

# Submerged Cultural Resources Exploration Team



www.scret.org

Exploration Updates

Fall 2002

Issue 1

Welcome to the first issue of SCRET's newsletter. Our goal is to publish the newsletter twice each year, in the fall and spring. Each issue will bring you up-to-date on SCRET's activities and accomplishments.

During 2002, SCRET has focused on unraveling the mysteries of Lake Washington. We have posted stories on our website on the Lake Washington Coal Cars, the passenger ferry *Dawn* and the Lake Washington mystery wreck. Each story explores a significant submerged cultural resource in the lake and explains the related history and the current condition of the resource. This issue will focus on SCRET's efforts to explore and document three additional sites in Lake Washington. These sites, which we have called targets one, two and three, take us back to the turn of the century – 1900.

## Targets One, Two and Three

In 1900, the Seattle area was simpler, life was less complicated, and travel was slower. Imagine life without automobiles or airplanes, without floating bridges, and with few paved roads. People relied on their feet, horses and bicycles to get around the city and they took trains and Mosquito Fleet steamers to reach more distant points. To get from Seattle to communities on Mercer Island and the eastside, you had to cross Lake Washington and the easiest way was by boat. To meet this need, small passenger ferries made regular runs around the lake, transporting foot passengers from community to community. Most of these passenger ferries were relatively small (60 to 80 foot) propeller steamers, built of wood and powered by small steam engines.

With this history in mind, in 2002, SCRET set out to explore and document three new sites in Lake Washington. The sites were located by Robert Mester using side scan sonar. From the side scan images, we knew the targets were the remains of ships, approximately 60 to 80 feet in length. We also knew the depth of the targets and how much they rose above the bottom, but nothing else. To explore and document these sites required SCRET divers to visit the targets and video the remains of these vessels.

### Target One - *Elfin*.

**Location.** Target one is located straight out from Houghton (present day Carillon Point) in 125 feet of water.

Target one is 55 feet long and rises approximately 10 feet off the bottom. Based on our research and video documentation, we believe the target is the remains of the passenger steamer *Elfin*.

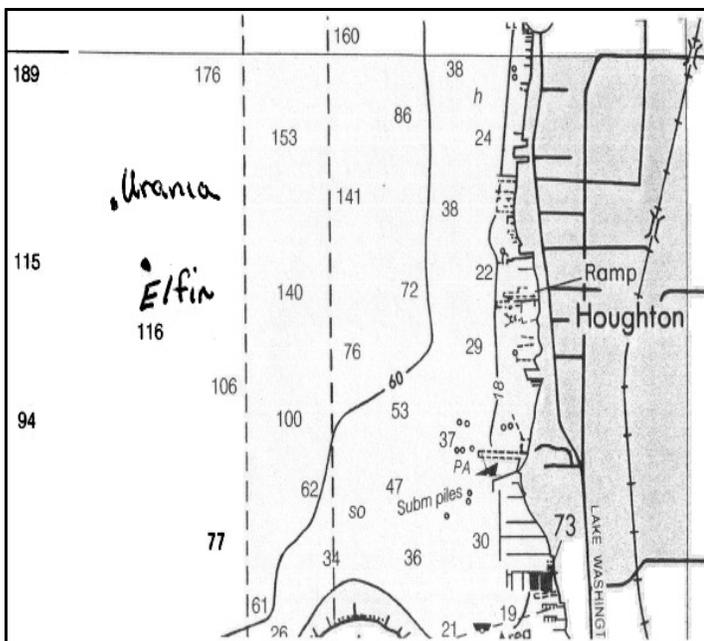


Chart showing locations of Targets 1 & 2

**History.** This small passenger steamer was built at Pontiac in 1891 by E. F. Lee. She was 55 feet long and carried passengers between Kirkland, Yarrow Bay and Madison Park. In 1896, the *Elfin* was repowered and a pilot house was added to the upper deck. The *Elfin* burned and sank off Houghton on December 2, 1900. At that time, fire was a major risk for small wooden vessels powered by steam. Their skippers were often tempted to push the boilers in these ships to obtain more speed, which increased the risk of fire.



***Elfin at dock in Kirkland***

**Discovery.** When SCRET divers visited the remains of the *Elfin*, they found an empty, charred hull, sitting upright on the bottom. As the *Elfin* burned, her cabins were destroyed, allowing the hull to rise higher in the water. The fire continued to burn as the vessel rose in the water, destroying the interior of the vessel and leaving only an empty hull.

