

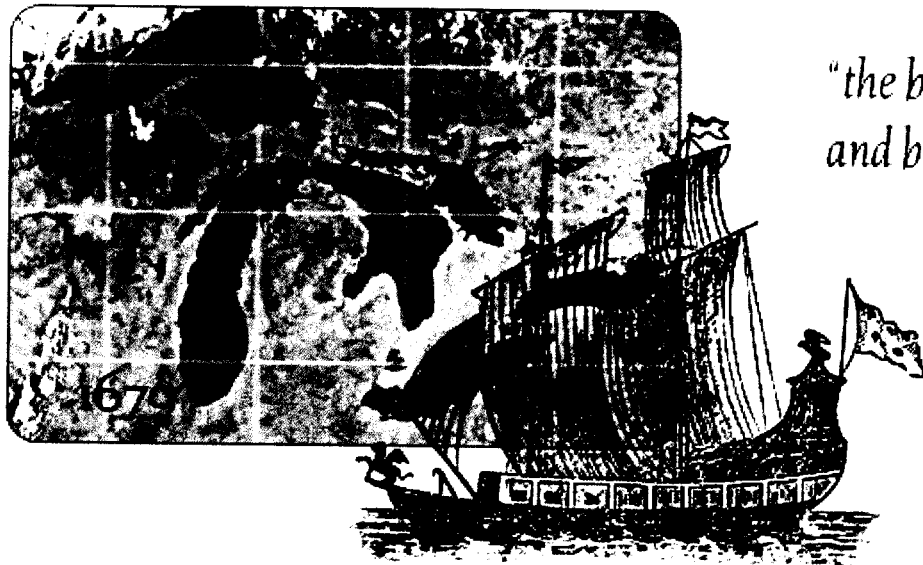
# The Search for the Elusive Griffon:

The First European Vessel to Sail  
the Upper Great Lakes



**GREAT LAKES**  
EXPLORATION GROUP, INC.

- home
- about us
- the expedition
- associates
- related links
- contact us



*"the boat was of 45 tun  
and built to hold 30 men"*

Father Hennepin

0000 01

# La Salle - Griffon Project

www.LaSalle-Griffon.org



- home
- about us
- the expedition
- associates
- related links
- contact us

## about us

### meet the team

## about the griffon

The *Griffon* (Griffin in English) was the first European vessel to sail the Upper Great Lakes -- and the first of upwards of 8000 shipwrecks in those waters as well. Built by the legendary French explorer, Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, the *Griffon* was intended to carry out lucrative fur-trading commerce which would support La Salle's expedition in search of the mouth of the Mississippi.

On its return maiden voyage, September 18, 1679, the *Griffon*, loaded with 6000 pounds of furs, sailed out from present day Washington Harbor on Washington Island, in northern Lake Michigan, never to be seen again, or at least maybe not until the summer of 2001. Steve Libert, president of Great Lakes Exploration believes he has located the ruins of a shipwreck that may look promising.



Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle: Explorer



Shore dive near Washington Island in Lake Michigan.



Building the *Griffon* (Hennepin, 1704)

### About Great Lakes Exploration Group

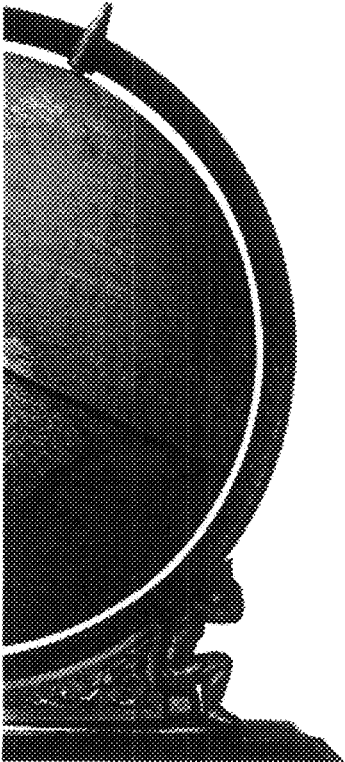
Since 2001 Libert has worked to involve academic experts and government officials in taking steps to preserve this potentially unique find. Great Lakes Exploration was formed with the vision of finding and protecting this rare piece of North American history.

Even if the wreck turns out not to be the *Griffon*, Dr. Demel believes the ship will still be a very noteworthy archaeological find. There are thousands of shipwrecks in the Great Lakes, few of which have ever been recovered. Further, the evident age of the vessel Libert has located will add to our store of knowledge of a critical time in our nation's history.

*We went two Leagues above the great Fall of Niagara where we made a Dock Building the Ship we wanted for our Voyage.*

Father Hennepin's Diary

0000 D2





**Expedition Outreach:  
The Purpose of this Web Site**

This site chronicles the ongoing expedition of the Great Lakes Exploration Group. Great Lakes designed this web site to reach out to experts, academia, other explorers, and the public at large. We will use this site to inform the public and educational institutions on existing research and test analysis. This is not to confirm or claim that the *Griffon* has been positively identified and found. Our purpose is to give all interested parties an opportunity to stay informed and participate in further discovery via Internet access.



.....

0000 3

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



[■ home](#)
[■ about us](#)
[■ the expedition](#)
[■ associates](#)
[■ related links](#)
[■ contact us](#)

## about us

### meet the team



Great Lakes team leaving from Ohio to Michigan.

From left to right: Vance Skowronski, Jim Kucharsky, Tom Kucharsky, Steve Libert



Steve Libert President of Great Lakes Exploration

"He is, if nothing else, a masterful and dogged researcher." – Stephen Dinan, *The Washington Times*

## meet the team

### The La Salle-Griffon Project Team

Currently, the Great Lakes Exploration Group, the Republic of France, the Field Museum, and the State of Michigan have an interest in the wreck site. Great Lakes is making every effort to forge a unique public/private endeavor that would preserve the historical and archaeological value of the find while also making it available for further study.

The Great Lakes Exploration Group has filed an admiralty arrest to bring the wreck under the protection of the court. Great Lakes hopes to be able to continue to work with the Field Museum to excavate and recover the vessel.

The Field Museum is involved because of the historic and academic significance of this Great Lakes discovery. Archeologist Dr. Scott Demel has been instrumental in providing guidance and advice to the Great Lakes group in the preliminary exploration in the area. Dr. Demel is also actively facilitating cooperation between the Great Lakes Exploration Group and the State of Michigan.

### Great Lakes Exploration Group

Steve Libert – [Biography](#)

President of Great Lakes Exploration Group, llc.

[libert@greatlakesexploration.org](mailto:libert@greatlakesexploration.org)

12800 Rose Grove Drive

Oak Hill, VA 20171

Phone: 703-262-0462

Fax: 703-262-0652

### Great Lakes Team:

Tom Kucharsky Partner

Carl Carlson, Partner

Jim Kucharsky, Partner

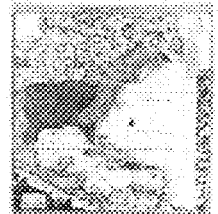
Vance Skowronski, Partner

Mike Behrens, Partner



### The Griffon

Mythical beast, half lion, half bird. In ancient times they were symbols of guardianship, protection and retribution of justice.



1782 map produced by Johann Michael Probst.

### Diving Associates:

James Nowka

Pat Ranguette

Randy McKay

Charlie Hendricks

0000 4



Rick Robol, Great Lakes Exploration Group's Legal Counsel

**ROBOL & WINKLER**

Rick Robol - [Resume](#)  
Legal Counsel  
[rrobol@columbuscounsel.com](mailto:rrobol@columbuscounsel.com)  
[www.columbuscounsel.com](http://www.columbuscounsel.com)

555 City Park Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43215  
Phone: 614-559-3839  
Fax: 614-559-3846



Dr. Scott Demel,  
Collection Project  
Coordinator, Academic  
Affairs - Anthropology

**Chicago Field Museum**

Dr. Scott Demel - [Biography](#)  
Collection Project Coordinator  
Academic Affairs - Anthropology  
[sdemel@fieldmuseum.org](mailto:sdemel@fieldmuseum.org)

The Field Museum  
1400 S. Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago IL 60605  
Phone: 312-665-7831  
Cell Phone: 312-208-7316  
Fax: 312-665-7193



0000 5

## STEVEN J. LIBERT



**President of Great Lakes Exploration Group, llc.  
12800 Rose Grove Drive  
Oak Hill, VA 20171  
Phone: 703-262-0462 Fax: 703-262-0652  
email: [libert@greatlakesexploration.org](mailto:libert@greatlakesexploration.org)**

Steve Libert was born in Fairmont, West Virginia on March 31, 1954, to George W. Libert, a retired 1st Sgt USMC and General Motors retiree, and the late Sandra E. (Laurel) Libert. He has two brothers, George W. (Butch) Libert Jr., Mark E. Libert and a sister Pamela J. (Riffle) Libert.

His father's military obligations relocated Steve's family to many East coast locations, including West Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia and South Carolina before they finally settled down in Dayton, Ohio. In Dayton Steve discovered and developed his athletic prowess, especially in baseball and football. However, when a severe injury ended his short-lived professional football career, Steve turned to other outlets for his adventurous spirit.

Steve first learned to fly, but soon discovered the lure of underwater exploration. He developed a passion for solving complex underwater mysteries.

Over the past 28 years, Steve's underwater expeditions have taken him on journeys that only a few others have dared to undertake: to the East China Sea, Okinawa, Exumas, Florida's Keys and his beloved Great Lakes. He has acted as consultant to renowned author Clive Cussler, the distinguished archaeologist, Dr. Lee Spence and the late, legendary shipwreck researcher, Robert (Bob) Fleming. Steve has directly participated and/or shared his knowledge and expertise in projects such as the Titanic, I-52 submarine, Navy flight 19 avengers, Bon Homme Richard, the vessel of John Paul Jones, General Tomoyuki Yamashita's hidden troves, the Poverty Island Mystery, sinking of the Carl D. Bradley, missing L-39C Albatross and his life long quest, "Le Griffon."

Steve is the first to admit that his unique skills and research techniques have been born out of failures and hardships. In the face of obstacles and mistakes, Steve has persevered. He credits his wife Kathie J. (Butler) Libert, his confidant and support since their high school days, for all his successes. "I can overcome any obstacle as long as she is by my side."

Steve received his BA in Political Science with a minor in Economics in 1980 from Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio. He works in Washington DC and lives in northern Virginia. Steve and Kathie enjoy their summer home in Charlevoix, Michigan, and plan to settle there upon retirement.

