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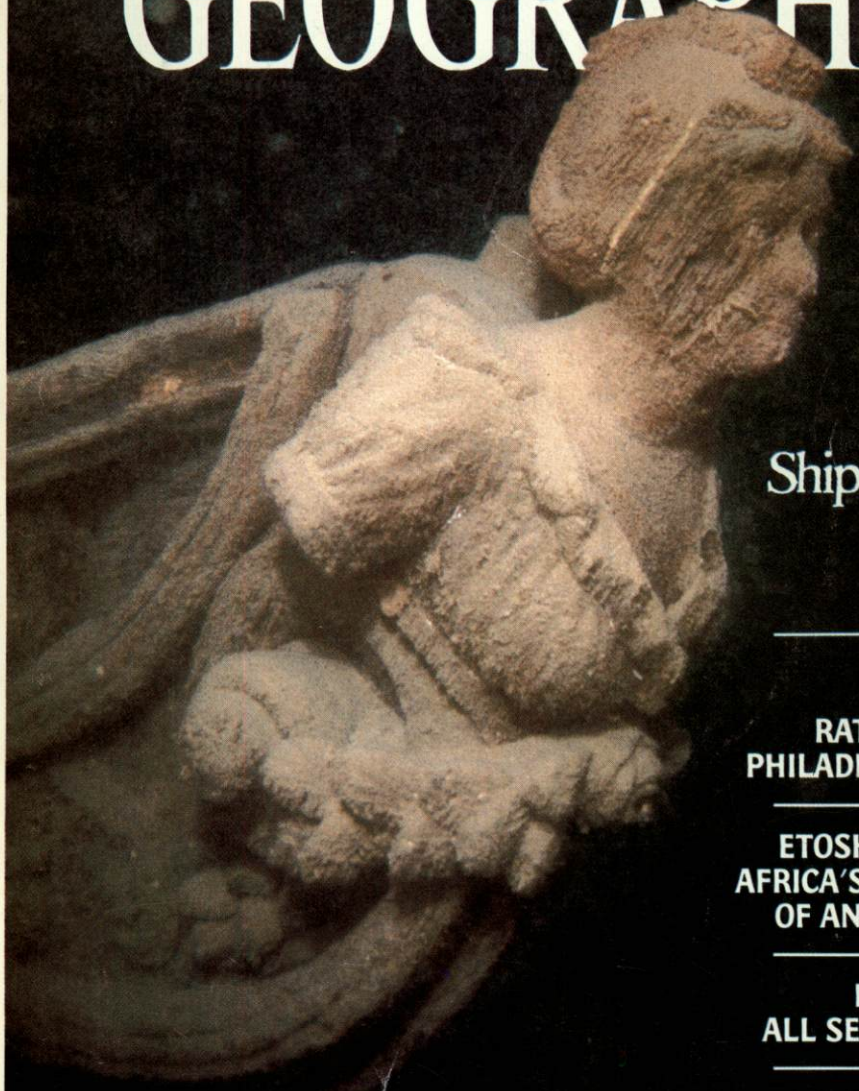
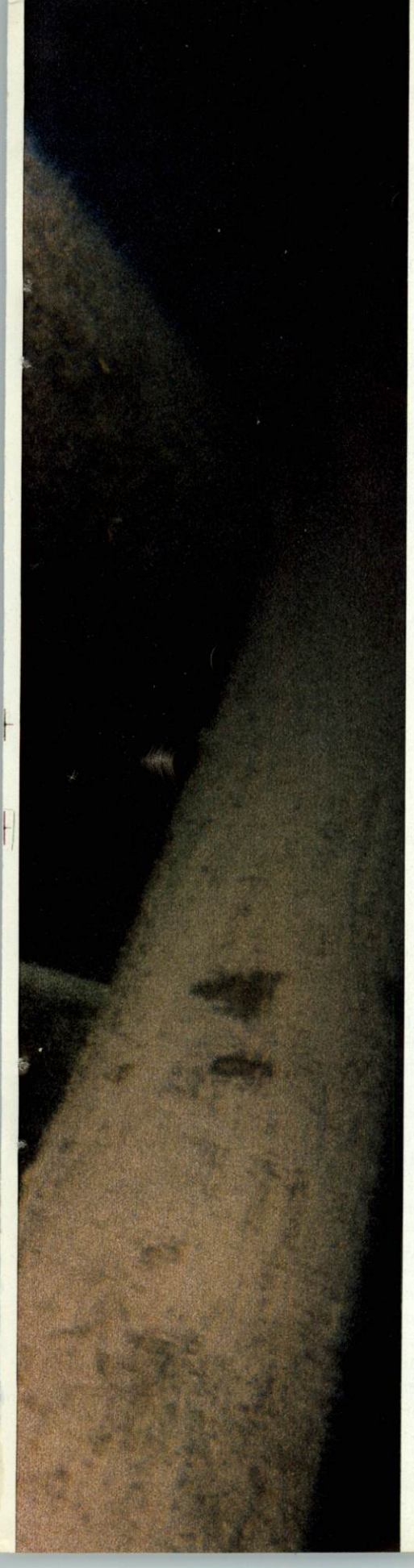


Specter from the past, a female figurehead still graces an armed American schooner found on the bottom of Lake Ontario



Hamilton & Scourge

Ghost Ships of the War of 1812

By DANIEL A. NELSON

Photographs by EMORY KRISTOF
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER

Paintings by RICHARD SCHLECHT

THROUGH an undersea snowstorm of swirling sediment the figure slowly emerged. Hand over heart, body inclined forward, the small human likeness seemed to be taking a bow (left).

In the darkened control room some 300 feet overhead, I watched as the remotely controlled underwater TV camera explored every detail of the scene far below. After a time someone behind me remarked quietly, "Not bad for 11 years' work, Dan—seems to me you could take a bow yourself."

The remark was well meant, but if bows were to be taken they would number in the hundreds—one for every person who had helped bring that ghostly shape to the monitoring screen. The image was of a ship's figurehead, a likeness of the great British naval hero Horatio Nelson. It belonged to a United States Navy vessel named *Scourge* that sank with *Hamilton,* a sister ship, in a terrible storm on Lake Ontario 170 years ago. The story is one of violence and remarkable courage. It is best told by Ned Myers, who was there.

Myers was an able seaman in the U. S. Navy in the War of 1812, a conflict with Britain that left neither side better off. Its causes included British interference with U. S. trade with Napoleonic France and impressment of

Apparition from the deep, *the figurehead of the Scourge framed by the bowsprit and a spar is photographed by sophisticated electronic techniques in Lake Ontario. Another U. S. warship of the War of 1812, the Hamilton, was also found.*

American sailors. Armies clashed from Canada to Louisiana, navies from the Great Lakes to the high seas.

Ned Myers would doubtless be forgotten today but for two things: He was blessed with an almost photographic memory, and before the war he shared a voyage aboard an American merchant ship with a young man by the name of James Fenimore Cooper.

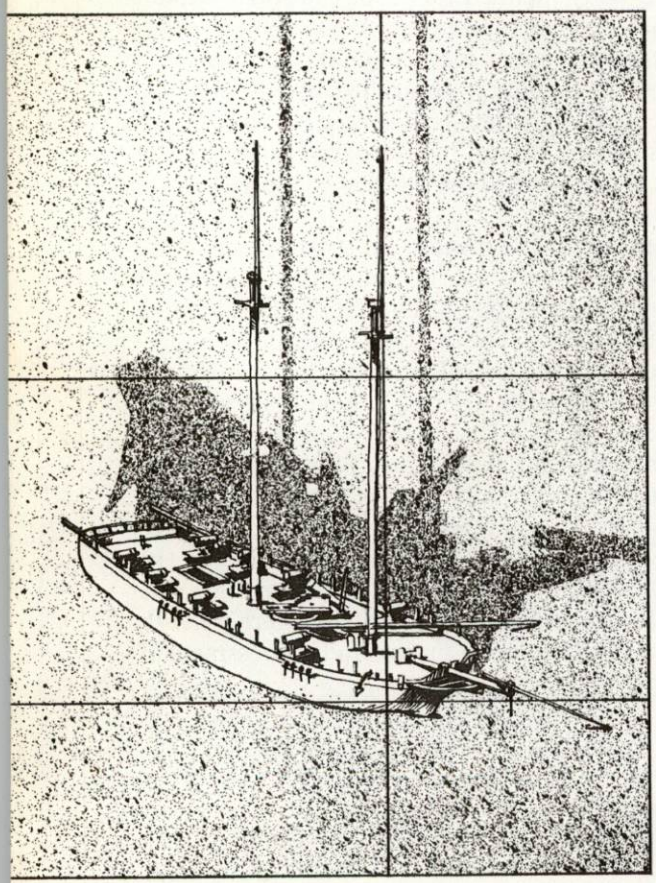
During the War of 1812 Myers served aboard the armed schooner *Scourge,* which patrolled Lake Ontario with a U. S. squadron that included another armed schooner, *Hamilton. Scourge* was originally a Canadian merchant vessel called *Lord Nelson,* which was captured and renamed by the Americans. *Hamilton* had been an American merchantman named *Diana,* which was also renamed and pressed into service for the war. The Americans added guns to the ships, making them dangerously top-heavy.

In the early hours of August 8, 1813, *Hamilton* and *Scourge* were overwhelmed by a sudden violent squall as they lay becalmed about a quarter of a mile apart and within sight of a British squadron in western Lake Ontario (map, page 299). Both ships perished almost instantly. Reeling under the lash of the squall, they swamped and went to the bottom, carrying all but eight crew members from each vessel.

