



MORE INFORMATION: Tom Beardsley, on board David Folger
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OVID, NY June 6, 2022 -- A research team on Seneca Lake has been utilizing some high-tech sonar equipment to map the bottom of the lake in ways never done before. Along the way, they have been discovering secrets resting on the floor of this deep Finger Lake in Central New York.

As Governor Hochul was officially announcing Buffalo as the location of the World Canal Conference in 2025, the year of the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal's opening, these researchers found two additional sunken canal boats which had been lost while traversing the lake carrying all kinds of cargo.

This device maps the lake's bottom in a swath as wide as 140 degrees from the boat. Sonar tech Tom Manley says that beam can be adjusted to get the best readings, particularly in deep water. Manley, along with nautical archeologist and lead investigator Art Cohn, look for "blips" or anomalies on computer screens on board the twin-engine, 48' aluminum catamaran, **David Folger**.

The **Folger** is a research vessel specifically designed for this and other lake science studies. Owned by Middlebury College of Vermont, the boat spends most of its time on Lake Champlain but is currently under a charter for the Seneca Lake project through the month of June. Packed with computers and servers, transducers, sound-velocity meters, sampling devices and a lot of navigation software, the boat only crawls on the surface when working. While crawling, however, "pings" are transmitted from the transducers and reflect against the bottom – and what lies on it – back to the boat. Computers extrapolate the data and measure the depth to whatever reflected the ping. "Simply put, the bottom is outlined. If there's a ship, we see the outline of the structure and the same thing for a rock, a log, an underwater channel or even a fish," says Manley.

Last year the team confirmed one particular shipwreck to be that of an early 19th century canal packet boat. This is the only actual canal packet boat known to exist. "There are certainly others waiting to be discovered, but until now, we only had drawings, paintings and narratives of these boats," says Cohn.

The study of Seneca Lake began in 2018 after Cohn's team found a sunken coal barge. That wreck had been well documented in Geneva newspaper accounts of the time (mid-1870's). This discovery led to the mapping project and discovery of more boats.

"The end result will be two-fold. The mapping will help geologists, biologists and others in lake studies build more knowledge of our fresh-water resources. We'll also be sharing some data which is incidental to our project, but important for them such as chlorophyll, temperature, pH and other readings taken at various depths," Cohn adds.

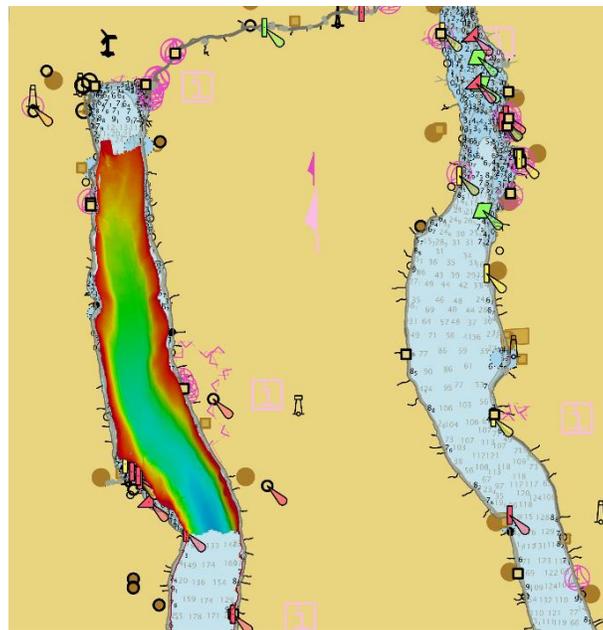
This year, the team expects to finish the sonar mapping of the lake. A full "post-processing" of the sonar data collected will take an additional three to four months in a computer lab. Subsequent studies of anomalies found will take place with a side-scan sonar and perhaps underwater photography utilizing a ROV.

The shipwrecks are the property of the people of New York State and will be studied to learn about life on the lakes and canals in the 1800's. All the objects found will be preserved for future generations. Photos and computer renderings will be used in interpretive displays and published materials which the team will make available for museums, historical societies and roadside markers in the Finger Lakes region. The shipwrecks become the property of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the state agency responsible for the cataloging and management of historic shipwrecks.

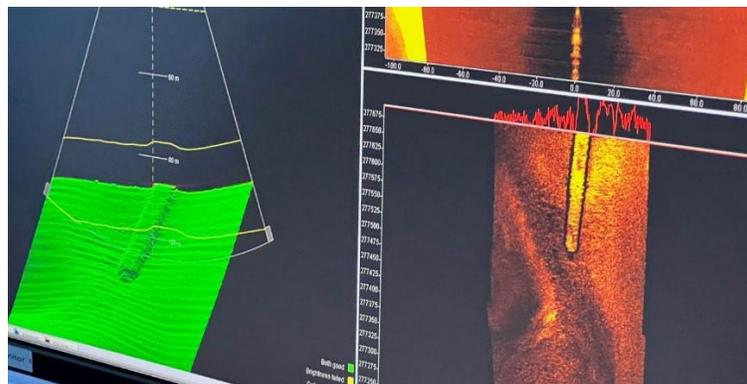
Other members of the team include the ship's captain, Richard Furbush; Assistant Sonar Tech Erin Hogan, along with operations coordinator and second captain, Tom Beardsley

The project is publicly and privately funded through grants and donations. It is an extension of the Finger Lakes Boating Museum in Hammondsport (Keuka Lake), a 501(c)(3) corporation.

Three of the Finger Lakes were connected to the canal system in the 1800's, Keuka (via the Crooked Lake canal), Seneca (via the Cayuga-Seneca and Chemung canals) and Cayuga Lake (via the Cayuga-Seneca canal). If all goes according to plan, the team will have the opportunity to survey all three lakes in conjunction with the Canal Bicentennial.



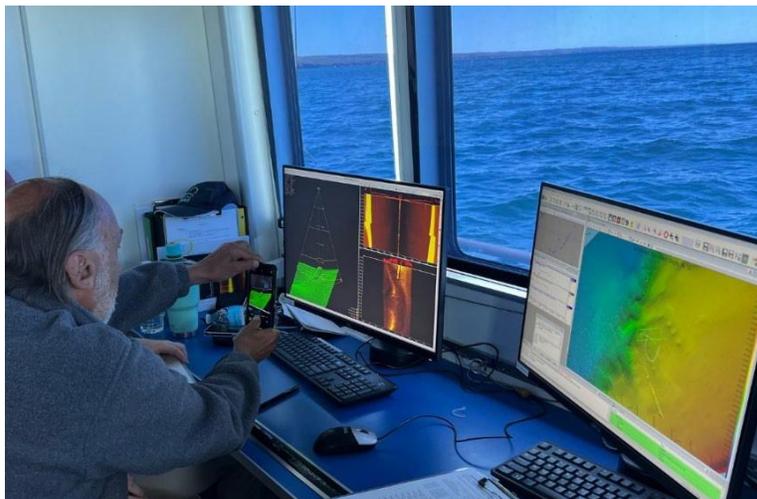
Overall bathymetry (raw) of study to date



Screen shot of mapping data as it is received. This is the first image of a canal boat seen since its sinking, believed to be in the 1840's.



R/V David Folger at Sampson State Park docks



Lead Investigator Art Cohn snaps a picture of a recent discovery on the west side of Seneca Lake, June 2

Full resolution photos are available on request.

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