0000 6

**RICHARD T. ROBOL**

**ROBOL & WINKLER**  
**555 City Park Avenue**  
**Columbus, OH 43215**

**Phone: 614-559-3839 Fax: 614-559-3846**

**email: rrobol@columbuscounsel.com**

**www.columbuscounsel.com**

**EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE****Legal and Business Experience**

Attorney in private practice with extensive trial, negotiating, appellate, research, counseling and drafting experience in civil litigation, contracts, commercial law, admiralty and maritime law (MLA Proctor in admiralty status), international law, utility law, intellectual property, corporate management and insurance law. Multiple successful jury and non-jury trials in diverse litigation (contracts, antitrust, business injury, personal injury, international contract disputes, class action suits, insurance defense), e.g. winning largest salvage judgment in U.S. history. Innovations in admiralty law described in *New York Times* Best Seller *Ship of Gold in the Deep Blue Sea*. Previously, Executive Vice President & General Counsel, Columbus-America Discovery Group. Management, planning, budgeting, security and media experience, including supervision of law firms and lawyers, engineers, paralegals, and outside contractors. Bars to which admitted: Supreme Court of the United States; District of Columbia Bar; Ohio State Bar; Virginia State Bar; U.S. Court of Appeals, Fourth, Sixth, Ninth and Eleventh Circuits; N.D.OH, S.D.OH, E.D. VA., W.D. VA. Professional Associations: American Trial Lawyers Association, Maritime Law Association, Ohio State Bar Association, Columbus Bar Association. *Who's Who in America*, *Who's Who in American Law*; *Register of Preeminent Attorneys*, *Who's Who Among Rising Young Americans*; *Two Thousand Notable American Men*. *Martindale-Hubbell* Rating: AV.

**Clerkship**

- \* Law clerk to John A. MacKenzie, Chief Judge, U.S. District Court, E.D.Va.
- \* Research and litigation experience in federal and state substantive and procedural law. Work included U.S. District Court matters, appeals from Bankruptcy Court and Magistrate, and appeals at U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals.

**Military Service**

- \* MAJ, USAR. Experience focusing on instruction and/or practice in military leadership and history, operations,

claims, administration, and legal assistance. Primary support to Armor and Infantry. Top Secret Clearance.

## EDUCATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

### Law School

- Harvard Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts (J.D. 1978).
- Member, Board of Students Advisors. Won *Addison Brown Prize* for Outstanding Treatise. Served as Managing Editor, *Harvard International Law Journal*; Instructor in American Law, Harvard Law School International Tax Program; Coach and Director, Harvard Jessup Moot Court Program. Moot Court experience included: Harvard Jessup Moot Court- Best Team, Best Oralist; New England Regional Jessup Moot Court- Best Team, Best Brief, Second Best Oralist; U.S. National Jessup Moot Court- Third Best Brief, Fourth Best Oralist.

### Fulbright

- University of Pavia, Pavia, Italy.
- Fulbright Scholar to Europe. *Corsi singoli* in comparative law, international law, and international organization, residing in Collegio Ghislieri, Italy. Spent summary in Paris, France.

### College

- University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia (B.A. 1974).
- Graduated first in class of 2,000 (4.0 grade point average). Course concentration in economics, government, and international relations. Voted top novice debater on Virginia Debate Team. Elected to Phi Eta Sigma Honorary Fraternity and to Phi Beta Kappa. Won *Class of 1953 Award for Scholastic Achievement*. Won *Stevenson Prize* for outstanding undergraduate thesis. Echols Scholar.

## DIRECTORSHIPS & RELATED OFFICES

(Current and Past)

- Philippe Cousteau Foundation, Board of Directors.
- Parents United Against Child Abuse, *Pro bono* counsel.
- National Council for Prevention of Child Abuse, *Pro bono* counsel.
- Virginia Opera Association Guild, Board of Directors.
- Worthington Presbyterian Church, *Pro bono* counsel.
- National Conference of Christians & Jews, Virginia, Board of Directors.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Articles

- Co-Author, "Ohio Citation Made Easy- Name Calling for Practitioners," *Columbus Bar Briefs* (Spring, 2003).
- Co-Author, "Attorney Fee Forfeiture: Coming Soon to An Ohio Court Near You?" *Columbus Bar Briefs* (Winter, 2003).
- Co-Author, "Much Ado About Something: The Changing Landscape of Case Precedent," *Columbus Bar Briefs* (November 2002).



- Co-Author, "Future Crime Exception: The Lawyer's Duty of Confidentiality," *Columbus Bar Briefs* (October, 2002).
- "Five Rules of E-Commerce Law," *Columbus Chamber of Commerce Newsletter* (November, 2001).
- "Admiralty Law in Classical Greek and Roman Literature," *J. Maritime Law & Commerce* (Spring 2000).
- "Legal Protection of Underwater Cultural Resources: Can We Do Better?" *30 J. Maritime Law & Commerce* 303 (1998).
- "The S.S. CENTRAL AMERICA Project: International Law and Individual Freedom," *16 International Legal Practitioner* 118 (1991).
- "Legal Protection of Information, Ideas and Discovery," *Proceedings, Marine Technology Society* (1991).
- "Dredging, Ocean Dumping and the Law of Deep Ocean Discovery: An Overview," *23 Proceedings, Texas A&M* 72 (1990).
- "The Emerging Law of Deep Ocean Discovery," *42 Harvard Law School Bulletin* 20 (Winter 1991).
- "Legal Protection of Information for Shipwreck Discovery," *2 Treasure Diver* 60 (1990).
- Co-Author, "Admiralty Law and the S.S. CENTRAL AMERICA Project," *2 Treasure Diver* (1990).
- Co-Author, "International Litigation in Virginia: Extraterritorial Service of Process and Discovery," *37 Virginia Lawyer* 18 (1989).
- "Apportioning Contribution Among Joint Tortfeasors in Virginia," *7 Virginia Bar Association Journal* 14 (1981).
- Co-Author, "International Law: A Primer for the Practicing Attorney," *30 Virginia Bar News* 50 (1981).
- "Admiralty's Adjudicatory Jurisdiction over Alien Defendants: A Functional Analysis," *11 Journal of Maritime Law and Commerce* 395 (1980).
- "Jurisdiction in the Aegean Sea Continental Shelf Case," *18 Harvard International Law Journal* 649 (1977).
- "The Emerging Law of Deep Ocean Discovery: An Overview," *4 LOS Lieder* 22 (1991).

## Treatises

- Author, *The Law of Ocean Science and Technology*.
- Editor and Contributor, *International Law for General Practitioners*.
- Contributor, *Interstate and International Aspects of Bankruptcy*.
- Contributor, Confidentiality of Medical Records in Virginia.

## TEACHING AND MAJOR SPEECHES

- *Adjunct Professor of Military History*, Capital University, Columbus, Ohio, (2000-2003).
- *Adjunct Professor of Admiralty*, University of Dayton School of Law, Dayton, Ohio, (2000-2001).
- *Harvard Law School*, International Tax Program, "Introduction to American Law," Cambridge, Massachusetts (1977).
- *Oceans 2000*, "The Law of Ocean Science and Technology," Providence, Rhode Island.
- *University of Rhode Island*, "Protecting Our Underwater Cultural Heritage: Can We Do Better?" Newport Rhode Island.
- *Marine Technology Society*, "Legal Protection of Information, Discovery and Ideas," New Orleans, Louisiana.
- *Harvard Club of New York*, "Salvaging Sunken Treasure," New York, New York.
- *Marine Technology Society ROV Committee*, "Telepossession and Telepresence," Hollywood, Florida.
- *Harvard Law School Forum*, "From Radio Shack to Riches: NEMO The Robot and Recovery of the SS *Central America*" Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- *University of Baltimore Law School*, "Deep Ocean Exploration and the Law of Salvage," Baltimore, Maryland.
- *College of William and Mary*, Marshall-Wythe School of Law, "The Emerging Law of Deep Ocean Discovery," Williamsburg, Virginia.
- *Virginia Defense Force*, "War Crimes and the Law of Land Warfare," Richmond, Virginia.

- *Association of Diving Contractors*, "The Law and Underwater Exploration," New Orleans, Louisiana.
- *Pace University Law School*, "Treasure Salvage and the SS *Central America*," White Plains, New York.
- *Western Dredging Association*, "Ocean Dumping and Dredging," Virginia Beach, Virginia.
- *Marine Technology Society*, "The Emerging Law of Deep Ocean Discovery," Washington, D.C.
- *International Shipwreck Convention*, "Legal Protection of Confidential Information for Shipwreck Discovery," Key West, Florida.
- *Seas '89*, "The Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987," Norfolk, Virginia.
- *Lorman Business Center*, "Confidentiality of Medical Records: Legal Implications of Aids," Virginia Beach, Virginia.
- *Virginia State Bar*, "International Litigation: An Introduction," Washington, D.C.
- *Virginia State Bar*, "International Litigation and Bankruptcy," Virginia Beach, Virginia.

### **MAJOR TELEVISION AND VIDEO APPEARANCES**

- *NBC* - "Trial Watch."
- *The Discovery Channel* - "Treasures of a Lost Voyage."
- *ABC* - "Good Morning America."
- *PBS* - "MacNeil - Lehrer News Hour."
- *CBS* - "The Evening News with Dan Rather."
- *CNN* - "Headline News."
- *The Discovery Channel*, Interactive Video, "Treasures of a Lost Voyage: A History Mystery."

**DR. SCOTT DEMEL**

**Collection Project Coordinator**

**The Field Museum  
Academic Affairs – Anthropology  
1400 S. Lake Shore Drive  
Chicago, IL 60605**

**Phone: 312-665-7831 Fax: 312-665-7193  
email: [sdemel@fieldmuseum.org](mailto:sdemel@fieldmuseum.org)**

Dr. Scott Demel earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. His research focused on Archaic settlement patterns along the western coast of Lake Michigan (ca. 2,500-9,000 years ago), paleoenvironmental reconstruction, and identifying archaeological correlates of coastal occupation.

Scott has conducted archaeological research throughout the Midwest for over thirteen years, has excavated over one hundred prehistoric and historic sites (Phase I surveys, Phase II testing, and Phase III mitigations). He has authored or co-authored over 80 archaeological reports ranging in scope from Paleoindian campsites to historic farmsteads and historic cemeteries, as well as several chapters and various papers.

Demel is Adjunct Professor of Anthropology at DePaul University, where he periodically teaches courses in Anthropology and Archaeology. He is also co-director of DePaul's urban historical archaeology field school, which will be at the Pullman State Historic Site again this summer.

His research interests and specialties in archaeology are wide ranging, including such topics as Great Lakes prehistory and early history (colonial and American period historical/urban archaeology), early Chicago history, coastal zone studies in the Lake Michigan Basin (settlement and ecology); paleoenvironmental reconstruction, marine archaeology, the peopling of the Americas; hunter-gatherers of the Archaic period; complex societies, monumental architecture and cultural landscapes; microwear and use-wear analysis of lithic tools.

Demel has worked at the Field Museum as the Collection Project Coordinator for four years in Academic Affairs and as a researcher in the Department of Anthropology. He is currently working on the Museum Campus/Lakefront Archaeology Project, as well as the Chinatown Museum Foundation Archaeology Project. His role at the Museum includes coordinating the move of collections from current storage to a new underground facility he helped design. This gives him opportunities to work with existing archaeological collections from around the world.