One of the survivors was Ned Myers, and every detail of that terrible night remained locked in his memory over the next 30 years. In 1843 Myers contacted his former shipmate, Cooper, who by then had become one of America's leading writers.

From his remarkable memory Myers recounted his entire naval career to his old friend Cooper, including a graphic description of the night *Hamilton* and *Scourge* sank. The eventual result was a classic of naval drama: *Ned Myers; or A Life Before the Mast,* by J. Fenimore Cooper. A single passage in Ned's account details the death of *Scourge* with frightening clarity:

The flashes of lightning were incessant, and nearly blinded me. Our decks seemed on fire, and yet I could see nothing. I heard no hail, no *(Continued on page 294)*



Proof positive from 290 feet

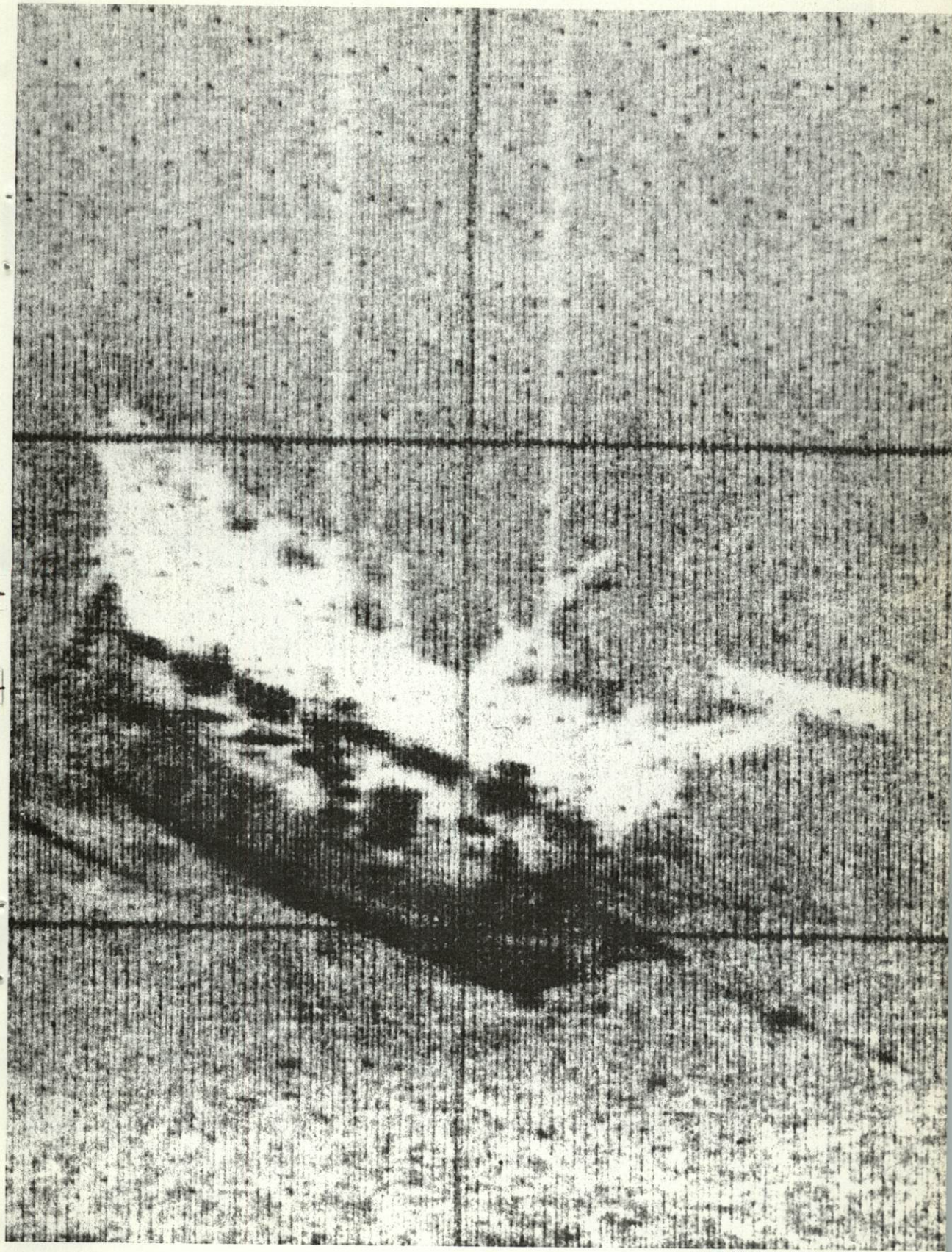
GHOSTLY SCHOONER, later identified as Hamilton, sails again in this dramatic side-scan sonar image ***(right)*** *made by a Canadian government research vessel in 1975.*

Sound pulses reflected from 290 feet down show the ship in black, casting a white acoustic shadow that outlines her masts. An artist's drawing ***(left)*** *refines the images and reverses the colors.*

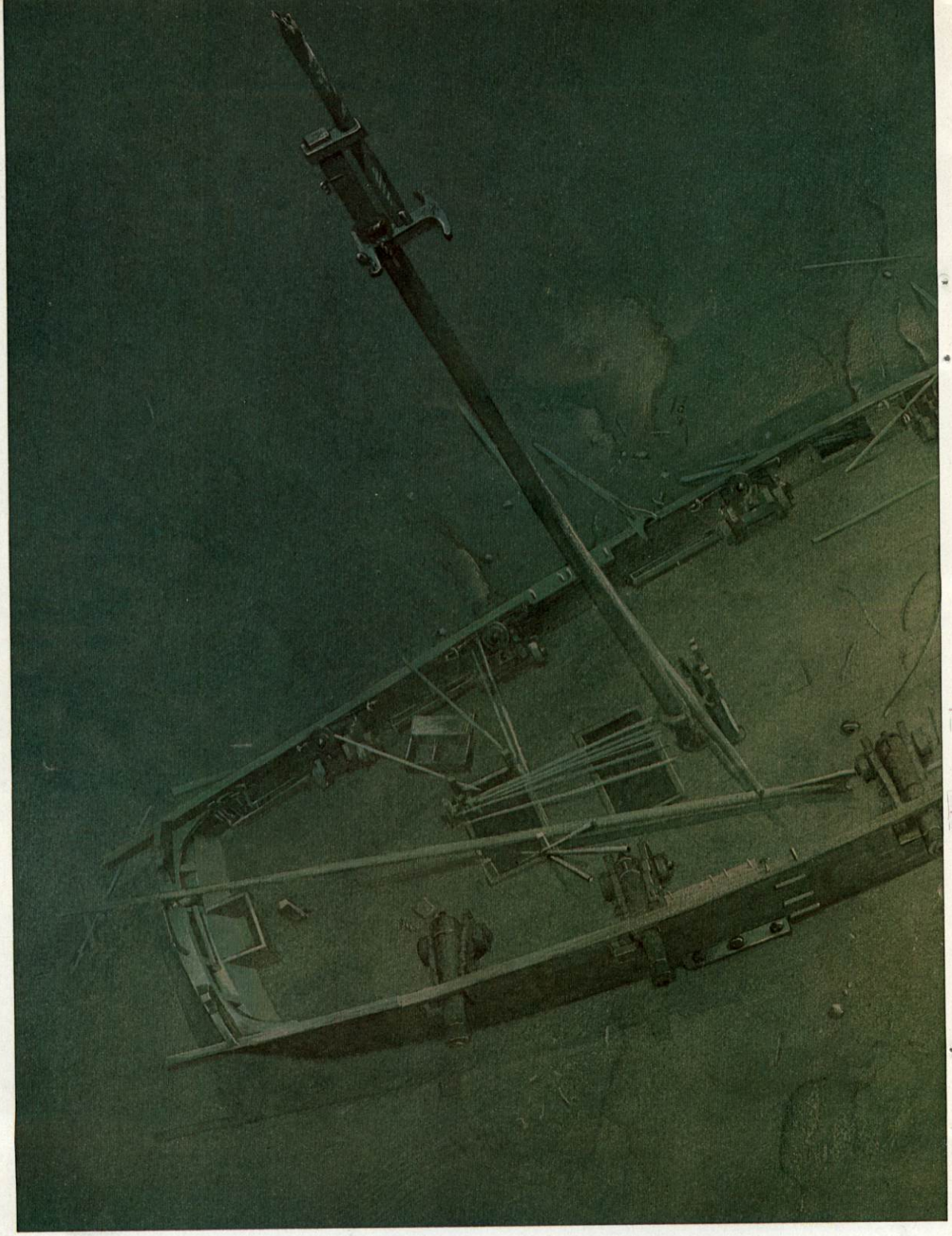
A second sonar image pinpointed Scourge 1,500 feet away from Hamilton. Becalmed while attempting to engage a British squadron, both vessels later foundered during a sudden squall soon after midnight on August 8, 1813.

Directed by author Daniel A. Nelson, the search for the ships was originally sponsored by the Royal Ontario Museum, the Canada Centre for Inland Waters, and the federal and Ontario governments, with later support from the Hamilton-Scourge Foundation and the National Geographic Society.

