



## Guidelines for Evaluating Shipwrecks of National Historic Significance in Canada



Shipwreck of National Historic Significance in l'Anse-aux-Bouleaux, Québec  
Photo Peter Waddell/Parks Canada

Note: The present document draws its substance from a Agenda Paper titled "*Les Épaves de navires d'importance historique nationale au Canada, Lignes directrices pour de critères d'évaluation des épaves de navires*", submitted to the Criteria Committee in April 1998. The following recommendations are viewed as the basic information format required prior to any examination of future candidates for a national historic recognition. The Board agreed with the content of the document in July 1998 but reassessed the shipwreck definition in December 2000.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) has often been asked to have shipwrecks recognized as of national historic significance. Only a few shipwrecks have been designated based on their association with major events in the history of *Canada*. These decisions have always been difficult because of the intangible and unusual character of the resources. These guidelines respond to a recommendation of the *Board* made in 1990, that questions concerning submerged shipwrecks in *Canada*, and in particular their protection, be examined as soon as the necessary resources are available, and that a document on the subject be submitted at the same time to the *Criteria Committee* and the *Thematic Studies and Systems Planning Committee*.

The idea of examining the spectrum of selection criteria specific to shipwrecks and suggesting an approach to the HSMBC became urgent because of the equivocal status of shipwrecks, which can be regarded as archaeological sites, movable cultural property and property with market value under the *Canada Shipping Act*.

The guidelines are intended to respond to some of the Board's wishes by providing the necessary tools to help evaluate candidates for a national historic designation. They are meant for the use of Parks Canada cultural resource managers, cultural resource managers in provinces and territories, non-governmental organizations working for the protection and the presentation of cultural resources and finally to any individual interested in presenting candidates for a national historic designation.

A future study will eventually elaborate specific shipwreck selection criteria for national historic designation to complete the set of guidelines. It is however necessary to improve the overall historic knowledge, the number and the representation of various types of shipwrecks throughout the country before formulating selection criteria. This does not prevent any submission to the *Board* in the interval.

These guidelines will also ensure that future submissions to the HSMBC will be treated uniformly and that recommendations will be well documented.

## RECOMMENDED APPROACH FOR SUBMITTING SHIPWRECKS TO THE HISTORIC SITES AND MONUMENTS BOARD OF CANADA

In the past, not all of the shipwreck nomination files forwarded to the *Board* have followed the same line of procedure or presented the same type of documentary content. This study is designed to correct past shortcomings, so that cases can be better assessed against the general criteria on the one hand and the archaeological criteria on the other. By the time they reach the Board, nomination files should have gone through an analytical grid, by means of which an attempt will have been made to identify, for each case, certain attributes or qualities whereby a wreck can be situated on a certain value scale. The attributes presented will be accompanied by certain expressions describing the assessment. For example, terms such as *excellent*, *remarkable*, *outstanding*, or *important* might serve to establish the reasons why a candidate would deserve consideration as being of national historic significance. The following section on attributes or qualities constitute the proposed grid.

The *Board* will make its own judgment as to the shipwreck's commemorative significance and to the shipwreck's connection to one or more themes. It will also evaluate the content of the attributes that characterize the shipwreck in light of the national criteria.

In practice, prior to the analytical grid stage, the person or group preparing the submission will compile a standard file on the history or career of the wrecked vessel. This file will assemble all of the information relating to the candidate. It will list the necessary background information on this vessel category, outline its role in the economy, the characteristics that make it distinctive or an excellent representative of its category, provide establish associations with one or more persons (captain, officers, sailors, passengers) and one or more events, detail its architectural features, identify the shipyard where it was manufactured, name its designer or builder, mention any modifications it underwent, etc. Graphic information such as engravings, drawings, paintings, plans, photographs could also be of great importance to the file. This information will of course be used to document the attributes that demonstrate the significance of the resource. These attributes will afford means of assessing all of the candidates from the same perspective, thus facilitating the work of the Board members.