He is also a member of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA), the Illinois Archaeological Survey (IAS), and he serves on the Board of Directors for the Illinois Association for the Advancement of Archaeology (IAAA).

# La Salle - Griffon Project

www.LaSalle-Griffon.org



- home
- about us
- the expedition
- associates
- related links
- contact us

## the expedition

- [press release](#)
- [research & collections](#)
- [photo gallery](#)
- [video clips](#)
- [expedition timeline](#)

## an expedition of historic significance: the search for the elusive griffon

### A Passion for Exploration

Steve Libert, president of Great Lakes Exploration Group, LLC, has an obsession for exploration. National Geographic may have been credited for the phrase "Exploration is an Obsession", but it was certainly inspired by someone like Libert. Human progress depends on exploration and discovery," he says. "And I think individual explorers still have an important role to play."

For Libert, his main drive is uncovering mysteries and legends from historical records, discovering the obvious truth and events that played in their creation. "I'm a researcher at heart, not a historian," Libert admits. However, history and legendary tales have inspired and challenged his imagination. It hasn't been an easy ride for Libert. His determination is characteristic of what it takes to be an explorer in the 21st century or, for that matter, an explorer 325 years earlier exploring a new frontier in the New World. In any event, both explorers would probably say that their stories are similar in many ways - much money is spent and many obstacles are encountered on the way to the most meaningful discoveries.

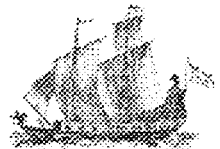
Libert has spent 28 years researching and studying the history of the *Griffon*, the first European-owned vessel to sail the upper Great Lakes. He is driven by the prospect of finding a vital part of our country's history.

Now Libert believes he may have done just that. In the summer of 2001, during a routine dive, Libert discovered something protruding from the murky lake floor. Subsequent inspection suggested that this might be the bowsprit of a ship... and a very old one.

Since that discovery Libert has worked steadily with the Field

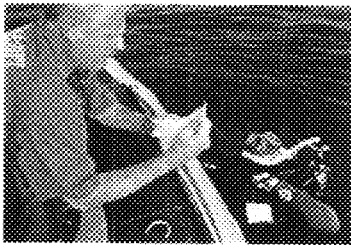


Sieur de La Salle

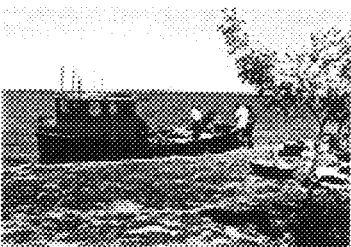


The Griffon from an old wood cut.

*They're never weary  
of making new  
Discoveries. They're  
indefatigable in  
rambling through  
unknown Countries  
and Kingdoms not  
mentioned in  
History leaving their  
minds with the*



Tom Kucharsky and Dr. Scott Demel take a specimen for carbon dating analysis.



Loading food and necessities aboard the *Karen*.

Museum, Chicago, IL, in conducting preliminary studies of the wreck in situ. Great Lakes Exploration Group filed an admiralty arrest in the U. S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan in the summer of 2004. Great Lakes hopes for and is working toward a truly cooperative public/private venture that will protect the scientific and historical value of the shipwreck. Libert believes that the wreck is possibly the *Griffon* and wants to take every possible step to maintain its archaeological and historic importance.

Father Hennepin's description of a 17th century explorer.

**An Underwater Time Capsule**

If the wreck Libert has found is the *Griffon*, it will be a find of tremendous historical significance. "The ship is a time capsule that will fill the missing gaps of La Salle's early exploration of North America," says Libert. The *Griffon* was built by Rene-Robert Sieur de La Salle, one of the first French explorers of the Great Lakes Region. He would later claim the lands west of the Mississippi for France, lands that eventually became part of what is presently known as the Louisiana Purchase.

Excavation of the ship will tell us much about the history of our country and how our ancestors lived. In particular, the wreck is a record of ship construction of that period, about which relatively little is known. La Salle constructed the *Griffon* on the banks of the Niagara River, about three miles above the falls. It is still not known which side of the river the *Griffon* was built, the Canadian or the U.S. side, however, that piece of the puzzle may be answered if the wreckage is the *Griffon*.

*The Iroquois were amazed, being unable to comprehend how the Frenchmen could so easily build so large a canoe of wood.*

The fact that the *Griffon* was built in the wilderness, as opposed to a shipyard, will reveal the circumstances La Salle and his men faced and the tools and technology they possessed. The ship was built with timber cut on site. The exact dimensions of the vessel are not known. It is however believed to have been 45 tun\*, 30 to 40 feet in length with a 10 to 15 foot beam and a single mast with several square sails.



Niagara Falls

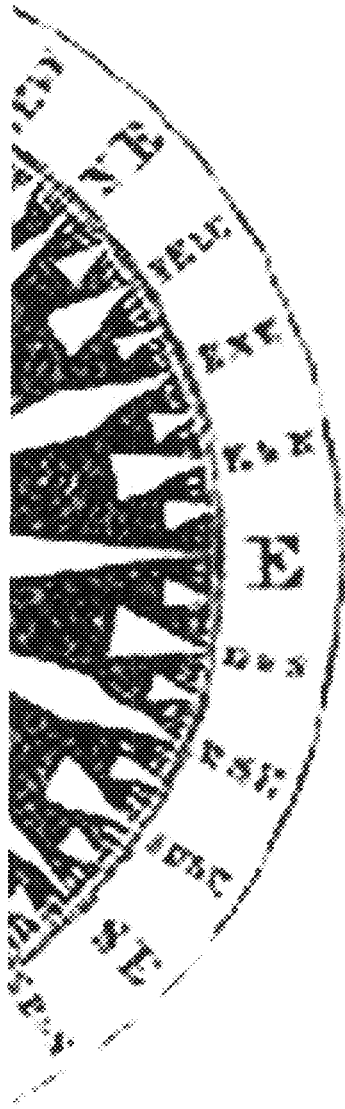


Aerial view of Niagara Falls and River.

**\*Tun**  
Tun is an old French word for a large cask used in shipping wine, equivalent to 33.7 cubic feet or 953.93 Liters, or 252 U.S. gallons.

**League**  
A league is approximately 2.4 to 4.6 statute miles. Today it is considered 3 statute miles.

**Pied**  
French foot equaling 12.8 English Inches.

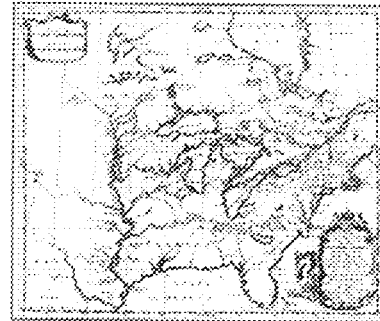


La Salle intended to use the *Griffon* as a commercial vessel. With the support of King Louis XIV, he financed his search for the mouth of the Mississippi with the proceeds from the lucrative fur trade. Some however regard the *Griffon* as a "vessel of war" because of the five to seven cannons it had mounted.

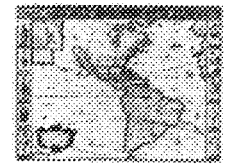
.....

**The Voyage of the *Griffon***

The *Griffon's* maiden voyage started from Niagara on August 7, 1679. La Salle and 34 men sailed across Lake Erie to present day Detroit and then to St Ignace, near the Straits of Mackinac, finally stopping at safe anchorage on the shores of Green Bay. On September 18, 1679, La Salle dispatched a crew of six to sail the *Griffon*, which was loaded with some 6000 pounds of furs, tools, and trade goods back to Niagara.



The *Griffon* from old wood cut.



1676 map made by John Speed.

.....

The *Griffon* sailed from what is known today as Washington Harbor on Washington Island. Father Hennepin, a Franciscan Recollect friar who had accompanied La Salle on the expedition, records that the ship fired a single cannon shot as it set sail. Hennepin also writes that those on land did not know what course the ship had taken once it left anchorage. The *Griffon* was never seen again.

.....

**Rumors, Legends, and Speculation**

From this point on, there are plenty of rumors and legends that have circulated, but history has been silent. One theory is that Indians captured the crew, took the furs and burned the ship. La Salle himself came to believe that the captain and crew had mutinied, stolen the furs, and scuttled the ship.

The most common explanation is that the ship was lost during a severe storm that often frequents the Great Lakes during this time of the year. It is known that there was a tremendous storm on the day after the *Griffon* left Washington Harbor on September 18th. The ship may well

Metiomek, an Iroquois prophet, placed a curse on the *Griffon*. Legend says the *Griffon* "sailed through a crack in the ice" fulfilling the Indian curse.

*They set sail on the 18th of September with a light but very favorable west wind. What route they took has never been ascertained.*



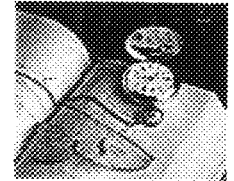
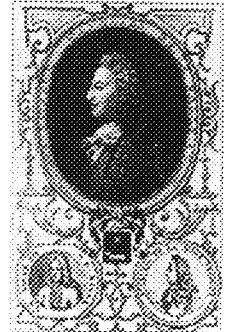
Father Louis Hennepin accompanied La Salle on the expedition to find the northwest passage to China.

have sunk in that storm.

There is some support for this theory in Father Hennepin's diary, where he notes that Indians later told La Salle they had come across the *Griffon* at anchor in the northern part of the lake. The Indians advised the captain to keep close to shore, but the captain was apparently not inclined to heed the Indian's advice and weighed anchor. They later observed the ship being tossed and turned while making no headway in the violent seas and winds. The next day they returned to check on the crew but there was no trace of the ship to be seen.

.....  
**325 Years Later, Has the *Griffon* Been Found?**

La Salle's expedition and the loss of the *Griffon* in September of 1679 was of great historical significance to our country's founding and important for New France (Canada), where La Salle set out to explore the new frontier. Now, 325 years later, another expedition may prove to be just as important. Libert's experience sailing and diving in the Great Lakes convinced him that the *Griffon* had left Washington Island and had anchored in the northern waters of Lake Michigan. Libert believes that the storm of September 19 - 23rd suddenly engulfed the ship soon after hoisting anchor. He speculates it probably happened quickly and that the *Griffon* foundered in huge waves and went straight to the bottom of the lake intact. "That would be the ideal scenario." Libert however concedes, "the vessel may have struck a sand bar and broke apart". The water is extremely cold and everyone on board could have succumbed to hypothermia within minutes. If the ship foundered, it would be consistent with the fact that no debris has ever been found.



.....  
\*\*All quotes from Father Hennepin's Diary.  
.....

As for the *Griffon*, it had not yet appeared, and for many months La Salle was heartsick with anxiety for her fate.