Ghost Ships of the War of 1812



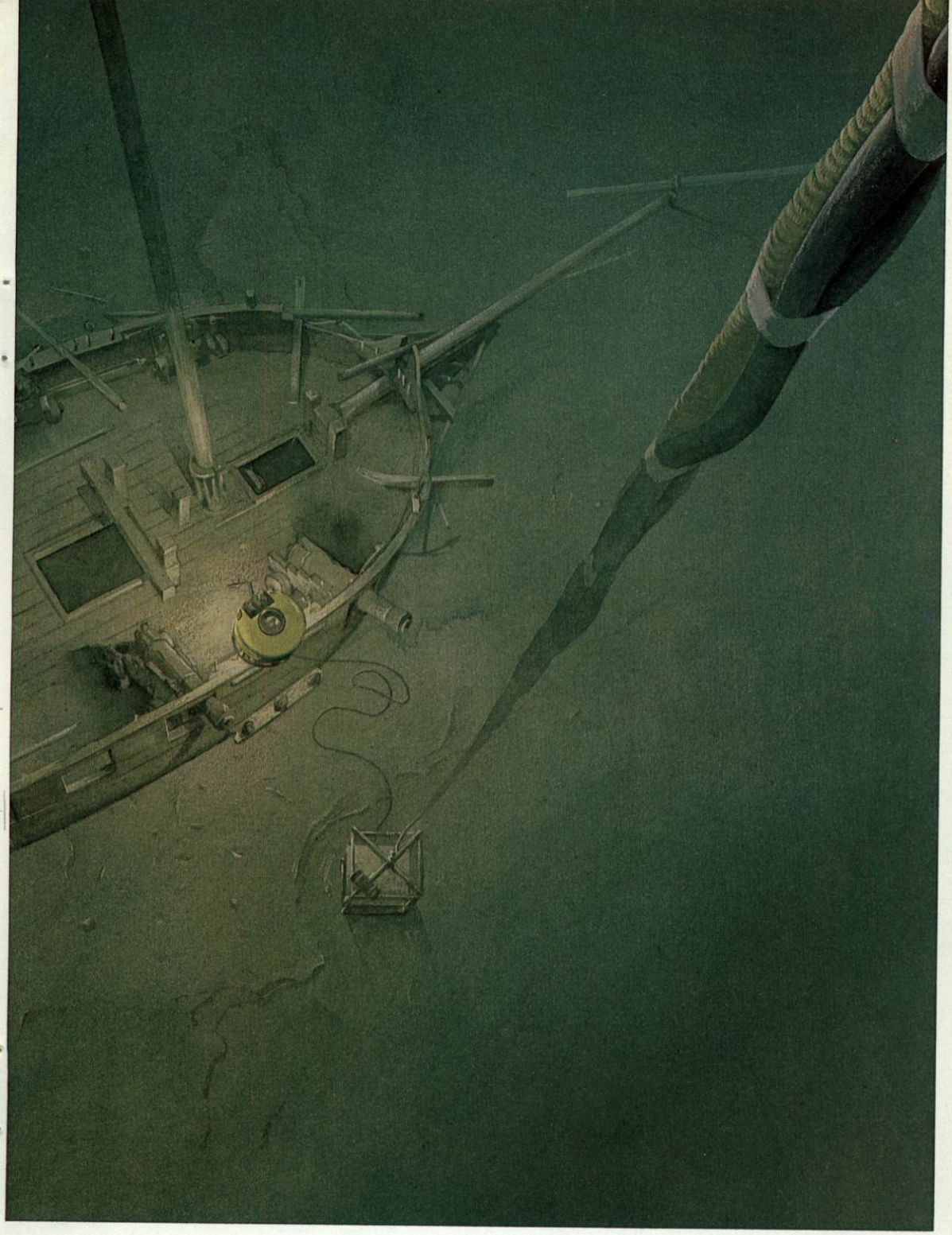
CANADA CENTRE FOR INLAND WATERS



Scourge

HIGH-TECH EXERCISE in underwater archaeology: A remotely piloted vehicle carrying its own lights and cameras hovers over the starboard rail of the 60-foot-long Scourge. A cable connects the vehicle with its operators aboard ship.

With helicopter-like maneuverability, the



vehicle photographed Scourge section by section, in visibilities that were never better than ten feet. After poring over photographs and videotapes, artist Richard Schlecht reconstructed this view of the remarkably well-preserved vessel.

From a crew of about 50, only eight men survived. One of them, Ned Myers, recalled that the vessel "was so tender that we could do little or nothing with her in a blow. It was often prognosticated that she would prove our coffin." Myers's tale of his dramatic escape, as related by James Fenimore Cooper, *begins on page 300.*

order, no call; but the schooner was filled with the shrieks and cries of the men to leeward, who were lying jammed under the guns, shot-boxes, shot, and other heavy things that had gone down as the vessel fell over. . . .

The water was pouring down the cabin companion-way like a sluice. . . . I made a spring, therefore, and fell into the water several feet from the place where I had stood. It is my opinion the schooner sunk as I left her.

HAMILTON WENT with her, and the two lay largely forgotten over the next 158 years, with no memorial but Ned Myers's account and terse references in the U. S. naval archives.

Then in the summer of 1971 the Royal Ontario Museum at Toronto commissioned a historical research project to look for the *Hamilton* and *Scourge* in western Lake Ontario. The lake had been a major theater in the War of 1812, taking the place of roads in the movement of troops and supplies. As a result, shipbuilding on Lake Ontario had reached massive proportions. By the time the war ended in 1815, both sides had ships on the lake or on the ways as powerful as anything at the historic Battle of Trafalgar a decade earlier.

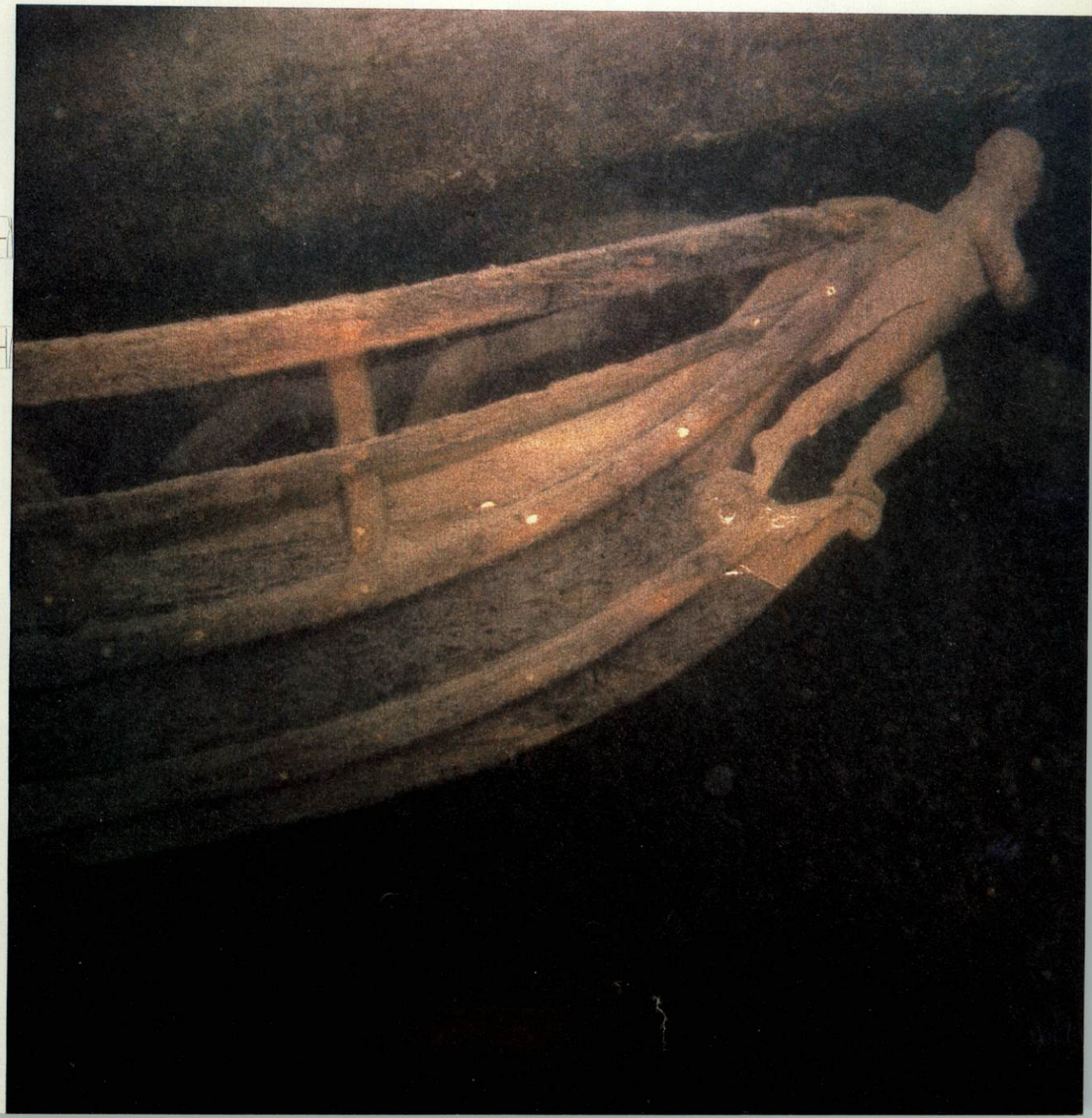
Through my friend Dr. Douglas Tushingham, then chief archaeologist of the Royal Ontario Museum, I was asked to direct the ship research project. Though my profession is dentistry—I have a busy practice in St. Catharines, Ontario—I had experience in underwater work, having spent much of my free time over the years with leading marine archaeologists in Bermuda and the Caribbean. I had also been a research associate of the museum for several years.