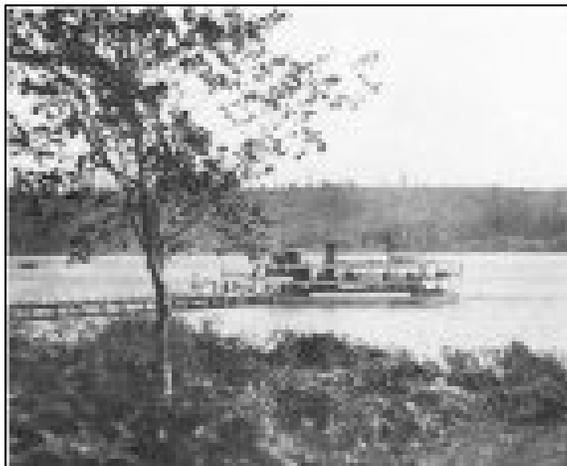


***Bow of Elfin - 2002***

The entire hull of the *Elfin* is still substantially intact, from bow to stern. This made identification of the vessel relatively easy through comparisons of the hull with historical photographs of the *Elfin*.

**Target Two - *Urania*.**

**Location.** Target two is also located off Houghton (present day Carillon Point), a little west and north of Target one (see chart on page 1). It rests in 150 feet of water and is 85 feet long and rises approximately 10-15 feet off the bottom. Based on our research and video documentation, we believe the site is the remains of the passenger steamer *Urania*.



***Urania at dock in Juanita – 1907***



***SCRET diver Mark Tourtellot on stern of Elfin 2002***

**History.** The *Urania* was built in Seattle in 1907. She was 85 feet long and carried passengers on Lake Washington between Kenmore, Juanita and Madison Park. The *Urania* burned and sank off Houghton on February 12, 1914.

**Discovery.** When SCRET divers visited the remains of the *Urania*, they found an empty, charred hull, sitting upright on the bottom. Like the *Elfin*, as the *Urania* burned, her cabins were destroyed, allowing the hull to rise higher in the water. The fire continued to burn as the vessel rose in the water, reducing the remains to a charred hull. This hull is also substantially intact from bow to stern, which assisted in the identification of the vessel.