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



[■ home](#)  
 [■ about us](#)  
 [■ the expedition](#)  
 [■ associates](#)  
 [■ related links](#)  
 [■ contact us](#)

## the expedition

[press release](#)

[high res photos](#)

[legal brief](#)

[articles](#)

[research & collections](#)

[photo gallery](#)

[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

## press release

### 325 Years Later, Shipwreck Mystery May Be Solved

[Download PDF of Press Release](#)

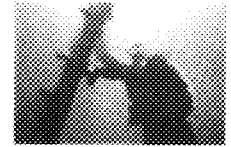
March 2005 --- The depths of the Great Lakes are home to thousands of shipwrecks, most lost to history. Now, perhaps the most archaeologically significant of all, - **the 325-year old *Griffon*, built by the legendary French Explorer, Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle** - may have been located by explorer Steve Libert and team, in northern Lake Michigan.

The *Griffon* (*Griffin* in English) was the first European-owned ship to sail the upper Great Lakes --- **and the first shipwreck in those waters**. On September 18, 1679, loaded with 6000 pounds of furs, the *Griffon* sailed from the Island of the Potawatomi, north of present day Door County, Wisconsin. From there the ship vanished, probably wrecked during a storm that began early on September 19, 1679.

Over the past three centuries many explorers, including La Salle himself, have sought the *Griffon*, without turning up so much as a splinter. But after 28 years of research, study and diving, Libert, president of Great Lakes Exploration, has reason to **believe he's located what may be the bowsprit of the *Griffon*** in northern Lake Michigan's icy waters.

**Working with archaeologists from Chicago's Field Museum**, Libert's preliminary attempts to verify the identity of the shipwreck appear promising. The location correlates well with the research of the late Dr. George Quimby, a former Field Museum curator who conducted extensive studies on the *Griffon* mystery in the mid-20th century. In addition, **"the location is consistent with historical accounts of the *Griffon's* voyage,"** says Dr. Scott Demel, PhD., of the Field Museum.

Further, initial **carbon-dating tests have been performed**



Carbon dating of shipwreck looks promising.



Great Lakes Team onboard the *Sharon*



by Beta Analytic Laboratories of Miami, FL. and the University of Arizona. "Unfortunately, dates in this period using this technique are somewhat ambiguous," says Dr. Darnel. "However, the data from the C14 analysis doesn't preclude the possibility that what may be a bowsprit is of sufficient age to be the *Griffon*."

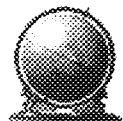
To conduct test excavations to conclusively identify the wreck, however, will require resolution of some outstanding legal issues. Libert emphasizes that if the vessel is indeed the *Griffon*, then France will have a strong claim to the wreck. In the meantime, the State of Michigan claims ownership of the bottomlands of Lake Michigan. **Great Lakes Exploration is seeking legal authorization to continue scientific study and exploration of the shipwreck.**

The U. S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan, in which both Great Lakes and the State of Michigan have filed briefs, is delaying issuing a custodial decision, allowing the parties time to work out an agreement. Libert and his partners are currently in negotiations with the State of Michigan to establish a cooperative relationship for exploration of the wreck. **"To best advance the careful study of this potentially unique find, we are striving to create one of the first truly public/private cooperative endeavors since passage of the Abandoned Shipwreck Act of 1987,"** says Richard Robol, attorney for Great Lakes Exploration.

**"Great Lakes is committed to protecting the scientific and historical values of the shipwreck,** and has asked the federal court to give due consideration to protecting the common heritage of the U.S. and France by allowing the scientific exploration of Great Lakes and the Field Museum to continue without interference," Robol concludes.

.....  
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT **LASALLE-GRIFFON.ORG**  
or contact **Rick Robol** at **rrobol@columbuscounsel.com,**  
or media contact **kathie@kensingtoncreative.com**

6829 Elm Street, Suite 210, McLean, VA 22101 • 703-556-3311 • Fax 703-556-4172



.....

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



**GREAT LAKES**  
EXPLORATION GROUP, INC.

- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

## high res photos

[press release](#)

[high res photos](#)

[legal brief](#)

[articles](#)

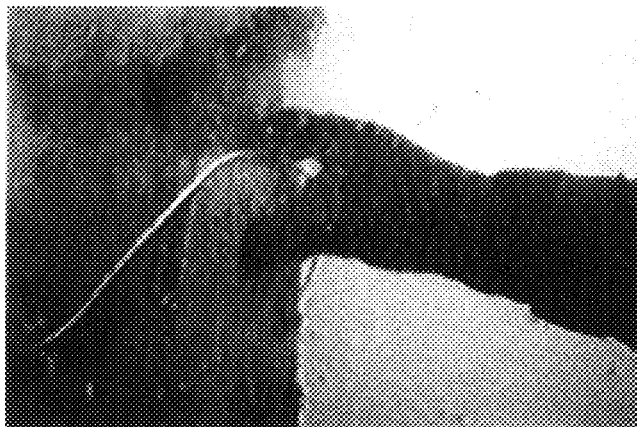
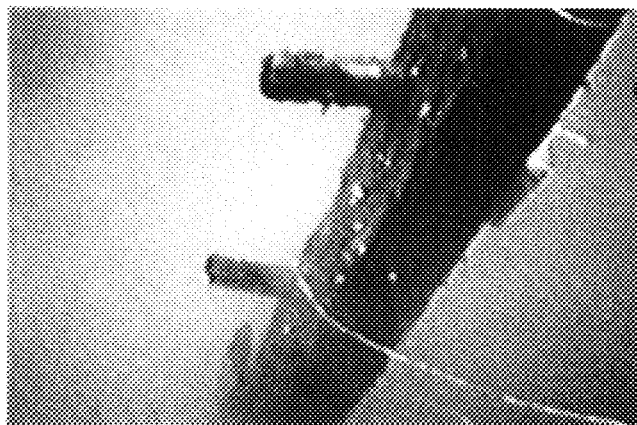
[research & collections](#)

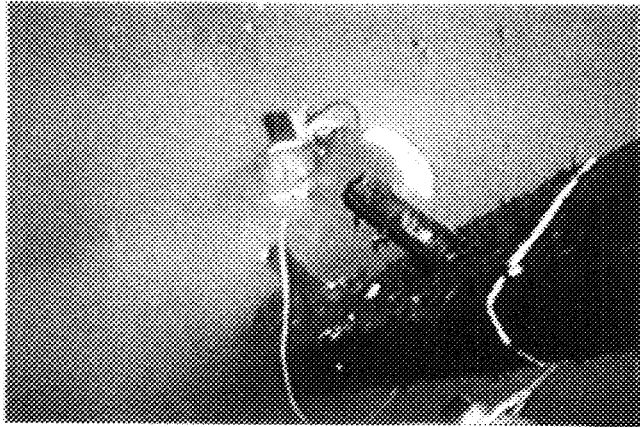
[photo gallery](#)

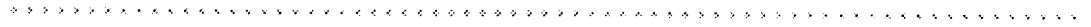
[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

### Infrared Photos of Shipwreck







# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

### [press release](#)

- [high res photos](#)
- [legal brief](#)
- [articles](#)

### [research & collections](#)

### [photo gallery](#)

### [video clips](#)

### [expedition timeline](#)

## legal brief

[Legal Brief](#) - January 27, 2005

### **SUMMARY OF LEGAL PROCEEDINGS IN U.S. DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN**

Great Lakes Exploration has filed a legal request for Federal protection of the shipwreck. As part of its case, Great Lakes has asked the Court to deny the State of Michigan's claim that it is the sovereign owner of the target shipwreck, *The Griffin*, superior to the Republic of France. The case is pending in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan (*Great Lakes Exploration Group LLC v. The Unidentified, Wrecked and (For Salvage-Right Purposes), Abandoned Sailing Vessel, her tackle, apparel, appurtenances, cargo, etc. located within a circle having a radius of 3.5 statute miles, whose center point is at coordinates 45° 32.8' North latitude and 86° 41.5' West longitude*).

Upon locating the site which it believes to be the target, Great Lakes Exploration became concerned that in the absence of legal protection, the shipwreck could be subject to irreparable destruction and loss at the hands of souvenir seekers and relic hunters. Great Lakes Exploration and the Field Museum are asking the Federal Court to allow their scientific exploration of the shipwreck to go forward, so that the identity of the shipwreck can be conclusively and scientifically determined.

In opposition, the State of Michigan has asserted that its sovereign rights in the shipwreck are superior to those of the Republic of France. Michigan claims that because the shipwreck lies in Michigan state waters, the State of Michigan— not the Republic of France— is the lawful owner of *The Griffin*. The State opposes federal protection of the shipwreck on grounds that it is the property of the State Government, and that the scientific exploration of the shipwreck by Great Lakes Exploration and the Field Museum should not go forward except under exclusive state control.



.....

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

### press release

- [high res photos](#)
- [legal brief](#)
- [articles](#)

### research & collections

### photo gallery

### video clips

### expedition timeline

## articles

Article 1 - October 9, 2004 - *Record-Eagle*  
Michigan mounts effort to halt salvage of purported shipwreck

Article 2 - July 08, 2004 - *The Grand Rapids Press*  
CLAIM TO HISTORY: Has explorer found ship sunk in 1679?

Article 3 - July 26, 2004 - *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*  
Small ship would be a big discovery

Article 4 - May 11, 2005 - *The Grand Rapids Press*  
Legal fight over shipwreck rests with the French



## Michigan mounts effort to halt salvage of purported shipwreck

### Steven Libert maintains he's found the Griffin

By Patrick Sullivan, Record-Eagle staff writer  
October 9, 2004 - [Record-Eagle](#)

TRAVERSE CITY -Michigan's Attorney General said a local man may or may not have found a shipwreck of historical significance in Lake Michigan, but they nonetheless want to stop him from salvaging it.

Steven Libert, who lives in Virginia and has a home in Charlevoix, has not identified the shipwreck he believes he found near Poverty Island, but said scientific evidence shows it could be the Griffin, the first European decked ship to sail the upper Great Lakes.

The Griffin, considered by some to be the Holy Grail of Great Lakes shipwrecks, was built by French explorer Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, and lost in 1679 during its maiden voyage.

Libert has said it's too early to know for sure what he's found, but he sued the shipwreck in federal court in Grand Rapids in an effort to take legal possession of the vessel.

The State of Michigan recently filed dozens of pages of motions in an effort to intervene and have the lawsuit dismissed.

The state's motion was filed on behalf of the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries and the Department of Environmental Quality, and allege that state law and the Abandoned Shipwreck Act give Michigan ownership of shipwrecks of historical significance on its bottomlands in the Great Lakes.

James R. Piggush, assistant attorney general, said in the filings that Libert's company, Great Lakes Exploration LLC, has not properly identified the shipwreck it seeks.

The ship is described in the lawsuit as being located in a 38.5-square-mile area near Poverty Island, off the mouth of Green Bay. The ship may have sunk during a foreign research expedition scores of years ago, according to the suit.