In the case of an unidentified shipwreck<sup>1</sup>, this assessment must be based on the characteristics provided by the (archaeological) inventory, survey and evaluation data, which must be presented within the broader context of the maritime, technical and material culture knowledge which the shipwreck might offer. The unidentified shipwreck must nonetheless be checked against the attribute grid, which is designed for both identifiable and non identifiable or archaeological subjects. For the last, it would be judicious to support the analysis of National Historic Significance with one or more of the following Criteria<sup>2</sup>:

- (1) substantive evidence that a particular site is unique; or
- (2) that it satisfactorily represents a particular culture, or a specific phase in the development of a particular cultural sequence; or
- (3) that is a good typical example; or
- (4) that is otherwise conforms to general Board Criterion touching the selection of historic sites for national recognition

Finally, whatever is the proposed candidate, the proponent must include the documentation on the exact location of the remains and their area of dispersal, the condition of the remains, the research potential, and the contribution of known or desired information to both the discipline and other related sciences. It is also advisable to verify if a legal owner can be identify.

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1. A shipwreck whose name is unknown; type or designation may not necessarily be known either.

2. HSMBC, *Policies, Criteria, Guidelines*, 1996A, # 13, p.8–9

## DEFINITION OF SHIPWRECK

For designation purposes, *shipwreck* shall mean an *artifact*<sup>3</sup> representing a ship, boat, vessel or craft, whatever its type<sup>4</sup>, which is deemed to have sunk; been driven aground, run aground or wrecked; and been abandoned, thus putting an end to its career.

The shipwreck will be submerged and possibly embedded in an ocean, lake or waterway floor, be lying or buried in a tidal flat, beach or any other type of shore including a modified ancient shore.

The physical appearance of the candidate may vary. The shipwreck may be in one piece or in the form of remains spread out over a large area. In the latter case, a shipwreck may be nominated as an archaeological site or archaeological remains, depending on the approach necessary to document it<sup>5</sup>.

Included in the definition of shipwreck will be the remains and fragments associated with the structure, cargo, equipment, human remains and personal effects of occupants, fragmented remains associated with these items and any natural accretions following the shipwrecks<sup>6</sup>.

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3. Man made object.

4. Aircraft and other airborne vehicles have been excluded .

5. Shipwrecks are generally considered archaeological sites, to judge from the general acceptance of this concept in Canada and abroad (see section 2). The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada has endorsed this judgement in considering certain archaeological remains or sites testifying to the more concrete past existence of these shipwrecks to be of national historic significance (Machault, Corossol, Anse-aux-Bouleaux Shipwreck).

6. By extension, a shipwreck designated an "archaeological site" will include the preceding elements and even any natural accretions following the shipwreck, which may help to reconstitute the context of the wreck's evolution and to clarify its specific attributes.

## EVALUATION ATTRIBUTES

### Preliminary remarks

The assessment elements presented below can be used to locate the material or information necessary to prepare a shipwreck nomination file for submission to the *Board*. It is very important that the *Board* have at its disposal a file which allows it to assess all of the facets associated with a proposed candidate. It is understood that the more attributes a shipwreck has, the easier the evaluation of the case will be and the better its chances of being considered a candidate for recognition of national historic significance.

From among the elements for assessing significance, an attempt will be made to highlight the most relevant attributes to each shipwreck analysed for submission purposes.

So as to better categorize the information, the attributes can be divided into four (4) classes. The classes could be divided into: 1. attributes of characterization, 2. culture, 3. presentation, and 4. structural assessment. These attributes are also subdivided into diverse components defining when applicable, the values attached to each candidates.

### 1. Characterization attributes

- *Architectural: typological and characteristic*

This involves a description and assessment of the **period or date of construction and disappearance** of the ship. When available, one should also give the most appropriate **designation of the ship** (this designation or definition has long been based on the rigging or propulsion - three-masted barque, schooner, ketch, cutter, paddle-steamer - although it may also have no obvious relation to these - dory, dugout, longboat, York boat, Durham boat). The **architect, builder or shipyard** will be specified. The vessel will also be categorized according to the **construction material** of the hull, or to its **use or function**: cargo, liner, fishing, navy frigate. In theory, this information should help any reader to acquire a physical and functional perspective of the candidate presented for commemoration.

- *Technical*

In referring to this element, one must consider how a wreck might constitute or incorporate one or more **innovations** in terms of engineering (propulsion systems and methods, machinery), whether experimental or patented (for example, study of the introduction of the steam engine on the ships justified the archaeological excavations on the *Lady Sherbrooke* one of the *Molson's* steamer in Montreal). Furthermore, the whole field relating to the **evolution** of naval construction might be assessed. The subthemes of **design, choice of materials, joining, connections, reinforcement, methods of sealing and preservation, finishing, adaptation etc.**, should be explored, as well as **construction quality**, if this can be assessed.