Lake Ontario's waters are deep and cold, with lower levels that remain forever in the near-freezing range. Unlike tropical seas with their warm temperatures and corrosive

Doing unexpected duty *for the American cause, a likeness of Adm. Horatio Nelson, one of history's greatest naval heroes, serves as the figurehead of Scourge in this montage of two photographs taken from slightly different angles.*

Originally a Canadian schooner named Lord Nelson, the vessel was captured before formal outbreak of hostilities, then armed and renamed.

Oddly enough, the sculptor carved this figure of Nelson having two arms (see also page 288), even though the admiral had lost his right arm in combat 15 years before.



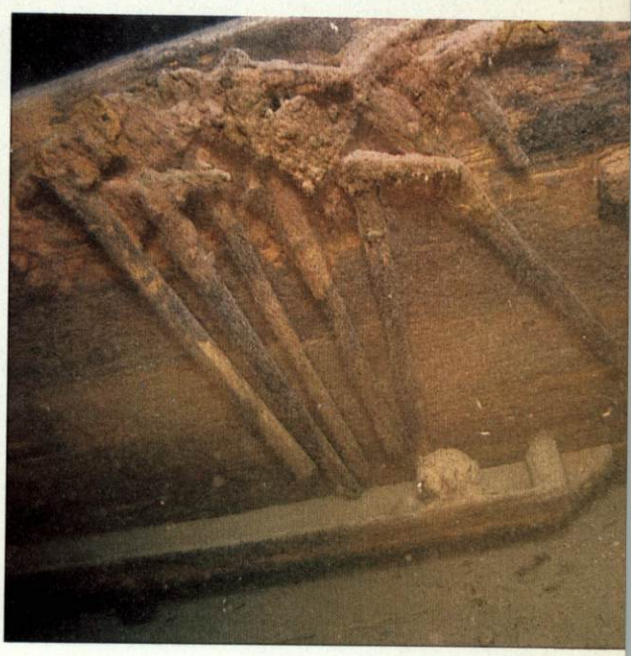
At the ready *despite 170 years on the bottom, one of Scourge's six-pounders* ***(above)*** *pokes its muzzle through a gunport beneath a pair of stowed cutlasses. Numbers on the picture record time, date, and roll number—in this case, 12:10 a.m. plus 21 seconds, on the 14th (May), film roll 2. Such inserts have been cropped out of other photographs in the article.*

A spar rests between the base of the mainmast ***(facing page, top)*** *and the bilge pumps. Boarding axes* ***(facing page, bottom)*** *are stowed inside the aft bulwark, above a shot rack that still contains a cannonball.*

salts, the relatively pure, cold waters of the Great Lakes tend to preserve whatever sinks into their lower reaches. That fact was to have overriding significance in the case of *Hamilton* and *Scourge*.

Cooper's book provided a wealth of detail on the ships, and equally important, it gave some idea of their whereabouts on the bottom of Lake Ontario. No exact position was possible, of course, because the ships' logs had gone down with everything else. But in time Ned Myers was to give me an invaluable clue.

What began as a simple research project gradually assumed the proportions of an



obsession. I was no longer content merely to gather information on *Hamilton* and *Scourge;* I was determined to find and explore the ships themselves. From the beginning three very remarkable people not only tolerated my obsession but constantly sustained me in it: my wife, Nancy, Doug Tushingham, and Dr. Peter Sly, a senior scientist at the Canada Centre for Inland Waters, commonly known as CCIW. It is a federal research facility charged with investigating and protecting Canada's lakes and rivers—a mission that Peter was to interpret liberally over the years to include a prolonged search of Lake Ontario's bottom.

BUT WHERE TO BEGIN the search? Historical documents, especially those drafted in time of war, often suffer from the ignorance or the outright bias of the authors.

In my search for the two ships I needed original documents that stated simple facts, not opinions. Nothing fits that description better than a ship's log, and I felt frustrated by the loss of those of *Hamilton* and *Scourge*. I wondered if the logs of other ships in the American squadron might have survived. I wrote to the Navy Department in Washington, D. C., with the question, but the answer was negative. The National

Archives, however, had the log of H.M.S. *Wolfe,* flagship of the British forces that had been skirmishing with the American squadron the day before *Hamilton* and *Scourge* went down. Would a copy of *Wolfe*'s log be of any interest? It most certainly would.

I never found the name of the British officer who stood watch aboard H.M.S. *Wolfe* on that crucial morning of Sunday, August 8, 1813, but I feel a sense of gratitude toward him. In a careful hand he had entered the details of his watch in the ship's log:

AM: Light breezes variable, very warm weather. At 5: The 40 Mile Creek bore SSW distance about 8 miles, wind southerly. Saw the Enemy squadron bearing E & by S about 4 or 5 leagues standing to the westward on the larboard tack. At ditto made sail and stood toward him. . . .

The officer might as well have drawn a chart; 40 Mile Creek still exists by that name, and it empties into western Lake Ontario near the town of Grimsby on the south shore. On the morning of August 8, *Wolfe*'s position was eight miles north-northeast of the mouth of the creek. From that point the bearing of the American squadron was east by south and the distance was "4 or 5 leagues"—meaning 12 or 15 miles.

At last I had a search area, but with one small problem. The sighting from *Wolfe* had been made at 5 a.m., approximately four hours after *Hamilton* and *Scourge* went down. How many miles had the American squadron sailed in the meantime? It was Ned Myers who gave me the answer: None.

According to Cooper's book, Ned had been picked up after the sinking by another ship in the squadron, *Julia.* After several hours' sleep Ned came on deck around 6 a.m. and encountered a scene he was not likely to forget:

The squadron could not have moved much between the time when the accidents happened and that when I came on deck . . . for we now passed many relics of the scene, floating about in the water. I saw spunges, gratings, sweeps, hats, &c., scattered about. . . .

In other words the bearings taken by *Wolfe* on the American squadron coincided with those recorded for *Hamilton* and *Scourge.* It was time to start the search underwater.

ALLOWING a sizable margin for error, I marked off a 32-square-mile section of Lake Ontario where I thought the two ships must lie. Then I called on Peter Sly and his colleagues at CCIW for the first of many favors generously granted.

A standard technique today for locating sunken ships is to survey first with an underwater magnetometer, whose sensor can detect significant amounts of iron such as cannon at considerable depths. Once a target is located, side-scan sonar can frequently be used to determine the shape and size of the sunken object.

The CCIW had side-scan sonar and navigational and data recording systems that it agreed to make available, along with a research vessel. A more vital loan was that of Peter himself, who had become a virtual partner in our quest. Finally, with a leased magnetometer, we were in business. After preliminary trials in 1972 we began a full-scale underwater search in the fall of 1973.

The initial results were discouraging. Among the magnetometer's major contacts, side-scan sonar identified a pile of bridge girders lost overboard by a freighter years earlier and a scattering of practice artillery shells in an area of the lake used by the Canadians as a World War II firing range.

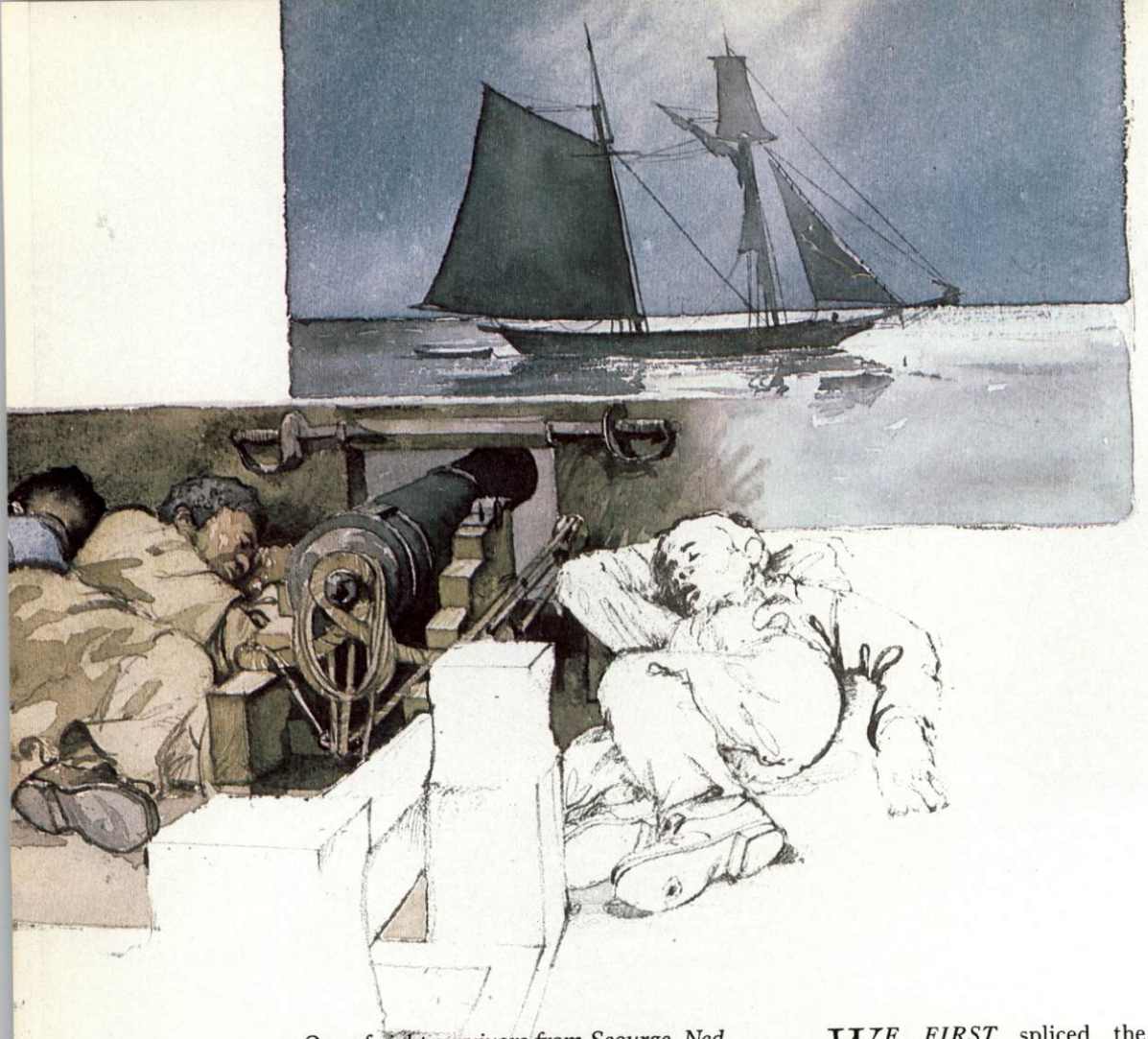
Finally, with a single day of borrowed ship time left and the initial area thoroughly investigated, I did some fast thinking. Suppose the watch officer aboard *Wolfe* had misjudged the distance to the American squadron? If the enemy ships had been a full 15 miles to the east of *Wolfe,* they probably would have slipped into the mouth of the Niagara River for the night under the friendly guns of Fort Niagara. But the Americans had remained in open water—perhaps a bit closer to *Wolfe* than the watch officer realized. The next morning I asked for a search farther to the west of our original area.