Great Lakes Exploration filed photos of the "purported wreck," Piggush wrote, but the photos only reveal something that "appears out of the (Lake Michigan) bottom looking much like a needle."

Piggush argues that there is no indication in the photograph that anything is attached to the vertical object sticking from the lake bottom, and no indication of a ship structure below the surface.

But Piggush wrote that if a vessel that matches Libert's description is there, it could be of historical significance.

"A 45-ton, 40- to 60-foot long, wooden, hand-built sailing vessel with a beam of 10 to 22 feet, and a crew of five, lost and abandoned near Poverty Island prior to the 20th century, would be a significant archaeological find," Piggush wrote.

Libert's attorney, Richard Robel, said Great Lakes Exploration has not been served with the state's motions.

"Great Lakes Exploration is committed to preserving the site, and would welcome the state's support and input," Robel

said. "Great Lakes would again like to take the opportunity to invite the state to join it in a positive dialogue about how best to serve the interests of all involved, including those of future generations."

Robel said Libert's company is working with the Field Museum of Chicago to explore and analyze the site.

"Such an effort would be far preferable to years of legal squabbling, which could potentially hamper scientific exploration and cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in lawyers' fees," Robel said.

Libert says he would like to work with Michigan officials, but if the shipwreck turns out to be the Griffin, that could mean the Abandoned Shipwreck Act does not apply.

"If this was the Griffin and I knew for sure, it would take the ASA right out of this because France would own it," Libert said.

© 2004 *Record-Eagle*. Used with permission



## **CLAIM TO HISTORY: Has explorer found ship sunk in 1679?**

By Ed White

July 08, 2004 - *The Grand Rapids Press*

A Virginia man who for years tried to get permission to search for gold in northern Lake Michigan said he is back with the story of another shipwreck, one that could be among the "most significant archeological finds" in U.S. history.

Steve Libert won't divulge the ship's identity or the exact location in Lake Michigan. But state archeologist John Halsey has an idea, based on the scant details filed in federal court in Grand Rapids.

"There is something sticking out of the bottom that he thinks is the Griffin," said Halsey, who has briefly talked to Libert. "I don't think it's possible to know without more discovery."

Historians consider the Griffin to be the first European trade ship to sail lakes Huron and Michigan. It was built for French explorer Robert Cavelier Sieur de La Salle in 1679 but disappeared that same year, probably in a storm, loaded with furs and bound for Lake Erie.

"I'm not going to say what it is," said Liber, of Great Lakes Exploration Group, based in Ohio. "If I did, everyone would jump out of the woodwork. ... They'll find the ship and tear it apart."

He may have no choice but to divulge more. Great Lakes Exploration has filed a lawsuit seeking to be declared the exclusive owner of the shipwreck. In the short term, it wants to be named custodian.

A judge, however, rejected that request, for now, saying he needs more information.

Great Lakes Exploration "fails to give any identifying information" about the ship, aside from disclosing latitude and longitude coordinates in a large area, U.S. Chief District Judge Robert Holmes Bell said.

Based on the coordinates, the shipwreck is in northern Lake Michigan, somewhere between Escanaba and the St. Martin Islands, near Wisconsin.

"The vessel was owned by a foreign research expedition operating with the authority of ... a foreign sovereign until it became wrecked, lost and abandoned," Great Lakes Exploration said in court documents.

The group said it has "invested substantial time, money and effort" finding the ship and researching its history.

Libert, an experienced diver, said he removed a tiny piece to determine age.

"It's taken me 30 years to locate this," he said. "I last saw it two weeks ago. We're not 100 percent sure, but, so far, all the scientific data is supporting what we think it is."

Halsey has seen only "grainy" underwater videotape. He said he wants the state's maritime archeologist to go to the site.

"You don't have to have a doctorate degree to know how many vessels were under a foreign sovereign on the Great Lakes," Halsey said. "If it turned out to be the Griffin, it would be the preeminent vessel in the Great Lakes.

"But you don't know what's left; sometimes there are just bits and pieces," he said. "Where exactly it was lost is also a real mystery. Back then, you didn't have a whole lot of people watching for it."

And even if it is the Griffin, Libert's group still would have a difficult time gaining control, Halsey predicted.

Michigan typically has authority over abandoned ships on the bottom of the Great Lakes. But the French government could trump everyone if this is the Griffin, he said.

"Unless the French give their blessing, it can't be salvaged," Halsey said.

La Salle's other ship, La Belle, was discovered in the mid-1990s in Matagorda Bay off the Texas coast. With approval from France, state archaeologists there recovered nearly 1 million artifacts, from human bones to muskets.

This is not Libert's first visit to federal court. He and partners spent years trying to salvage rights to the Captain Lawrence, a ship ravaged by storm off the Upper Peninsula in 1933.

They believed it went down just after the skipper recovered a chest of gold dating back to the War of 1812.

The state, however, said the ship was abandoned by its owner and must remain untouched. Federal courts agreed.

© 2005 *Grand Rapids Press*. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

## Small ship would be a big discovery

### Diver suggests that he's found the Great Lakes' 1st European shipwreck

By Dan Egan

July 26, 2004 - *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

Treasure hunter Steve Libert has spent much of the past three decades scouring the bottom of Lake Michigan for stockpiles of lost gold.

He's never found so much as a nugget, but now the 50-year-old is hinting that he might have struck upon something some would see as far more precious - the lost Griffin, the first European ship to sail the Great Lakes, and the first to sink.

Researchers are dubious that the fabled vessel from the 17th century has finally been found.

"It's possible, but I'd be very surprised," said Ron Mason, a professor emeritus of anthropology at Lawrence University. "If it sank into very shallow water, then it was probably broken up by wave action. If it sank into deeper water, then there would be a good chance of preservation, but it would be very hard to find."

The Griffin, built by French explorer Robert La Salle, was last spotted in September 1679 off the tip of the Door Peninsula. Loaded down with furs, it was bound for the eastern Great Lakes but was never seen again.

The theory is that it was lost somewhere between what is now Wisconsin's Rock Island State Park and the Straits of Mackinac.

#### Cagey on specifics

Libert, who lives in Virginia but scuba dives extensively in Lake Michigan, evidently thinks he knows exactly where it was lost, but he isn't offering specifics. In fact, in a lawsuit filed last month in federal district court in western Michigan to get salvage rights to the ship, he gives only a dim description of its location, and won't even name the vessel.

He said he won't give away the location for obvious reasons. But he is vague in explaining why he won't reveal the name of the vessel he believes he may have found, saying only that it has something to do with the pending litigation.

Michigan state archaeologist John Halsey said it's obvious Libert believes he has found the Griffin, given the description of the vessel contained in the lawsuit.

"How many other vessels can you think of that would be under the control of a foreign monarch and have that kind of historical value?" he asked.

But Halsey said so far there is scant evidence that what Libert found is the Griffin.

"You've got a small portion (of wood) that may be be a portion of a ship sticking out of the lake bottom, and that's what he's running with," he said.

Halsey said he has no doubts the Griffin rests somewhere at the bottom of the lake, but perhaps in nothing close to a ship's shape.

"Somewhere in Lake Michigan (or) Huron the Griffin must be. But whether it's in anything like the shape of a ship, it's up to question . . . it's sort of an act of faith to assume somewhere out there is something that looks like a ship that is the Griffin."

Libert said he had some slivers of the wreck carbon dated, and the age range for the wood shows it dates between 1640 and 1780.

Mason, who has done extensive research into La Salle's activity in the region, said one telltale sign of the Griffin is that it carried two brass cannons.

Libert won't describe the materials he has located, but says, "put it this way, it definitely belongs to a ship."

### **Ship's history**

Ship is not even a word that people today likely would use to describe the Griffin.

Historian George Irving Quimby wrote in 1966 that records from the time of its construction indicate it was a sailboat no more than 40 feet long - scarcely a worthy life raft aboard some of today's 1,000-foot Great Lakes freighters.

"It wasn't terribly big by our standards, but it was a monster to the Indians who saw it," Mason said.

The Griffin, constructed in late winter and spring of 1679 just above Niagara Falls, was designed to haul trading goods to American Indians in the western Great Lakes in exchange for furs, according to Quimby.

It sank on its first return trip from the upper lakes.

Mason said La Salle and his crew arrived at Rock Island on its maiden voyage. There, most of the men, including La Salle, departed the ship and headed south on Lake Michigan by canoe.

The Griffin, loaded with furs for the return trip, departed for the east from Rock Island with a skeleton crew. It was never seen again.

Mason said the ship most surely sank before the Straits of Mackinac, where Lakes Michigan and Huron meet.

"There was already some French people at the straits and had the Griffin passed there, it seems likely to me we would have some record of that," he said. "My guess is the vessel went down somewhere in northern Lake Michigan, and it probably went down in the terrible storm that hit the area in late September of 1679."

That storm was recorded in the journal of one of the members of the La Salle canoe party headed down the Lake Michigan shoreline.

### **Similar find in Texas**

Mason said the Griffin would be valuable to researchers today because it likely carried things like the everyday tools and utensils the French explorers were using at the time.

"Depending on the preservation, it would be very interesting to see exactly how the vessel was built. We don't have any examples of that period in the Great Lakes," he said.

But we do have other examples of vessels sailed by La Salle, who ventured south after he lost the Griffin.

In the 1680s he led an expedition to the Gulf of Mexico to search for the mouth of the Mississippi River. He spent about two years wandering the Gulf Coast before his men mutinied and executed him.

One of his ships from that expedition, the La Belle, was recovered by researchers in the mid-1990s. The excavation lasted nearly a year and yielded a trove of artifacts, including the ship's hull, three cannons, pottery and skeletal remains, according to the Texas Historical Commission.

The ownership of such artifacts can be tricky business. In fact, it wasn't until last year that the U.S. State Department announced that a formal agreement on the La Belle artifacts had been signed between France and the United States.

The agreement cited France's claim to the ship but gave Texas the artifacts on a long-term loan.

Libert figures he is in for a fight, if it turns out he has landed the Griffin.

"Whatever country it belongs to, I guarantee you they probably will want to raise it," he said.

That likely won't happen any time soon. Libert noted that the judge failed to agree to his request to be granted "custodian" of the vessel, saying he needed more information.

Libert said he has not decided how to respond to the court's need for more specifics "without jeopardizing the whole operation."

From the July 27, 2004, editions of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Used with permission

## Legal fight over shipwreck rests with the French

By Ed White

May 11, 2005 - *The Grand Rapids Press*

GRAND RAPIDS -- A man who believes he may have discovered the wreck of the first European trade ship on Lake Michigan is getting support from France as he seeks salvage rights to the Griffin, a vessel that disappeared in 1679, a lawyer said.

Steve Libert's Great Lakes Exploration Group is engaged in what could be a long legal fight with the state of Michigan over possession of the site. But he likely will get a boost with France's interest in the case.

"If it's a French vessel, the French have a right to determine the recovery. France wants us to go forward," Great Lakes Exploration attorney Richard Robol told a federal judge Tuesday.