- **Scientific**

A number of cultural resources may represent typical cases for scientific studies. For example, a given shipwreck may be of interest for the development of documentary or preservation techniques (architectural survey, photography, sampling, experimentation with *in situ* stabilization).

There is also a potential for the study of how the component materials of cultural properties react with agents present in the natural environment. In some cases, one must recognize the interest of studying certain shipwrecks and weighing the negative impact of the environment or, alternatively, the stability and integration of cultural resources into the environment (for example, study of the deterioration of the wrecks at *Fathom Five National Marine Park*; of zebra mussels in *Kingston, Ontario*).

- **Representative**

This element may be used only in conjunction with one or more of the other assessment elements mentioned. If the shipwreck under consideration is a very good example of a type or class of ship, it is the other attributes that will make the difference (e.g. a ship built in the golden age for a vessel class and by a yard famous for the quality of its output).

- **Artistic**

This attribute has been included because ships from all eras, whether passenger or not, have been embellished with finishing elements that are more art than craftsmanship. Such features as figureheads and carved interiors are thus considered attributes which may enhance the interest of a vessel. Shipwrecks with cargoes containing works of art, museum pieces or any other cultural product of national historic importance would have to necessarily be associated.

- **Rarity and uniqueness**

Without being an attribute as such, rarity may occasionally be cited when a shipwreck is submitted. It should usually be paired with other attributes specifying identity, importance and context.

- **Group or association**

A remnant may be valuable by virtue of its association with other remains of another type or class. For example, such value might be attributed in the case of discovery of remains of a number of shipwrecks of different types, periods or uses together in a relatively limited area, or intermingled with each other. In cases of large associations of remains, the whole becomes more important than the sum of its parts. Furthermore, the whole often has more cultural impact than a single monument. This could be said, for example, of shipwreck graveyards. As an example, in 1711, the Admiral Walker lost 8 large vessels the same day at Pointe-aux-Anglais, Québec in an British expedition against Québec City.

## 2. Cultural attributes: historical/archaeological/anthropological/ethnographic

- **Association to persons, cultural groups, first nations**

If, for example, a ship was designed, built or owned by an important figure on the Canadian scene, this will be an attribute concerning which information must be provided, so that this connection can be fully assessed.

- **Event association**

If a ship was involved in an important event marking Canada's history, the story and details of its participation must be fully delimited and explained.

- **Sociocultural (cargoes and personal belongings)**

A site or ship may offer an opportunity to expand our knowledge about the social classes, trades, professions or, more broadly, cultural groups aboard the vessel. It may also offer an opportunity to examine consumption or work practices. An excellent example is the reference collection comprised of objects recovered from the frigate *Machault* (1760), which has advanced research on the French era in 18th-century Canada. As another example, there might be in the future a study of remains associated with immigrants or cultural communities which imported different fishing practices.

- **Symbolic**

The symbolic aspect that may be recognized in a shipwreck can be variable. It might be spiritual or religious, aesthetic or educational in nature. It might be manifested by the impact of a given event (shipwreck, rescue, salvage, creation of folklore) on a cultural community. Such impact may have arisen at the time of a wreck or even long after it. Symbolic value might also lie in the significance of the ship's construction and career, or even the human tragedy associated with it, as kept alive in tradition. For instance, such value might be attributed to a ship which is a war memorial, exploration ships, or other vessels with strong evocative power (e.g. the *Terror* and *Erebus*, *Bluenose*, *Marco Polo*, *Empress of Ireland*).

## 3. Presentation attributes

- **Interpretive**

A shipwreck might be found to contain great interpretive value if it were proven that it has potential to offer or that it is already contributing to education of the public. This component can be analysed as a function of other attributes such as accessibility, integrity, natural environment and associated cultural equipment, and this potential may be exploited both on the underwater site and on land. A good example of this type is the *Sweepstake* at *Fathom Five National Marine Park*, which is the most visited by divers of all the park's wrecks because of its accessibility, and which in addition to divers, is repeatedly toured every year by a fleet of glass-bottom boats.