With time running out, we searched by sonar alone. During a final sweep that day the instrument recorded a solid object on the lake bottom at a depth of nearly 300 feet. With no time to investigate we marked the site on our chart and reluctantly came ashore for the winter.

It was to be two years before the search could be resumed. CCIW has heavy commitments, *(Continued on page 306)*

SAILING WING and wing with flags hanging limply, Scourge and Hamilton, trailed by part of the U. S. squadron, break out oars in a late afternoon calm. Maneuvering like water spiders on the glassy lake, the ships fail to make contact with the British. The calm continues after sunset, and crews take their rest.

In the darkness the squall bursts, sending the ships to the bottom in minutes. An X marks their resting place near Port Dalhousie, Ontario.



One of eight survivors from Scourge, Ned Myers gave a gripping account of the tragedy to author James Fenimore Cooper, who incorporated the story in his 19th-century naval classic, "Ned Myers; or A Life Before the Mast." That moment-by-moment account, beginning just before the storm, guided artist Richard Schlecht in re-creating the disaster in these carefully researched paintings that illustrate Myers's words.

The incredible crawl of Ned Myers

WE FIRST spliced the main-brace [had a ration of rum] and then got our suppers, eating between the guns, where we generally messed. . . . As all hands were pretty well tired, we lay down, with our heads on shotboxes, and soon went to sleep.

. . . I ought to have said something of the state of our decks. . . . There was a box of cannister, and another of grape, at each gun, besides extra stands of both, under the shot-racks. . . . Each gun's crew slept at the gun and its opposite, thus dividing the people pretty equally on both sides of the deck. Those who were stationed below, slept below. I think it probable that, as the night grew cool . . . some of the men stole below to get warmer berths. . . .

to get one of the sweeps to keep me afloat. . . . The water was pouring down the cabin companion-way like a sluice; and as I stood, for an instant . . . I saw Mr. Osgood [Scourge's captain], with his head and part of his shoulders through one of the cabin windows, struggling to get out. . . . I saw him but a moment, by means of a flash of lightning, and I think he must have seen me. At the same time, there was a man visible on the end of the main-boom, holding on by the clew of the sail. I do not know who it was. This man probably saw me, and that I was about to spring; for he called out, "Don't jump overboard!—don't jump overboard! The schooner is righting."

I was not in a state of mind to reflect much on anything. I do not think more than three or

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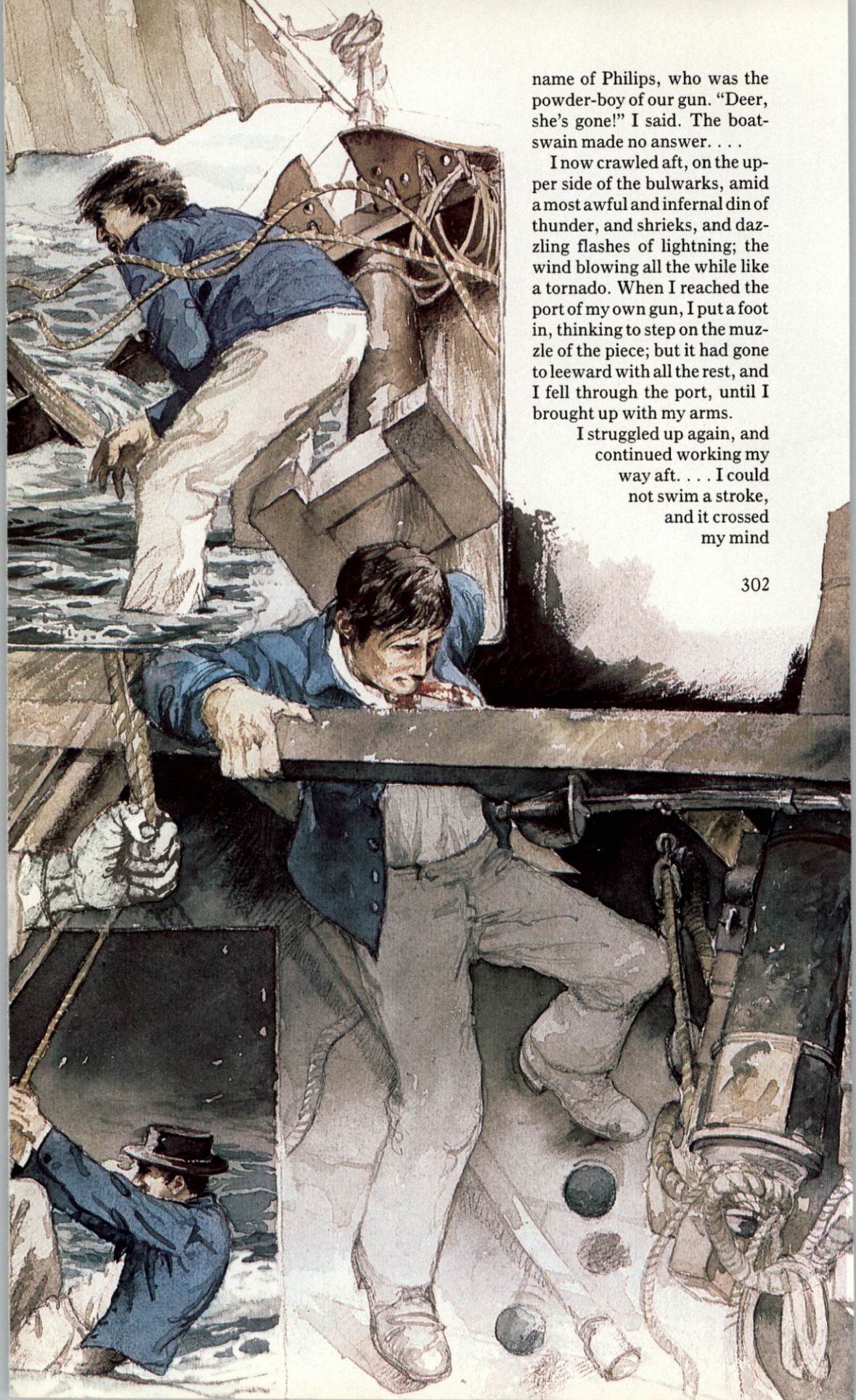


name of Philips, who was the powder-boy of our gun. "Deer, she's gone!" I said. The boatswain made no answer. . . .

I now crawled aft, on the upper side of the bulwarks, amid a most awful and infernal din of thunder, and shrieks, and dazzling flashes of lightning; the wind blowing all the while like a tornado. When I reached the port of my own gun, I put a foot in, thinking to step on the muzzle of the piece; but it had gone to leeward with all the rest, and I fell through the port, until I brought up with my arms.

I struggled up again, and continued working my way aft. . . . I could not swim a stroke, and it crossed my mind

four minutes, if as many, had passed since the squall struck us, and there I was standing on the vessel's quarter, led by Providence more than by any discretion of my own. It now came across me that if the schooner should right she was filled, and must go down, and that she might carry me with her in the suction. I made a spring, therefore, and fell into the water several feet from the place where I had stood. It is my opinion the schooner sunk as I left her. I went down some distance myself, and when I came up to the surface, I began to swim vigorously for the first time in my life. I think I swam several yards . . . until I felt my hand hit something hard. I made another stroke, and felt my hand pass down the side of an object that I knew at once was a clincher-built boat. I belonged to this boat, and I now recollected that she had been towing astern. Until that instant I had not thought of her, but thus was I led in the dark to the best possible means of saving my life. . . .

My first look was for the schooner. She had disappeared, and I supposed she was just settling under water. It rained as if the flood-gates of heaven were opened, and it lightened awfully. . . .

I could hear many [men] around me, and, occasionally, I saw the heads of men, struggling in the lake. . . . I now saw a man quite near the boat; and . . . made a spring amidships, catching this poor fellow by the collar. He was very near gone; and I had a great deal of difficulty in getting him in over the gunwale. . . .

I now looked about me, and heard another. . . . I caught him by the collar, too; and had to drag him in. . . .