Robol presented an e-mail from the U.S. State Department. It quoted a French diplomat as saying there was an "unequivocal naval connection" between the explorer, Robert de La Salle, and King Louis XIV, and France retains ownership to the Griffin.

Michigan typically has authority over abandoned ships at the bottom of the Great Lakes on its borders. But under law, France's rights could trump all.

No one is touching the site yet. Great Lakes Exploration is not even certain about the ship's identity, but the probability it is the Griffin is "higher than 50 percent," Robol said. Fearing the site could be looted, the group only says the wreck is between Escanaba and the St. Martin Islands, near Wisconsin.

U.S. Chief District Judge Robert Holmes Bell told Robol to get more details to state scientists within two weeks. The state then will check the site and report back in July.

Bell did not rule on Great Lakes Exploration's request to become custodian of the site. Michigan Assistant Attorney General James Piggush said a piece of wood at the bottom of the lake is "more likely a barn timber," not part of a ship. Robol said identification would be "difficult" and would occur only if the judge granted access to the site, less than 150 feet deep.

"Everything points to the Griffin, based on the location and markings," he said. "If it isn't, France isn't interested. My client isn't interested."

The Griffin was believed to have carried furs.

"The only riches on it would be riches of the mind," Robol said outside court. "I don't believe anyone believes there's treasure."

LaSalle's other ship, La Belle, was discovered off the Texas coast in the mid-1990s. With approval from France, state archaeologists recovered nearly 1 million artifacts, from human bones to muskets.

© 2005 *Grand Rapids Press*. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

000050

# La Salle - Griffon Project

www.LaSalle-Griffon.org



- home
- about us
- the expedition
- associates
- related links
- contact us

## the expedition

- [press release](#)
- [research & collections](#)
- [side scan sonar](#)
- [carbon dating](#)
- [archeological illustrations](#)
- [charts/imagery](#)
- [photo gallery](#)
- [video clips](#)
- [expedition timeline](#)

## research & collections

### Is this the *Griffon*?

#### Teaming with Chicago's Field Museum

In the summer of 2001, Steve Libert located an anomaly on the lake floor. At first he believed the protruding object to be a ship's mast, but believes now it is more likely to be the bowsprit. The preliminary studies that Libert and archaeologist Dr. Scott Demel, Ph.D, of Chicago's Field Museum, have since conducted are suggestive.

First, the object, thought to be a bowsprit, is clearly hand hewn. Dr. Demel notes that the bowsprit's construction is fairly crude. It lacks any metal, which makes it consistent with having been constructed in the wilderness as opposed to a shipyard, as the *Griffon* was.

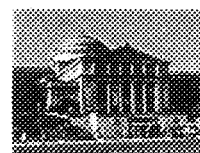
Second, the location where Libert found the wreck is consistent with the research of the late Dr. George Quimby, archaeologist and Field Museum curator in the mid-twentieth century. It's also consistent with Father Hennepin's description of the favorable winds the *Griffon* set sail from when it left the Island of the Potawatomi.

Finally, initial C-14 carbon dating performed by Beta Analytic Laboratories of Miami, FL and the University of Arizona are promising, though not conclusive. "Unfortunately, dates in this period using this technique are somewhat ambiguous," Dr. Demel says cautiously. "However, the data from the C-14 dates doesn't preclude the possibility that what may be a bowsprit is of sufficient age to be the *Griffon*."

Even if the wreck turns out not to be the *Griffon*, Dr. Demel believes the ship will still be a very noteworthy archaeological find. There are thousands of shipwrecks in the Great Lakes, few of which have ever been recovered. Further, the evident age of the vessel Libert has located will add to our store of knowledge of a critical time in our nation's history.



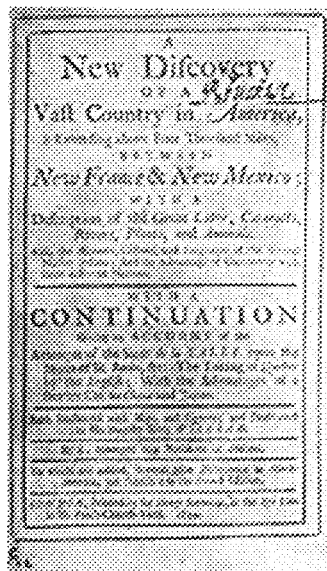
Carbon dating of shipwreck looks promising. [Go to our photo gallery.](#)



Chicago Field Museum



Chicago Field Museum



# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

## side scan sonar

[press release](#)

[research & collections](#)

side scan sonar

carbon dating

archeological illustrations

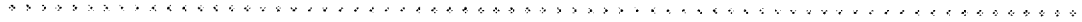
charts/imagery

[photo gallery](#)

[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

Coming soon...



000032



# LaSalle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

[press release](#)

[research & collections](#)

[side scan sonar](#)

[carbon dating](#)

[archeological illustrations](#)

[charts/imagery](#)

[photo gallery](#)

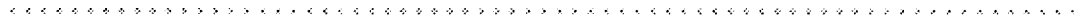
[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

## carbon dating

Two Carbon Dating reports:

- Download a PDF: [BetaC14.pdf](#)
- Download a Document of: [CalcutC14.doc](#)



000033

**(This is a copy of the letter being mailed. Invoices/receipts follow only by mail.)**

September 30, 2003

Mr. Steven J. Libert  
Fairport International Exploration, Incorporated  
12800 Rose Grove Drive  
Oak Hill, VA 20171  
USA

RE: Radiocarbon Dating Result For Sample G3

Dear Mr. Libert:

Enclosed is the radiocarbon dating result for one sample recently sent to us. It provided plenty of carbon for an accurate measurement and the analysis went normally. The report sheet contains the method used, material type, applied pretreatments and, where applicable, the two sigma calendar calibration range.

As always, this report has been both mailed and sent electronically. All results (excluding some inappropriate material types) which are less than about 20,000 years BP and more than about ~250 BP include this calendar calibration page (also digitally available in Windows metafile (.wmf) format upon request). Calibration is calculated using the newest (1998) calibration database with references quoted on the bottom of the page. Multiple probability ranges may appear in some cases, due to short-term variations in the atmospheric  $^{14}\text{C}$  contents at certain time periods. Examining the calibration graph will help you understand this phenomenon. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have questions about calibration.

We analyzed this sample on a sole priority basis. No students or intern researchers who would necessarily be distracted with other obligations and priorities were used in the analysis. We analyzed it with the combined attention of our entire professional staff.

Information pages are also enclosed with the mailed copy of this report. If you have any specific questions about the analysis, please do not hesitate to contact us.

The cost of the analysis was charged to your MASTERCARD card. A receipt is enclosed. Thank you. As always, if you have any questions or would like to discuss the results, don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



000034

Mr. Steven J. Libert

Report Date: 9/30/2003

Fairport International Exploration, Incorporated

Material Received: 9/18/2003

---

Sample Data	Measured Radiocarbon Age	$^{13}\text{C}/^{12}\text{C}$ Ratio	Conventional Radiocarbon Age(*)
Beta - 183101 SAMPLE : G3 ANALYSIS : AMS-Advance delivery MATERIAL/PRETREATMENT : (wood): acid/alkali/acid 2 SIGMA CALIBRATION : Cal AD 1660 to 1950 (Cal BP 290 to 0)	150 +/- 40 BP	-25.9 o/oo	140 +/- 40 BP

---

000035

# CALIBRATION OF RADIOCARBON AGE TO CALENDAR YEARS

(Variables: C13/C12=-25.9:lab. mult=1)

Laboratory number: Beta-183101

Conventional radiocarbon age: 140±40 BP

2 Sigma calibrated result: Cal AD 1660 to 1950 (Cal BP 290 to 0)  
(95% probability)

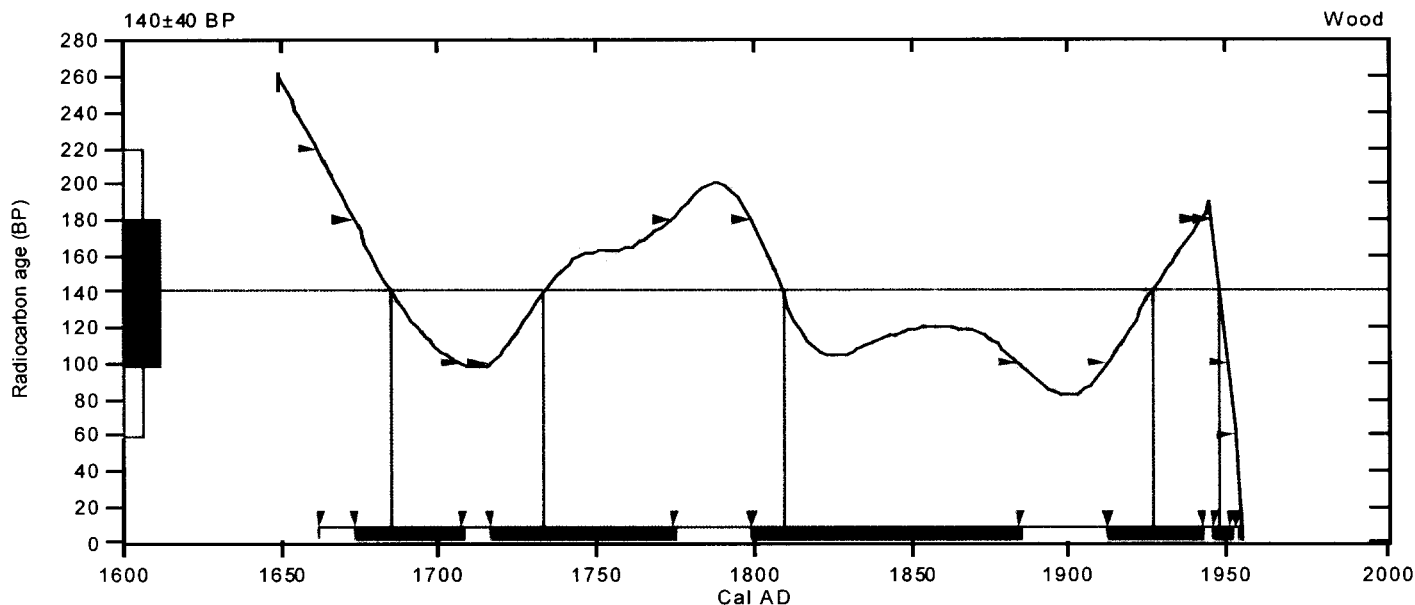
Intercept data

Intercepts of radiocarbon age  
with calibration curve:

Cal AD 1680 (Cal BP 260) and  
Cal AD 1730 (Cal BP 220) and  
Cal AD 1810 (Cal BP 140) and  
Cal AD 1930 (Cal BP 20) and  
Cal AD 1950 (Cal BP 0)

1 Sigma calibrated results:  
(68% probability)

Cal AD 1670 to 1710 (Cal BP 280 to 240) and  
Cal AD 1720 to 1770 (Cal BP 230 to 180) and  
Cal AD 1800 to 1880 (Cal BP 150 to 70) and  
Cal AD 1910 to 1940 (Cal BP 40 to 10) and  
Cal AD 1950 to 1950 (Cal BP 0 to 0)



## References:

### Database used

INTCAL98

### Calibration Database

### Editorial Comment

Stuiver, M., van der Plicht, H., 1998, *Radiocarbon* 40(3), pxii-xiii

### INTCAL98 Radiocarbon Age Calibration

Stuiver, M., et al., 1998, *Radiocarbon* 40(3), p1041-1083

### Mathematics

### A Simplified Approach to Calibrating C14 Dates

Talma, A. S., Vogel, J. C., 1993, *Radiocarbon* 35(2), p317-322

## Beta Analytic Radiocarbon Dating Laboratory

498 S.W. 74th Court, Miami, Florida 33155 • Tel: (305) 667-5167 • Fax: (305) 663-0964 • E-Mail: beta@radiocarbon.com

000036

RADIOCARBON CALIBRATION PROGRAM\*

CALIB REV4.4.2

Copyright 1986-2004 M Stuiver and PJ Reimer

\*To be used in conjunction with:

Stuiver, M., and Reimer, P.J., 1993, Radiocarbon, 35, 215-230.

