

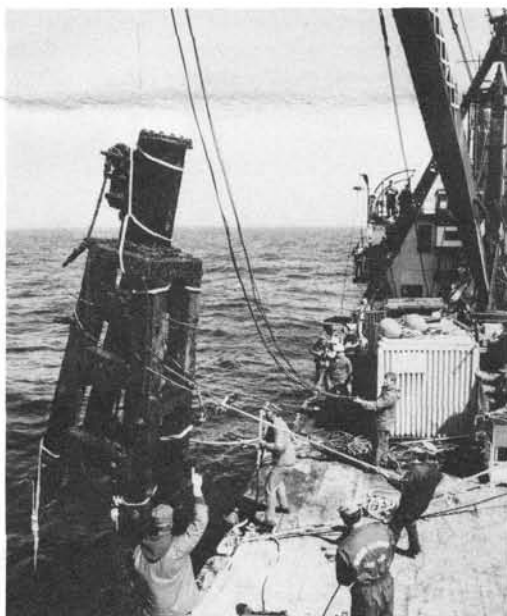
# SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

## NEWSLETTER

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### INDIANA SALVAGE OLDEST AMERICAN MARINE ENGINE RECOVERED



*Indiana's engine and boiler greeting the light of day for the first time in 121 years. At right is the vessel's Ericsson-type composite propeller, with cast-iron hub and wrought-iron-plate blades, one of them stamped with the name of Spang & Co., Pittsburgh, rollers of the iron. This was the only marking found on the elements raised. National Museum of History & Technology photographs.*

In August the Natl. Museum of History & Technology acquired the entire steam power plant and propulsion system from the *Indiana*, a 146-ft. freighter that sank off Crisp Point, Mich. in eastern Lake Superior in 1858. Recovery of this classic artifact—an artifact that has remained absolutely untouched since antebellum times—entailed the largest and most complex underwater salvage operation in which the Museum has ever been involved.

Built from oak at Vermilion, Ohio, in 1848, the *Indiana* was outfitted with a single-cylinder 16 x 48-in. vertical engine, a massive ten-ton upright boiler, and a ten-ft. Ericsson propeller. Screw propulsion then was in its infancy, but was just about to revolutionize maritime commerce by simultaneously permitting increased speeds and greater cargo capacity. No commercially-built American marine engine in its original state, or any screw propulsion system of comparable antiquity, is known to survive. The *Indiana's* machinery, including all engine accessories, the rudder, and steering quadrant—the entire system totalling 20 tons—was salvaged from a depth of 125 ft. by U.S. Navy divers who made more than 300 descents from their base of operations, the derrick barge *Coleman*, which remained on station round the clock for a total of 12 days.

This difficult and costly undertaking was a cooperative effort by

the NMHT; Mich. Dept. of State, History Divn.; the Great Lakes Research Center at Bowling Green Univ.; the Navy; and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Also participating was John Steele of Waukegan, Ill. who initially located and filmed the wreck.

Equipment salvaged from the *Indiana*, although remarkably well preserved, has, after all, spent 121 years under water and will require conservation measures as unprecedented in scale as the recovery operation itself. When these are completed, the entire system will be displayed at the Museum as one of the most remarkable technological artifacts brought to light in many years—a pristine, unadulterated, and uncompromised document of American steam engineering of the 1840s, a document without any counterpart. *R.C.P.*

#### CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Christopher Andrae, Parkhill, Ont.; Marilyn G. Miller, Heritage Planning Sect., Ontario Ministry of Culture; Susan H. Myers, Natl. Museum of Hist. & Tech.; William Poe, NMHT; Robert C. Post, Smithsonian Books; John R. White, Youngstown State Univ. With thanks.

#### FALL FIELD TRIP—PENNSYLVANIA'S ANTHRACITE REGION

On 13 & 14 October. You should have received the announcement and registration form for this. If you haven't, contact Room 5020 immediately for a copy. The list is limited. This will be a historic occasion.