I kept calling out, to encourage the swimmers. . . .

As the boat drifted along, she reached another man, whom I caught also by the collar. . . .

We had now as many in the boat as it would carry, and . . . it would not do to take in any more. . . .

The lake had swallowed up the rest . . . and the Scourge, as had been often predicted, had literally become a coffin to a large portion of her people.

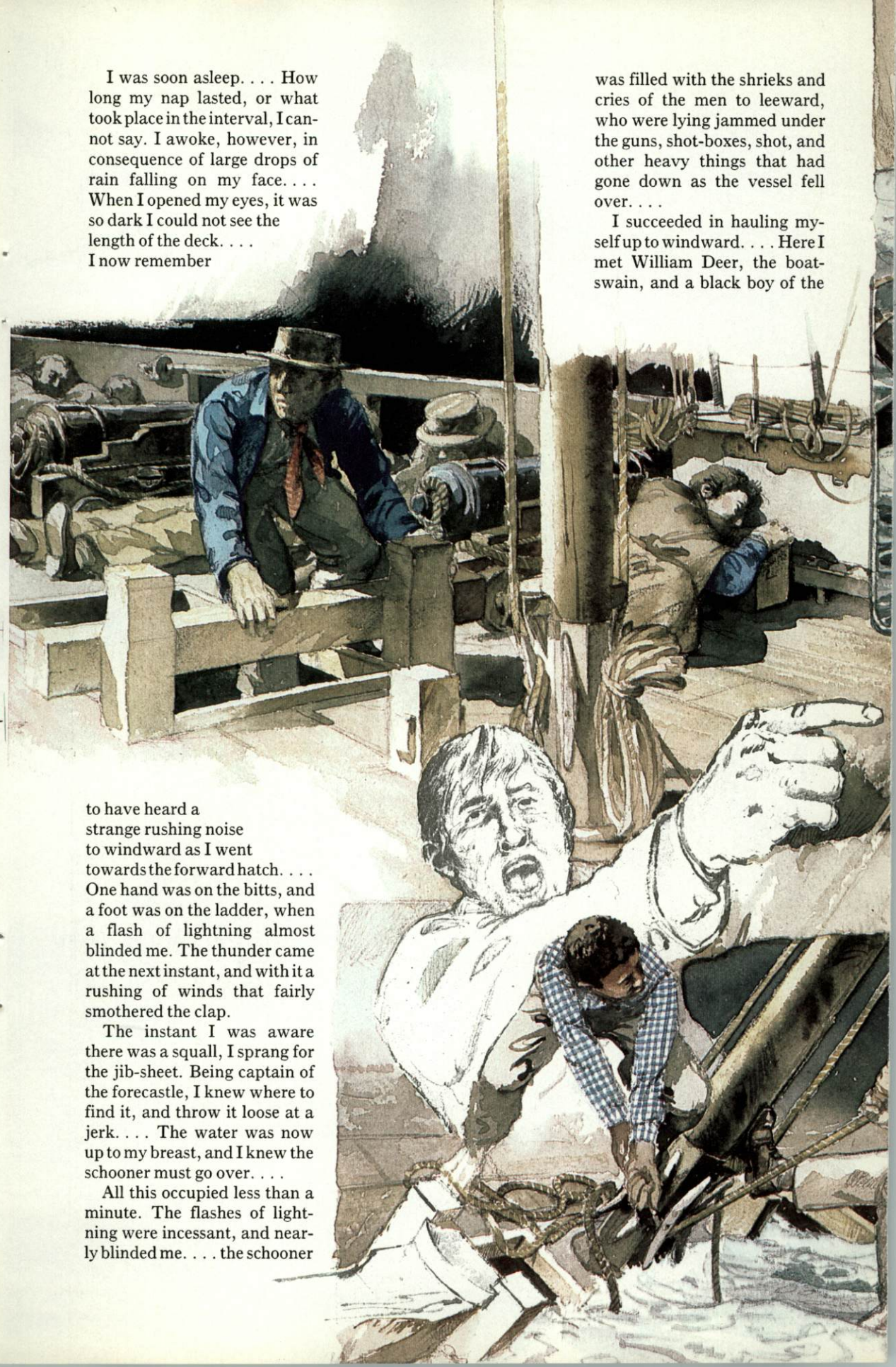
* * *

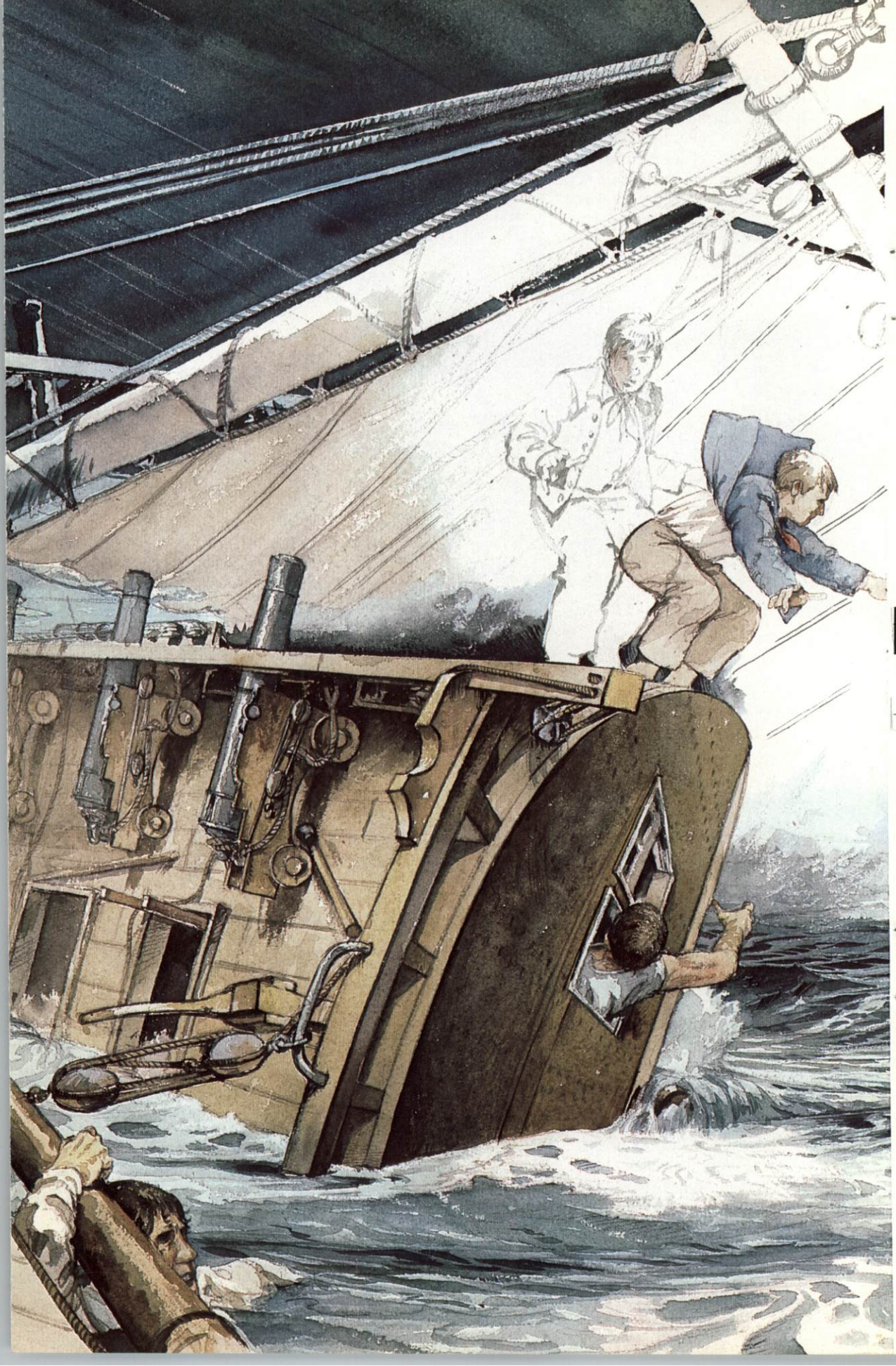
I was soon asleep. . . . How long my nap lasted, or what took place in the interval, I cannot say. I awoke, however, in consequence of large drops of rain falling on my face. . . . When I opened my eyes, it was so dark I could not see the length of the deck. . . .
I now remember to have heard a strange rushing noise to windward as I went towards the forward hatch. . . . One hand was on the bitts, and a foot was on the ladder, when a flash of lightning almost blinded me. The thunder came at the next instant, and with it a rushing of winds that fairly smothered the clap.

The instant I was aware there was a squall, I sprang for the jib-sheet. Being captain of the forecastle, I knew where to find it, and throw it loose at a jerk. . . . The water was now up to my breast, and I knew the schooner must go over. . . .

All this occupied less than a minute. The flashes of lightning were incessant, and nearly blinded me. . . . the schooner was filled with the shrieks and cries of the men to leeward, who were lying jammed under the guns, shot-boxes, shot, and other heavy things that had gone down as the vessel fell over. . . .

I succeeded in hauling myself up to windward. . . . Here I met William Deer, the boatswain, and a black boy of the





(Continued from page 298) and ships and sonar equipment were to be used only on an opportunity basis.

One afternoon in July 1975, as I was treating a patient in St. Catharines, a call came through from Peter Sly. His tone was casual, but I sensed the excitement behind it.