Annotated results (text) - calout.doc

Export file - calout.csv

Libert 1

Radiocarbon Age BP	119 +/- 37	
Calibration data set:	intcal98.14c	(Stuiver et al., 1998a)
% area enclosed	cal AD age ranges	relative area under probability distribution
68.3 (1 sigma)	cal AD 1684- 1732	0.311
	1808- 1887	0.567
	1910- 1927	0.110
	1948- 1950	0.011
95.4 (2 sigma)	cal AD 1676- 1764	0.351
	1768- 1775	0.014
	1802- 1939	0.616
	1946- 1952	0.019

References for calibration datasets:

Stuiver, M., and Braziunas, T.F., (1993), The Holocene 3:289-305.

Stuiver, M., Reimer, P.J., and Braziunas, T.F., (1998b)

Radiocarbon 40:1127-1151. (revised dataset)

Stuiver, M., Reimer, P.J., Bard, E., Beck, J.W., Burr, G.S.,  
Hughen, K.A., Kromer, B., McCormac, F.G., v.d. Plicht, J., and  
Spurk, M. (1998a), Radiocarbon 40:1041-1083.

McCormac, F.G., Reimer, P.J., Hogg, A.G., Higham, T.F.G., Baillie, M.G.L.,  
Palmer, J., Stuiver, M., (2002), Radiocarbon 44: 641-651.

Comments:

\* This standard deviation (error) includes a lab error multiplier.

\*\* 1 sigma = square root of (sample std. dev.^2 + curve std. dev.^2)

\*\* 2 sigma = 2 x square root of (sample std. dev.^2 + curve std. dev.^2)

where ^2 = quantity squared.

[ ] = calibrated with an uncertain region or a linear  
extension to the calibration curve

0\* represents a "negative" age BP

1955\* or 1960\* denote influence of nuclear testing C-14

NOTE: Cal ages and ranges are rounded to the nearest year which  
may be too precise in many instances. Users are advised to  
round results to the nearest 10 yr for samples with standard  
deviation in the radiocarbon age greater than 50 yr.

000037

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

[press release](#)

[research & collections](#)

side scan sonar

carbon dating

archeological illustrations

charts/imagery

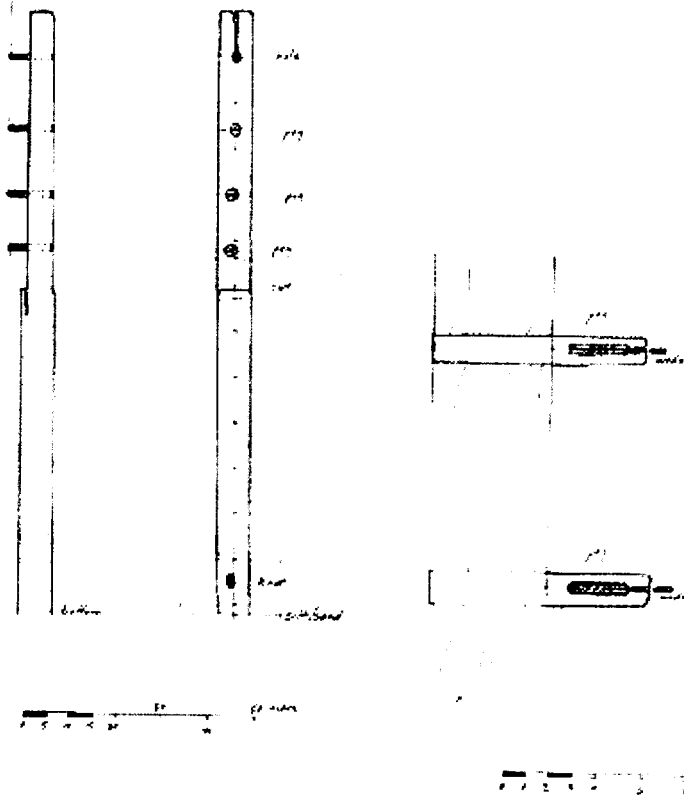
[photo gallery](#)

[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

## archeological illustrations

by Dr. Scott Demel



000038

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



**GREAT LAKES**  
EXPLORATION GROUP, Inc.

- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

[press release](#)

[research & collections](#)

side scan sonar

carbon dating

archeological illustrations

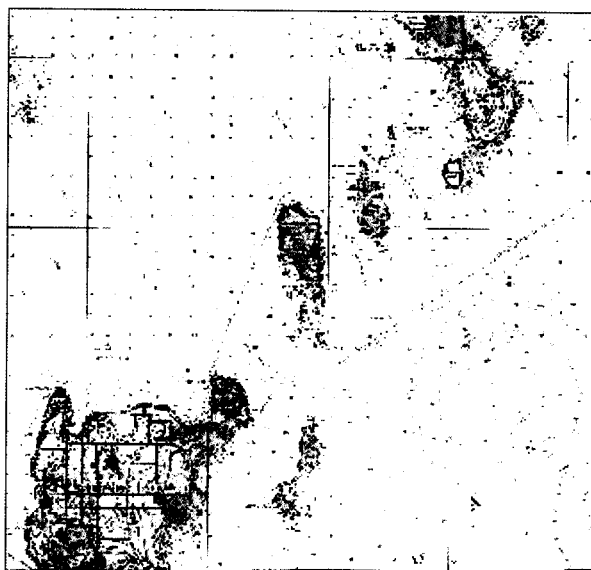
charts/imagery

[photo gallery](#)

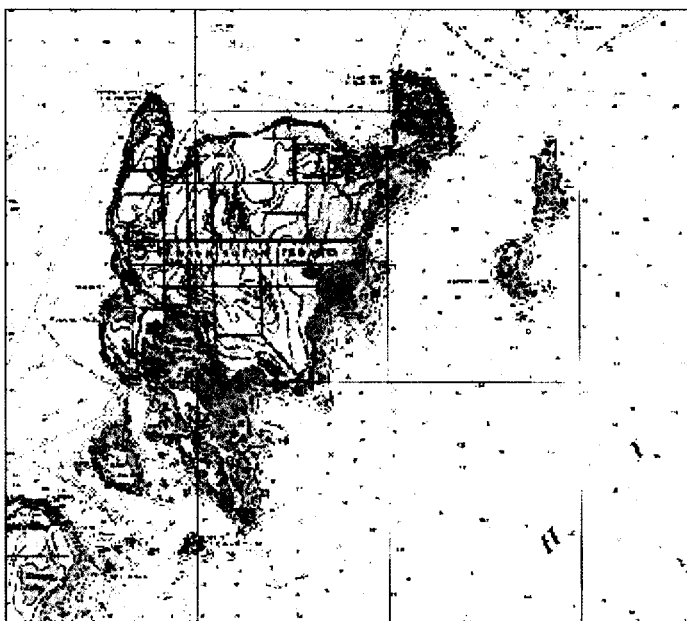
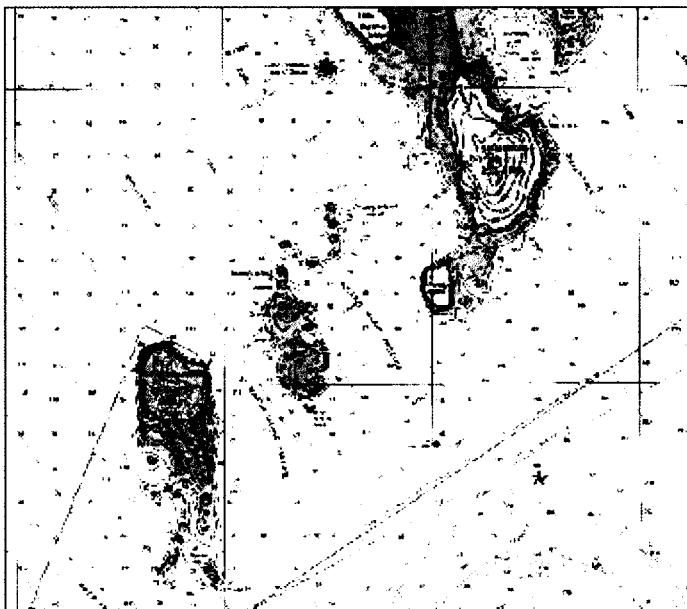
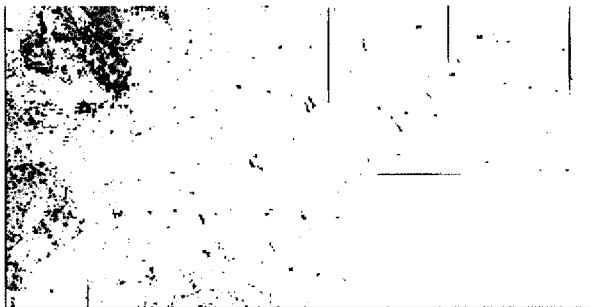
[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

## charts/imagery



000039



000040



# La Salle - Griffon Project

www.LaSalle-Griffon.org



GREAT LAKES  
EXPLORATION GROUP, INC.

