



## SHIPWRECK - George Stone

By Skip Gillham

**T**he **George Stone** was a typical wooden Great Lakes freighter of the latter part of the 19th century. The 282-foot, 6-inch long bulk carrier was built by F.W. Wheeler & Co. and launched at West Bay City, MI on June 20, 1893.

The 1,841 gross ton vessel went to work in the Bradley fleet and hauled cargoes such as iron ore, coal and grain. It is shown in a photo (on right) from the collection of the Milwaukee Public Library.

**George Stone** was in a collision that sank the schooner **S.H. Kimball** on May 8, 1895. The **Kimball** went down in Lake Huron off Point aux Barques.

Later, in 1898, the **George Stone** was one of 67 ships locked in the ice that had to be freed by an icebreaker from Detroit.

On October 13, 1909, the **George Stone** was carrying 2,800 tons of coal loaded at Ashtabula, OH for delivery to Racine, WI. A southwest gale caught the sixteen-year-old steamer in the Pelee Passage on Lake Erie, and it ran aground on Grubb Reef. A kerosene lamp in the pilothouse overturned, and the structure caught fire.

Attempts to get help were fruitless. The wooden lifeboat

smashed against the hull and broke up after launching. The Captain was one of eight men who then tried to take the steel lifeboat ashore, but it overturned before reaching land. Two sailors made it, but the Master was lost as he waded the final few yards. He was overwhelmed by the undertow and swept away. His body was found the next spring near Conneaut, OH on the other side of the lake.

Conditions on the **George Stone** were deteriorating. Water poured into the hull through the seams, and the pumps became clogged with coal dust and shut down.

Fortunately, the steamer **F.M. Osborne** spotted the distressed vessel and was able to get into position to remove the ten sailors who had remained on board. Before long the **George Stone** began to break apart and was a total loss.

But the ordeal was not over. The **George Stone** had been operating with a non-union crew, and they had been pelted with stones leaving Ashtabula. Even the survivors received a rude welcome arriving at Detroit. They were met by a mob before authorities intervened and secured their safety. ⚓



**George Stone**