

## Preface

On July 10, 1982, just thirteen months after getting certified to scuba dive, I made my first underwater foray to examine several of Lake George's sunken colonial bateaux (**bateau**<sup>i</sup> in the singular). These wooden vessels were arguably the most popular and versatile watercraft of their era for inland waterways. I was first shown one of the sunken bateaux by veteran scuba instructor Jack Sullivan, who had dived on these shipwrecks back in the early 1960s.

Several years later, on September 13, 1987, I made two scuba dives with other neoprene-clad **frogmen** off the Wiawaka Holiday House, an historic women's retreat on the shores of Lake George; recently the facility was renamed the Wiawaka Center for Women. The Wiawaka bateaux are located off the east side of Lake George, about a mile north of Million Dollar Beach, at the head of the waterway. At the time of my September 13, 1987, dives I was unaware that those scuba explorations would have such a dramatic and longstanding impact on my life.

September 13, 1987, was the final day of a three-day training session, called the "Archaeological Research Assistant Workshop." The program was sponsored by a not-for-profit corporation, the Atlantic Alliance for Maritime Heritage Conservation. The workshop, organized by Dr. Russell P. Bellico, Vince Capone, Jack Sullivan, and myself, took two years to plan as there were several delays scheduling the principal instructor, marine archaeologist R. Duncan Mathewson III. Since the 1985 discovery of the 1622 Spanish treasure galleon *Atocha*, found off Key West, Florida, Mathewson, the project's lead archaeologist, had been busy presenting lectures, teaching **underwater archaeology** workshops, and coordinating fieldwork at the seventeenth-century Spanish shipwreck. Mathewson, a lower Hudson River Valley, New York native, was somewhat controversial within the professional underwater archaeology community. Mathewson worked with Mel Fisher, a well-known Florida Keys treasure hunter. However, for scuba enthusiasts like myself who were interested in becoming archaeological divers to assist professional underwater archaeologists,

---

i For terms in bold text, see the glossary for more information.



**Figure P.1** Scuba diver at one of the Wiawaka sunken bateaux in Lake George in 1987. (Credit: Dr. Russell P. Bellico)

training opportunities such as this 1987 workshop were scarce and thus were much appreciated. Furthermore, Mathewson did a fine job introducing recreational scuba divers to the field of underwater archaeology.

The September 13, 1987, workshop's practicum dives included three boatloads of energetic scuba enthusiasts that numbered over twenty people. A light rain that day kept vessel traffic on the lake to a minimum. Vince Capone, from New Jersey, with his company's Benthos Mini-Rover MkII **remotely-operated-vehicle (ROV)**, the workshop instructor R. Duncan Mathewson III, and New York State Museum senior archaeologist Phil Lord were all aboard the largest boat in our small flotilla, a pontoon watercraft loaned to us by the Lake George Volunteer Fire Department.

My two dives that day were my second and third scuba visits to the cluster of several colonial bateaux, lying in twenty to forty feet of water off the Wiawaka Holiday House. Those plunges into the waterway were plagued at times by low visibility due to the many scuba divers spread out over a few hundred feet. Nonetheless, we perused several colonial shipwrecks and also made noninvasive measurements of some of those sunken British warships. I wrote in my dive log that evening that those two scuba visitations were "tough dives," as I swam back and forth supporting other underwater explorers with their assigned tasks. Nonetheless, it was an exhilarating experience albeit an exhausting one. Though I had made numerous scuba visits to shipwrecks in several waterways since I started diving in 1981, the September 13, 1987, dives were essentially my formal

introduction into the field of underwater archaeology. And so began my fascination with shipwreck archaeology that would result in over three decades researching, studying, and writing about **“Lake George’s Sunken Bateaux of 1758.”**

This book tells the story of these historic eighteenth-century British shipwrecks, and especially the archaeological investigation conducted by Bateaux Below and its forerunner organization, the Lake George Bateaux Research Team. I had the distinct pleasure of directing those two groups. Fundamental to our bateaux study was an eagerness to collaborate with other individuals and groups toward common goals—protecting and preserving these iconic shipwrecks and developing programs to interpret the results of our research for both scuba buffs and the non-diving public. In a figurative sense, we were “awakening the fleet,” trying to bring a greater awareness to the public about these historic watercrafts. I hope this book will encourage local residents, as well as visitors to Lake George, to become stewards of these finite **submerged cultural resources**.



**Figure P.2** September 13, 1987: Sport divers preparing to descend to the sunken Wiawaka bateaux during day three of an underwater archaeology training workshop. This was the genesis project that began Bateaux Below’s twenty-four-year study of Lake George’s sunken bateaux of 1758. (Credit: Joseph W. Zarzynski)