- home
- about us
- the expedition
- associates
- related links
- contact us

## the expedition

[press release](#)

[research & collections](#)

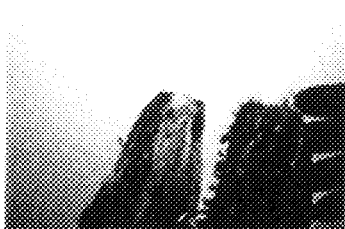
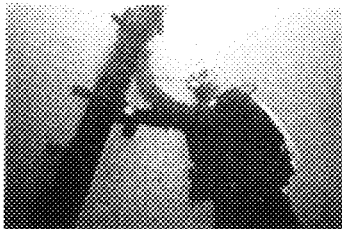
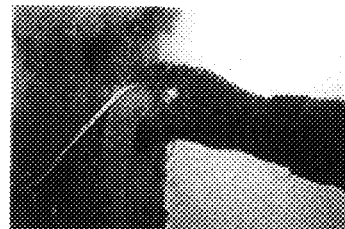
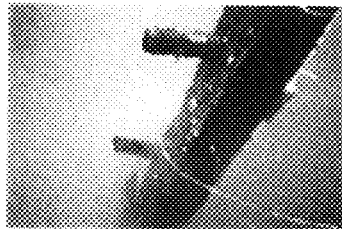
[photo gallery](#)

[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

## photo gallery

### Photos of Shipwreck



.....

### Expedition Photo Gallery

000041



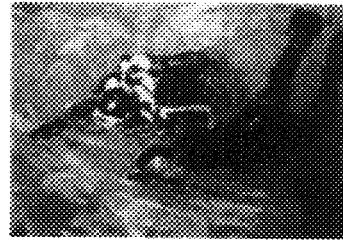
Grey Lady sits on shore waiting for some action



Carl Carlson and Brandy (the dog!)



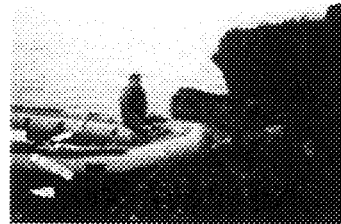
Jim Kucharsky waits for Steve to test the water's temperature



Steve Libert and Michael Skowronski during a shore dive



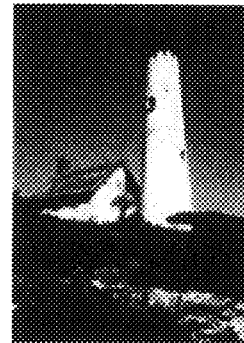
Jim and Vance Skowronski trading goods for food!



Vance enjoying the calm water



Steve takes the plunge



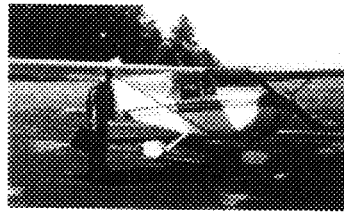
Poverty Island Lighthouse



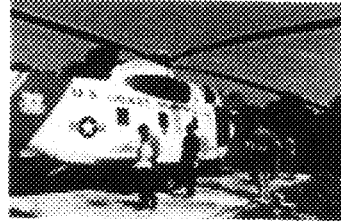
Tom Kucharsky, Pat and Jim relax after a long day



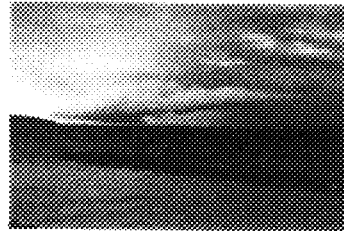
Tom and Jim get ready for a dive



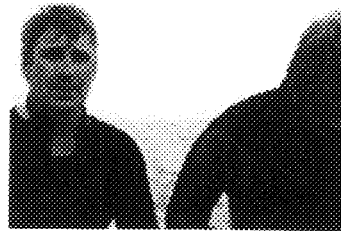
Vance prepares for a flight back to Ohio



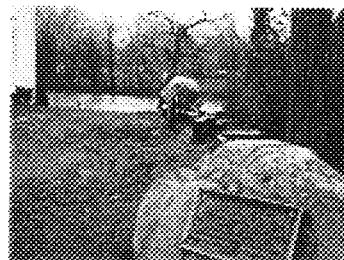
U.S.C.G. and Great Lakes Exploration Team



Storms frequent the lakes and cause major delays



Steve and Jim contemplate the next dive

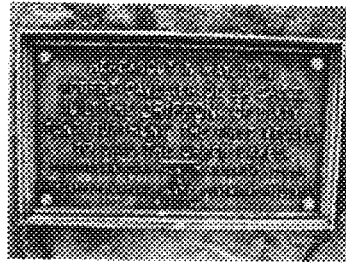


Present day site where the Griffon was constructed off the Niagara River



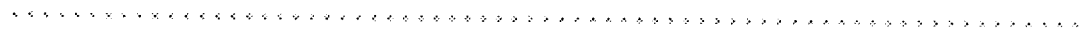
In 1679 the Griffon set sail down this channel - the Cayuga River on the Niagara River

000043



Historic marker for the  
construction of the *Griffon*

---



000044

# La Salle - Griffon Project

www.LaSalle-Griffon.org



- home
- about us
- the expedition
- associates
- related links
- contact us

## the expedition

[press release](#)

[research & collections](#)

[photo gallery](#)

[video clips](#)

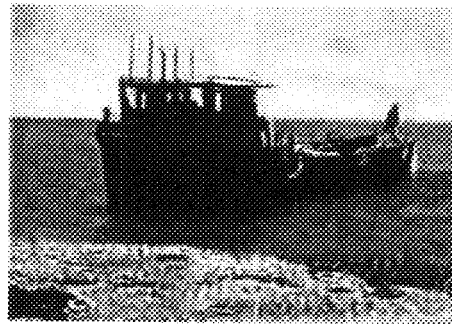
[expedition timeline](#)

## video clips



[Click to download and view video](#)

This 2.9MB file will take a few minutes to load.



[Click to download and view video](#)

This 5.2MB file will take a few minutes to load.



[Click to download and view video](#)

This 5.2MB file will take a few minutes to load.



000045

# La Salle - Griffon Project

www.LaSalle-Griffon.org



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## the expedition

[press release](#)

[research & collections](#)

[photo gallery](#)

[video clips](#)

[expedition timeline](#)

## expedition timeline

### Phase I: Discovery and Identification

#### Chicago Field Museum

The first phase of Great Lakes Exploration's quest for the *Griffon* has been partly accomplished with the discovery of a promising wreck in northern Lake Michigan. Great Lakes and its team are presently pressing for legal rights and permits to continue the Discovery Phase. Libert believes the next step should be an archaeological test excavation. The goal, to make a positive identification of the vessel.

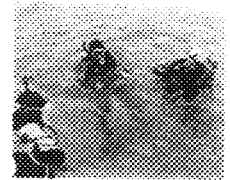
Dr. Scott Demel believes Phase I could take anywhere from one month to two years. "If the vessel is intact, the process of identifying the vessel will be quicker. If the wreckage is scattered on the bottom floor of the lake, then the excavation could easily take more time", says Dr. Demel.

### Phase II: Recovery and Preservation

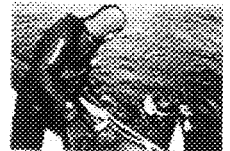
The actual recovery and preservation of the ship will depend on its condition. Whether the ship is recovered or explored *in situ* will depend on the factors affecting the nature of the shipwreck and the shipwreck site. Great Lakes and the Field Museum will do whatever is necessary to protect the scientific, historic and archaeological values of the shipwreck.

Artifacts will need to be uncovered, mapped, photographed and extracted. And, if there is enough of the ship to lift, the ship will have to be transported on a barge to a facility where it can be studied in a controlled environment.

If the vessel proves to be the *Griffon*, it is a sovereign vessel. France would have a strong claim to the wreck.



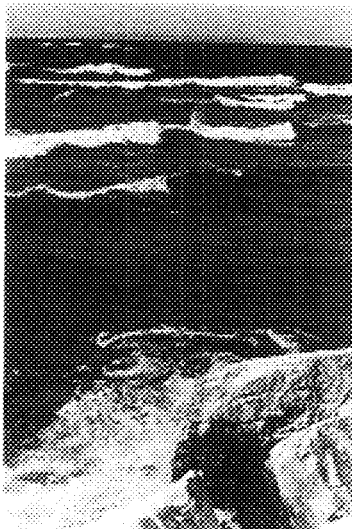
Carl, Kyle, and Jim



Tom and Jim Kucharsky

*"Phase I could take anywhere from one month to two years."*

—Dr. Scott Demel



Lake Michigan

000046

Libert hopes that France will cooperate with Great Lakes in continuing the excavation and protection of the wreck. There is a precedent. When the Texas Historical Commission discovered another of La Salle's ships, the La Belle, which sank in 1686 off the coast of Texas, France gave Texas a 100-year lease and the loan of certain artifacts.



.....

000047

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## associates

### Chicago Field Museum

Dr. Scott Demel,  
 Collection Project Coordinator  
 Academic Affairs - Anthropology  
[sdemel@fieldmuseum.org](mailto:sdemel@fieldmuseum.org)

The Field Museum  
 1400 S. Lake Shore Drive  
 Chicago IL 60605  
 phone: 312-665-7831  
 cell phone: 312-208-7316  
 fax: 312-665-7193  
 web: [www.fieldmuseum.org](http://www.fieldmuseum.org)



Chicago Field Museum



Chicago Field Museum



000048



# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



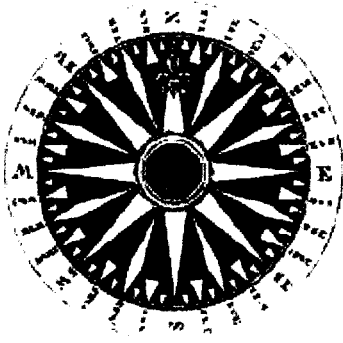
- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## related links

### Continuing Research and Information

The links provided here are for your review and have been found to be of relevance to this project and have educational value. If you have knowledge of other information you feel may be of interest to our readers, please forward your comments to: [info@greatlakesexploration.org](mailto:info@greatlakesexploration.org)

- [Historical Information](#) - American Journeys
- [Legal Information](#) - Rick Robol, Legal Counsel
- [Abandoned Shipwreck Act](#) - United States Code
- [Texas A&M](#) - In Search of La Salle
- [Archeology](#) - Chicago Field Museum



000049

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## contact us

### e-newsletter

## contact us

### **Great Lakes Exploration Group**

Steve Libert

President of Great Lakes Exploration Group, Ilc.

[libert@greatlakesexploration.org](mailto:libert@greatlakesexploration.org)

12800 Rose Grove Drive

Oak Hill, VA 20171

Phone: 703-262-0462

Fax: 703-262-0652

Or

Rick Robol

Legal Counsel

[rrobol@columbuscounsel.com](mailto:rrobol@columbuscounsel.com)



000000

# La Salle - Griffon Project

[www.LaSalle-Griffon.org](http://www.LaSalle-Griffon.org)



- [home](#)
- [about us](#)
- [the expedition](#)
- [associates](#)
- [related links](#)
- [contact us](#)

## contact us

### e-newsletter

## e-newsletter

If you are interested in receiving an electronic email of press releases, project updates, or public information/articles concerning the La Salle-Griffon Project, please register below.

NEWSLETTER SIGN UP FORM WILL BE ADDED WHEN SITE IS NO LONGER IN THIS TEST LOCATION



000051