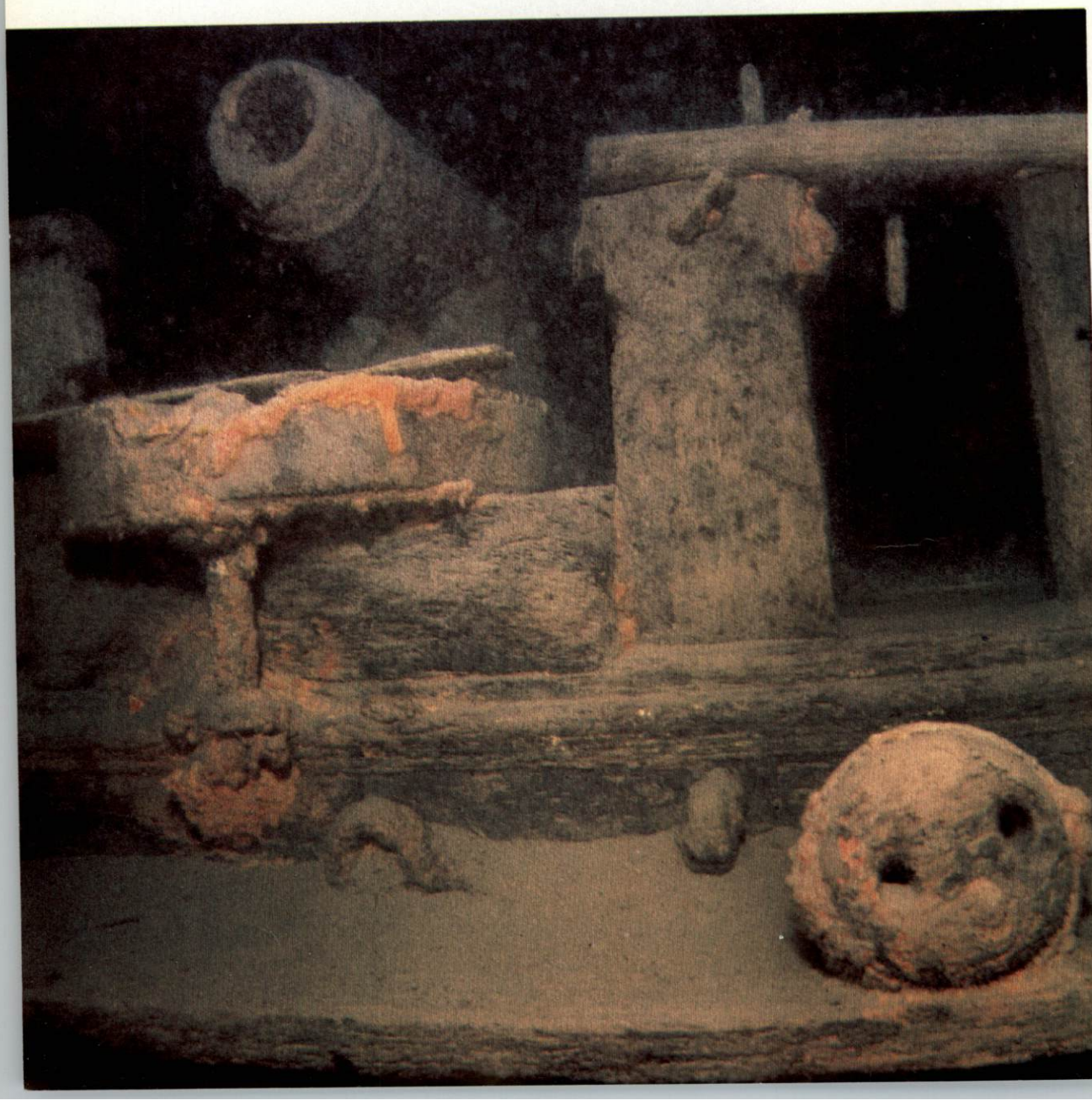
"Rich Thomas aboard R. V. *Limnos* has been investigating that sonar target you recorded in 1973. The ship has come in and is tied up below Lock No. 1 on the Welland Canal. We've got something that might interest you. Can you get away?"

The CCIW ship had turned out to a man for my arrival. As I reached the gangway, I found Rich and the entire crew lined up at the rail, grinning like an assortment of Cheshire cats. Without a word they ushered me up to the wheelhouse and led me to the chart table, where a number of sonar recordings had been laid out.

And there were the ships. Not miniature impressions or indistinct shadows but beautifully defined silhouettes of 19th-century schooners (pages 290-91).

"Well, Dan," Rich asked, still grinning, "was it worth the ten-mile trip?"

It was worth not only that but also all four years of effort and frustration, plus the even bigger job I knew was to come. We still had no proof that the ships were actually *Hamilton* and *Scourge,* and if they were, they



belonged not to us but to the United States Navy. For all their magic, sonar recordings could never identify the ships; sooner or later we would have to inspect them at close range through the use of divers or a submersible, either manned or remotely controlled.

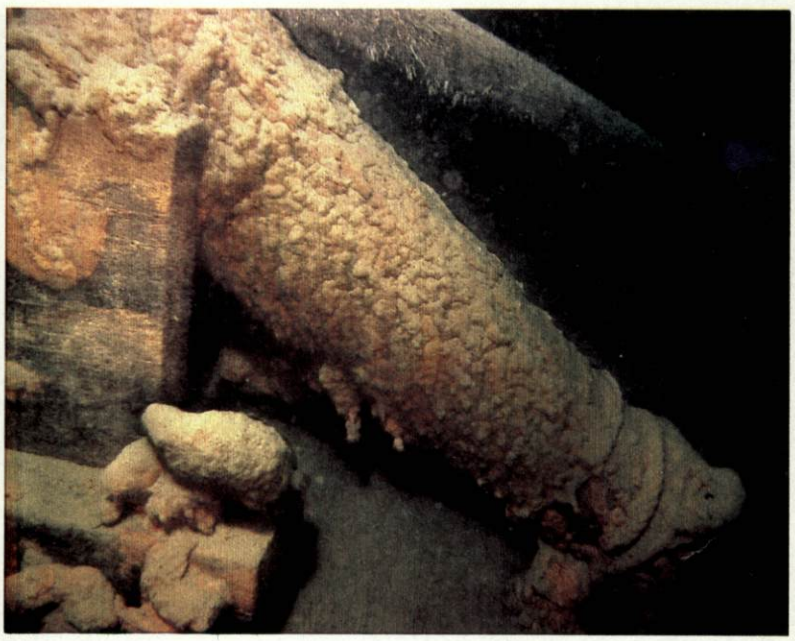
An opportunity came the following November, when CCIW ran tests on an experimental diving device with the inevitable acronym TROV—for tethered remotely operated vehicle—built by International Submarine Engineering of British Columbia. TROV carried a television camera and managed to train it at close range on what later proved to be the stern area of *Hamilton*.

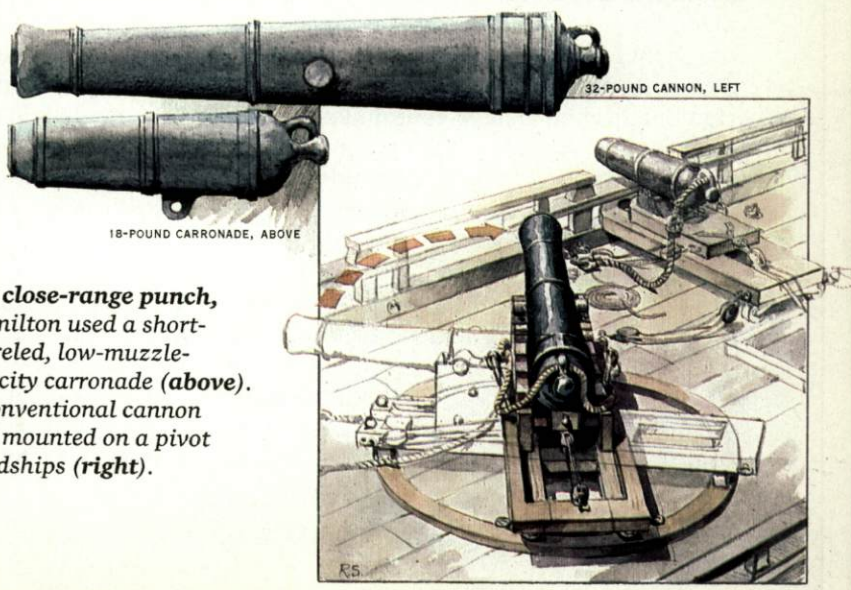
As we sat transfixed before the screen,

Hamilton

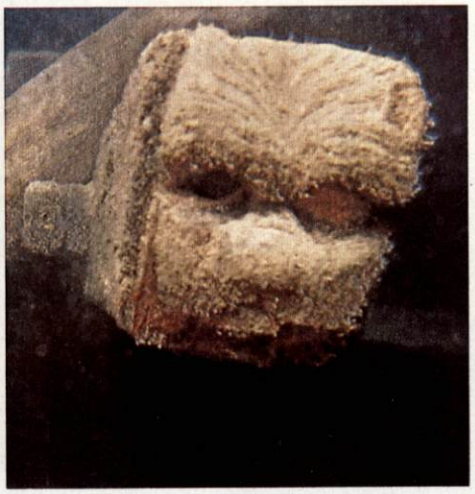
INCHING ALONG Hamilton's starboard rail, the remotely piloted vehicle's claw ***(left)*** *is positioned above two deadeyes and points toward one of the vessel's eight 18-pound carronades. The ship's 32-pound cannon rests with its muzzle down on the deck* ***(below)****.*

Fate that day denied Hamilton and Scourge the opportunity for ship-to-ship combat, but both vessels had earlier participated in successful assaults on York—now Toronto—and Fort George.