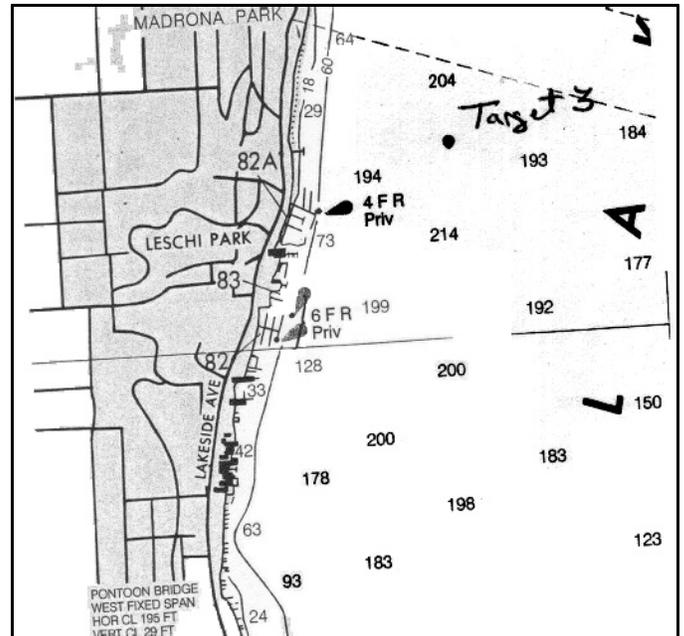


**Bow of Urania showing frame for upper deck—2002**

**Target Three – Acme or L .T. Haas**

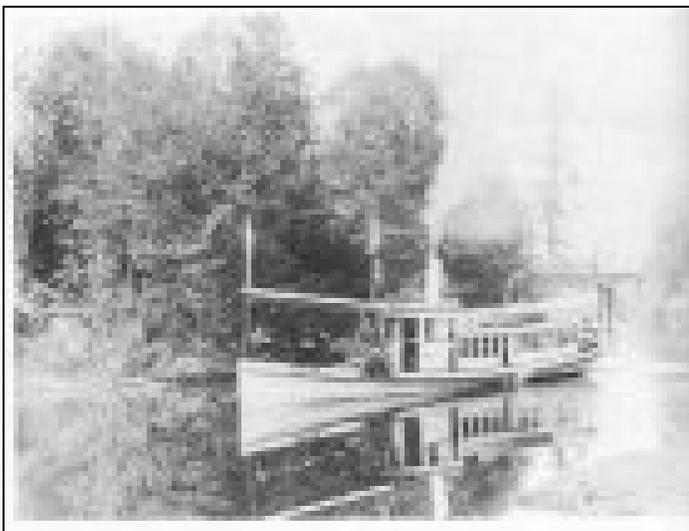
**Location.** Target three is located on the west side of the lake, north of Leshi. It rests in 210 feet of water.

Target 3 is 60 feet long and rises approximately 5-10 feet off the bottom. Based on our research and video documentation, we believe the site is the remains of a turn off the century passenger steamer, either the *Acme* or *L .T. Haas*.



**Chart showing location of Target 3**

**History.** The *Acme* was built in Seattle in 1899. She was 60 feet long and carried passengers on Lake Washington between Leshi, Madison Park and Bothell. She was owned and operated by N. C. Peterson. The *Acme* burned and sank off Leshi in 1908.



**Acme on Sammamish Slough near Bothell - 1900**

**History.** The *L. T. Haas* was 60 feet long and carried passengers on Lake Washington between Leshi Park and Maydenbaer Bay. The *L. T. Haas* was owned and operated by Carlson Brothers. Like the *Acme*, she burned and sank off Leshi in 1909.

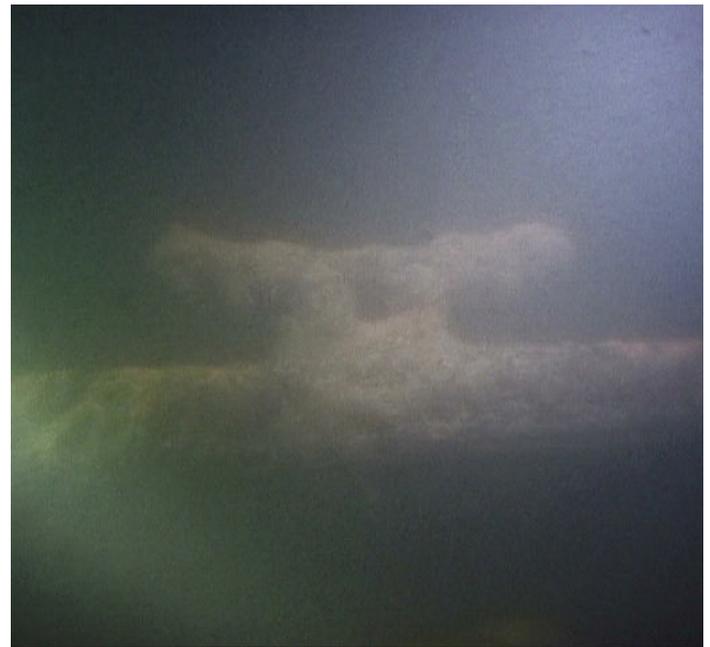
**Discovery.** When SCRET divers visited *Target Three*, they found an empty, charred hull, sitting upright on the bottom. The bow is relatively intact and rises about 7 feet off the bottom. Burnt framing for the upper deck rises from the hull about 10 feet from the bow. As you move toward the stern, the hull becomes buried in the silty bottom and then reappears, with the stern section rising only two feet above the bottom. The hull contains the remains of a small steam engine and propeller shaft, making this site unique.



