port and two of the three propeller blades are above the bottom. Ascending the starboard hull, numerous port holes are present with the glass intact.



I took another spin around the engine and deck structure, beginning to feel the effects of the 51 F [11 C] bottom temperature, I ascended 40 minutes into the dive and was obligated to about 9 minutes of hangtime before I could surface, where I was greeted by sunny skies and dead calm.