- **Economic**

The economic attribute should be indicated if there is strong recreational/tourist or cultural tourism potential and if there are infrastructures in place or being erected in connection with one or more shipwrecks. It is necessarily associated with the educational attribute, but may on occasion be a factor in certain cultural investment decisions, depending on the context.

- **Cultural landscape**

With time, one or more shipwrecks may have reached a state of equilibrium with nature, or even contributed to a proliferation of fish, molluscs and plants, becoming artificial reefs for marine flora and fauna. It is also desirable to include an assessment of these qualities and associated constraints in the case studies. It is also possible to consider shipwrecks graveyards as susceptible examples for consideration under the cultural landscape value.

#### 4. Structural assessment attribute

- **Integrity**

This element of the shipwreck file is usually the product of the archaeological investigation itself. Assessment of a shipwreck is not confined to how much of the hull has been preserved in its original condition. Rather it must be based on the existence of useful and often indispensable indicators for understanding the architecture, design and utilization of the ship as it was at the time it was wrecked or abandoned. At an extreme, it is applicable to the remains of a ship scattered over a wide area, insofar as it is possible, using appropriate approaches, to expand the field of knowledge. Only from this perspective is it possible to present the condition, fragility and vulnerability of the remains, and the value of preserving them. The example of the *Corossol*, recognized as of national historic significance, is particularly interesting in that, despite the absence of any remains of the hull, valuable information has been gathered about the existence and use of artillery and munitions aboard supply vessels chartered by the king of France in 1693.

## ASSOCIATION TO GENERAL CRITERIA

Although, the largest part of the evaluation work will be done by examination of the characteristics and attributes of a particular shipwreck, the HSMBC wishes that the proponent(s) qualify the perception they have of the national significance of the resource.

Therefore, we suggest that a written presentation explains the existing links between specific attributes and the general criteria established by the Board.

In this search for improved representation of shipwrecks, it is understood that the general criteria laid down by the *Board* will remain paramount. They have served and continue to serve as a basis for all nominations. These criteria previously outlined in the *Parks Canada* National Historic Sites Policy have been revisited and modified by the HSMBC in January 1999. The criteria applicable to shipwrecks now read as:

### CRITERIA FOR NATIONAL HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Any aspect of Canada's human history may be considered for Ministerial designation of national historic significance. To be considered for designation, a place, a person, or an event will have had a nationally significant impact on Canadian history, or will illustrate a nationally important aspect of Canadian history.

Subjects that qualify for national historic significance will meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. **A place** may be designated of national historic significance by virtue of a direct association with a nationally significant aspect of Canadian history. An archaeological site, structure, building, group of buildings, district, or cultural landscape of potential national historic significance will:
  - a) illustrate an exceptional creative achievement in concept and design, technology, and/or planning, or a significant stage in the development of Canada; or
  - b) illustrate or symbolize in whole or in part a cultural tradition, a way of life, or ideas important in the development of Canada; or
  - c) be most explicitly and meaningfully associated or identified with persons who are deemed of national historic importance; or
  - d) be most explicitly and meaningfully associated or identified with events that are deemed of national historic importance.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Considerations for designation of national historic significance are made on a **case-by-case basis**, in accordance with the above criteria and in the context of the wide spectrum of Canada's human history.
- An **exceptional** achievement or **outstanding** contribution clearly stands above other achievements or contributions in terms of importance and/or excellence of quality. A representative example may warrant a designation of national historic significance because it eminently typifies a nationally important aspect of Canadian history.
- An **explicit** and **meaningful** association is direct and understandable, and is relevant to the reasons associated with the national significance of the associated person or event.
- **Uniqueness or rarity** are not, in themselves, evidence of national historic significance, but may be considered in connection with the above criteria for national historic significance.
- **Firsts**, *per se*, are not considered for national historic significance.
- In general, only **one commemoration** will be made for each place, person, or event of national historic significance.

## Places

- Buildings, ensembles of buildings, and sites **completed by 1975** may be considered for designation of national historic significance, provided five years have passed since the death of those responsible for their design.
- A place must be in a **condition that respects the integrity** of its design, materials, workmanship, function and/or setting to be considered for designation of national historic significance, insofar as any of these elements are essential to understand its significance.
- The **boundaries** of a place must be clearly defined for it to be considered for designation as a national historic site.
- Large-scale **movable heritage properties** that would not normally be considered suitable for museum display may be considered for designation of national historic significance.

