

RECALLING THE DEAN RICHMOND SHIPWRECK SEARCH

By Garry Kozak

(Editor's note: From time to time THE KLEIN LINE will publish articles by guest writers. Many of these articles will provide unique personal insight into a project involving Klein HYDROSCAN Systems. Garry Kozak's article documents his successful 10-year search to find the legendary Great Lakes' treasure ship—the DEAN RICHMOND.)

An ominous storm built throughout Friday evening, October 13, 1893. By Saturday morning a full gale was blowing, with sustained winds of 60 knots. The DEAN RICHMOND, a Great Lakes package-freighter, was sighted twice that morning in the middle of Lake Erie just east of Erie, Pennsylvania. Her smoke stacks had been torn from the vessel by the high seas, and the crippled vessel apparently had no rudder control. On Sunday morning, October 15, 1893, bodies and wreckage from the RICHMOND washed ashore in Dunkirk, New York, 40 miles east of Erie. This confirmed the worst fears...the ship had gone down! The dreadful news was announced in the NEW YORK TIMES of that day: THE DEAN RICHMOND A WRECK—LOST WITH A CREW OF EIGHTEEN IN LAKE ERIE NEAR DUNKIRK.

During 1893, the RICHMOND had been under charter to the Clover Leaf Railroad, with her regular run between Toledo, Ohio, and Buffalo, New York. On the cold October afternoon of Friday the 13th, loading of the major cargo of zinc and lead ingots, and bagged flour was completed at the Toledo docks. The ship slipped her mooring lines and headed eastward to disaster.

In Summer 1894, the Murphy Salvage Company, hired by the insurance underwriters, conducted a massive search trying to locate the hull of the RICHMOND, but without success. From that time on, there had been countless searches attempting to solve the mystery of just where the vessel lay so that the cargo of zinc and lead could be recovered.

The RICHMOND was a typical Great Lakes package-freighter. It was 238 feet long, 35 feet in breadth, and 14 feet deep. Gross tonnage was 1250. Built in 1864, its only unusual feature was a twin engine/propellor design.

In May 1974, I arrived at Barcelona Harbor, New York, with a newly outfitted 32-foot-long boat and all the necessary equipment to find the DEAN RICHMOND. The primary search instrument was a Klein Model 400 Side Scan Sonar system. The previous winter had been spent researching all the historical documents and weather data. Based on this information a search area was selected where I believed the ship would be found.

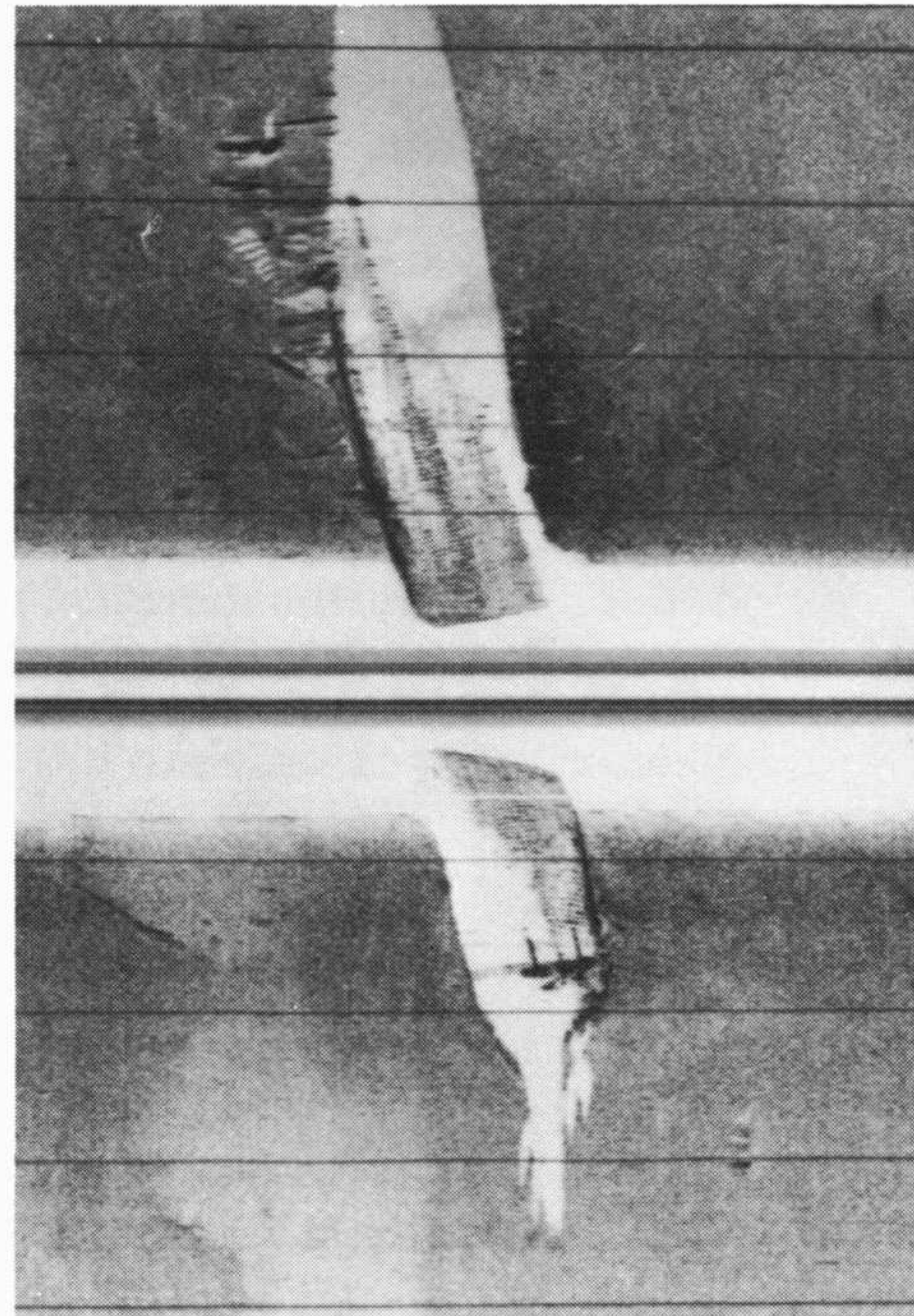
Considering lost time due to weather, I estimated that the search would take two to three months. I did not know then just how much of my life this shipwreck would con-

sume. The area was searched, many wrecks were found, but not the RICHMOND. In 1975 the search area was expanded. Again more wrecks, but still not the elusive DEAN RICHMOND. The expanding search went on and so did the years. Some acquaintances began wondering if there really was a DEAN RICHMOND. Those who did believe, questioned whether the side scan sonar would detect the wreck running on a 350 meter range scale at a



The Klein 100 kHz side scan sonar record is of the treasure ship DEAN RICHMOND (right). Here is the DEAN RICHMOND (top) as it looked while in service upon the Great Lakes.

Photo credit: Garry Kozak



search speed of six knots. Nine summers had passed, with the search area now totalling 550 square miles. Twenty-eight shipwrecks had been located, but the RICHMOND remained a "ghost ship."

On July 15, 1983, I was searching a new area only 12 miles from Erie Harbor. The sonar indicated a target 200 meters off the starboard side.

Turning around, passes were made on short ranges for higher resolution images. One hundred ten feet beneath our survey vessel lay a ship's hull, 238 feet long and 35 feet wide, upside down, with two propellers and shafts.

An exploratory dive was made. Nothing was found for identification until just before ascending when we saw them...lead and zinc ingots on the bottom off the wreck's port side. I had found the DEAN RICHMOND! Ten years after beginning the search, the wreck was found.