***L. T. Haas*— 1902**



***Bow of Target 3 - 2002***



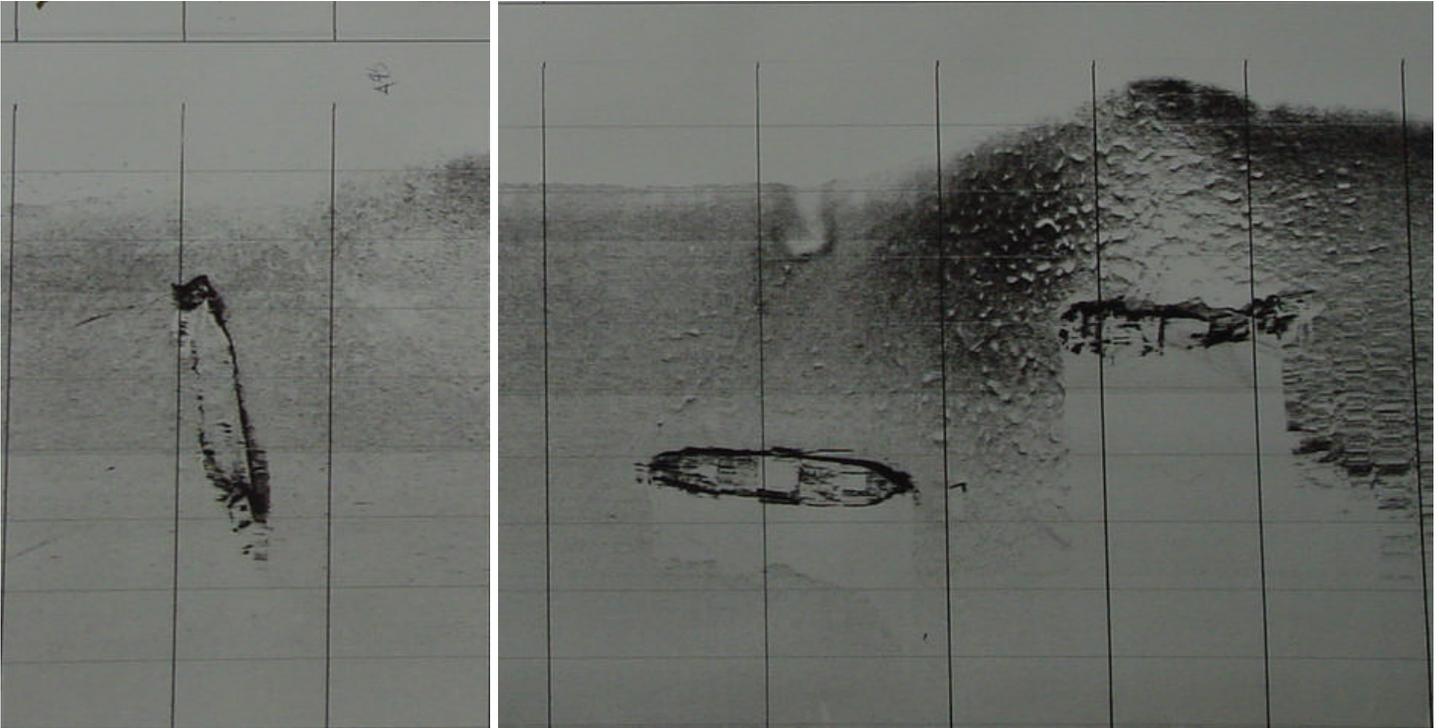
***Cleat on forward deck of Target 3 - 2002***

### **So, why are these underwater wrecks significant?**

In the United States today, there are only two operating, steam-powered wooden-hull passenger ships from the turn of the century time period. In Seattle, there is only one steam powered survivor of the Puget Sound “Mosquito Fleet” – the *Virginia V* (see [www.virginiav.org](http://www.virginiav.org)). Vessels built during this time period were constructed principally from models and wooden patterns. Few models or patterns survive.

Furthermore, the men who built these vessels rarely explained their skills in formal writing and thus crucial information regarding their design and construction rationale has been largely forgotten. It is only through the documentation of surviving ships and shipwrecks that we can recoup some of this important technological history. In addition, the study of these vessels teaches us the history and culture of the time.

## What's ahead in 2003?



**Sections from a sidescan image showing wrecks in Elliott Bay's "Wreck Alley"**

Elliott Bay contains a number of historically significant shipwrecks that are awaiting exploration and documentation by *SCRET* divers. Join with *SCRET* in 2003 as it continues its efforts to bring to light and preserve these unique parts of our local history.

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I would like to contact *SCRET* for information on a wreck – write to [info@scret.org](mailto:info@scret.org)

I would like to become a member of *SCRET* – join on-line at [www.scret.org](http://www.scret.org)

I would like to make a financial contribution to *SCRET* – mail to *SCRET*'s address shown below.

I would like to contribute an article to *SCRET*'s next newsletter – e-mail to [wjaccard@mindspring.com](mailto:wjaccard@mindspring.com) or mail to *SCRET*'s address shown below.

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*Historical photos from Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society  
Sidescan images from Robert Mester*



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