

The Daniel J. Morrell

The **Daniel J Morrell** was built by the West Bay City Ship Building Company and launched in 1906. Many authorities list her at slightly over 600 feet, but her registry states 580ft. long, 58ft. wide and 27ft. high. The ship was originally powered by a 1878 ihp Skinner Uniflow triple expansion engine. She was classified as a bulk carrier and went to work carrying Taconite from the Lake Superior ore ports to the mills of Detroit and Saint Catherines. She was hull # 619.

In 1945 two new Babcock boilers were added. At that time the **Morrell** was also equipped with the first gyro-compass on the Great Lakes thus greatly improving the navigational system on the ship as well as all other commercial vessels to come. In 1956 a 3200 ihp Skinner Uniflow triple expansion engine was installed.

On November 29, 1966 the **Morrell** and her sister ship the **Edward Y Townsend** headed North out of the Saint Clair River. The gale blowing over the Lakes continued to worsen with winds at 70 knots and waves washing over the ballasted ships at 20 to 25 feet.

The **Townsend** radioed that she was turning around and running for the safety of the Saint Clair. The **Morrell** continued on the Thunder Bay, where the Captain felt he would find safe Harbor. At 2:00am, off Pointe aux Barques, the **Morrell** began to break apart, with many of the crew jumping overboard and drowning in the icy storm tossed Lake.

At 2:15am the tired distressed ship broke in half. Dennis Hale and three other crewman managed to get on a raft. They saw the lights of what they thought was a vessel coming to their rescue. They were horrified when the stern of the Morrell plowed by them and smashed into the bow they had abandoned. The bow sank almost immediately and the stern section continued its journey up Lake Huron finally coming to rest six miles North in 200 feet of water.

There were 29 Officers and crew on the Morrell, 28 perished with 26 bodies eventually being recovered. Dennis Hale, the only survivor, was found by a Coast Guard helicopter 300 yard south of Pointe aux Barques Lighthouse at 4:15pm on November 30th. He was wearing shorts, life jacket and pea coat when rescued. Dennis was taken to Harbor Beach Hospital and spent three months recovering from hypothermia, frostbite and other injuries. Dennis never worked the Lakes again.

The Coast Guard report blamed inferior steel and metal fatigue. "Hogging" brought about by the storm probably cracked the hull. The "Witch's of November" had struck again.