For close-range punch, *Hamilton used a short-barreled, low-muzzle-velocity carronade* ***(above)****. A conventional cannon was mounted on a pivot amidships* ***(right)****.*



Hanging by a fluke, *Hamilton's port anchor remains in its stowed position* ***(left)****. The line that secured the anchor to a bitt next to the fluke has rotted away. Prior to stowage, the anchor was raised clear of the hull by passing its line through a cathead* ***(below)*** *that protrudes from the ship's bow.*

TROV panned slowly across spars, a rudder, the ship's gig, some remains of human skeletons, and—most revealing of all—an open box of cannonballs.

When the latter appeared on the screen I couldn't help applauding, and Jack Roe, TROV's operator, looked puzzled. "What's so special about cannonballs?" he asked.

"A cannonball or a cannon—it makes no difference," I answered. "Either one is proof that we're looking at *Hamilton* or *Scourge*. After the war, in 1817, Britain and the United States signed the Rush-Bagot Agreement. In effect it disarmed shipping on all the Great Lakes with only minor exceptions. So any sunken vessel that's carrying guns or cannonballs had to have gone down no later than the War of 1812. What you're looking at is an armed schooner, and only two of those were lost in this area during the war, *Hamilton* and *Scourge*. This has to be one or the other."

The remarkable thing about the ship was its excellent state of preservation. Through TROV's video system, it was obvious that the hull, fittings, and various items of equipment were little damaged by immersion in cold fresh water for 160 years. As we later confirmed, the ship lay just as she had in the moments before her death—cannon at the ready, cannonballs stacked nearby, cutlasses and boarding axes stowed in easy reach.

Historically the ship was an archaeologist's dream. During the pioneer era in which she had served, little was recorded, including ship design and construction methods. Shipwrights and sailmakers trusted more to instinct than to the drafting board, and little of their knowledge ever found its way onto paper.

As a result, *Hamilton* and *Scourge* are three-dimensional blueprints of their time, containing a wealth of historical detail on a period as important as it was poorly documented. Peering through TROV's constantly shifting camera lens was like looking through the window of a beautifully furnished naval museum devoted to the 19th century.

FOR THE MOMENT we had no right to enter that museum, for the United States Navy still held title to *Hamilton* and *Scourge*. In order for us to explore or salvage the ships, title had to be transferred to a responsible Canadian institution.

Grim evidence of the doomed men's fate, a sailor's bones rest near Scourge ***(below)****. It is likely that many more remains lie entombed in the hulls. When the ships are raised, a project that may take years, the dead will be returned to the U. S. Navy for burial with military honors. The city of Hamilton, Ontario, has set aside a site on the lakeshore where the ships can be displayed indefinitely.*

Meanwhile, to safeguard the ships from adventurers or thieves, project supervisors keep the wrecks under constant surveillance by electronic and other means.

Negotiations began, and with help from the National Geographic Society they were finally completed in 1979. Thanks largely to John A. MacDonald, then mayor of Hamilton, Ontario, and William M. McCulloch, an alderman with a keen sense of Canadian history, title to *Hamilton* and *Scourge* was eventually transferred to the city of Hamilton, which lies near the wreck site and which had shown great interest in the ships. The city later provided generous funds for further exploration and video documentation of the ships. The city also designated an attractive lakefront site where *Hamilton* and *Scourge* will one day be displayed if they are brought to the surface.

Meanwhile, through the help of Doug Tushingham, the Royal Ontario Museum and agencies of the Canadian federal and provincial governments supplied funds to assist CCIW in the sonar mapping of the entire wreck site. Our experience with TROV had shown the water on the lake bottom to be so clouded with sediment that photographic or video surveys had to be limited to close range. That fact almost cost Albert Falco and me a unique view of *Hamilton*.

Falco is the pilot of *Soucoupe,* the familiar diving saucer featured in the films of French underwater explorer Jacques Cousteau. In the summer of 1980, while we were still mapping the site by sonar, Captain Cousteau began work on a film that included the Great Lakes. He had heard of *Hamilton* and *Scourge* and asked to see sonar images of the ships. When I showed him several he exclaimed, "We must have this!"

AS A CONSEQUENCE one September afternoon I found myself stretched beside Falco within the narrow confines of the diving saucer, searching for a glimpse of *Hamilton*. At last by luck we made contact, and Falco guided the saucer along the ship's hull from the stern toward the bow.

Peering through the view port, Falco suddenly found himself face to face with a beautiful woman—the figurehead of *Hamilton*. The ship was originally christened *Diana,* and I saw a likeness of the goddess in the carved figure beneath her bowsprit. Falco was instantly smitten.

"Ah, la, la, magnifique! Charmante! Fantastique!" The Gallic compliments simply bubbled out of him. "In 30 years of diving,"

he told me later, "I have often dreamed of seeing something so beautiful. Thank you, *mon ami,* for realizing my dream."

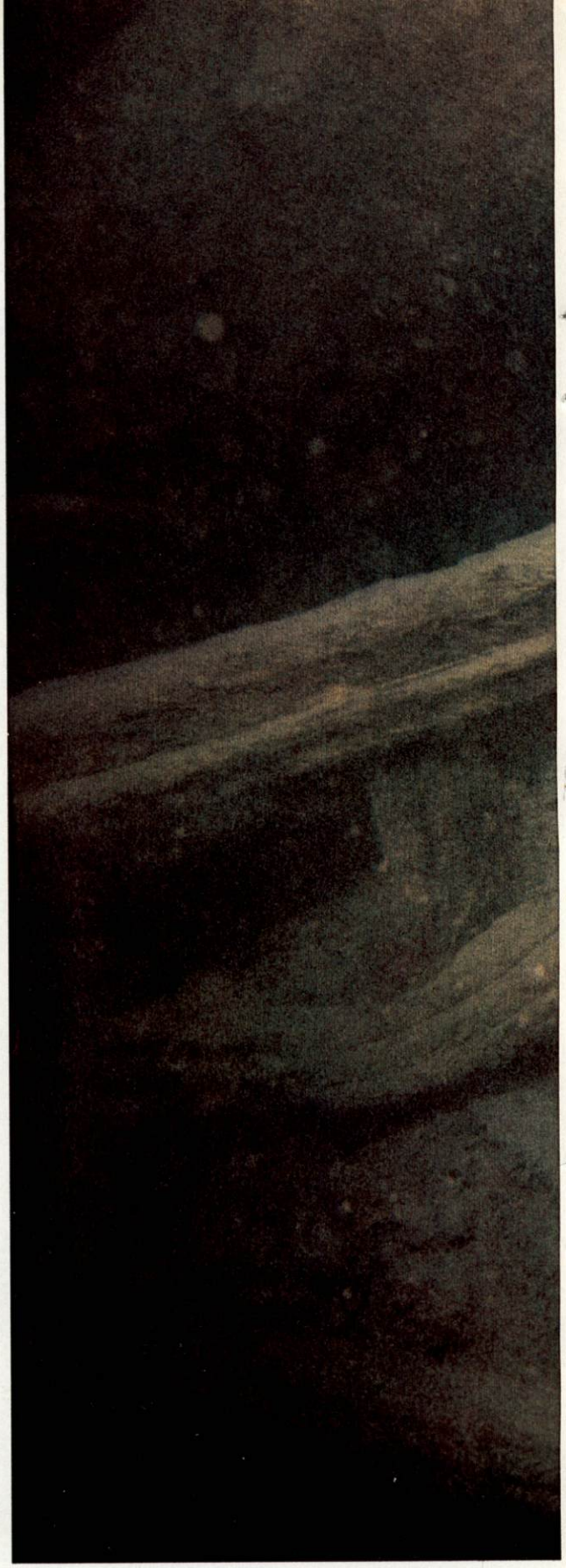
THOUGH I NEVER VISITED the wreck site after my dive with Falco, I have since inspected both *Hamilton* and *Scourge* as closely as if I had walked their decks. Thanks to the National Geographic Society and to a 29-year-old genius in electronics design named Chris Nicholson, I sat last spring before a video monitoring screen while the extraordinary pictures accompanying this article were taken.

It was Chris's remarkable underwater probe—made by Benthos, Inc., and dubbed RPV, for remotely piloted vehicle—that pierced the cloud of underwater sediment and focused a National Geographic camera on the heroic figure of Lord Nelson.

From there RPV and the camera proceeded to survey *Hamilton* and *Scourge* from bow to stern. We now have perhaps the most detailed portraits ever made of ships lying as deep as 300 feet. The citizens of Hamilton can take particular pride in those portraits, for their city and the government of Ontario contributed most of the operating funds for the project.

What the portraits tell us is that the hulls of *Hamilton* and *Scourge* are completely intact, with no visible damage to keels, frames, or planking. *Hamilton* is slightly longer than *Scourge*—75 feet as compared to 60. The rigging of both ships has been swept away and the spars lie scattered on deck. But three of the four masts remain upright, as do most of the topmasts. It is almost as though with a little refitting the two ships could sail again.

In any case the story of *Hamilton* and *Scourge* is far from complete. There is a great deal more to come, and as my old friend Ned Myers put it: "The past, I have related as faithfully as I have been able so to do. The future is with God. . . ." * * *



***Upswept hair** and a rose below the bodice of Hamilton's figurehead recall the ship's former duties as an American schooner named Diana. The vessel was purchased by the Navy in the fall of 1812 and refitted for combat.*