

FISH TUG *ALOHA*  
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore  
9922 Front Street  
Empire  
Leelanau County  
Michigan

HAER MI-412  
*HAER MI-412*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

### FISH TUG *ALOHA*

HAER No. MI-412

**Location:** Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, 9922 Front Street, Empire, Leelanau County, Michigan

**Rig/Type of Craft:** Fish tug

**Trade:** Fishing

**Official Number:** 237857

**Principal Measurements:** Length (waterline): 41'  
Beam: 12.2'  
Depth of hold: 5.42'  
Tons (gross): 26  
Tons (net): 17  
(The listed dimensions are current, but it should be noted that draft, displacement, and tonnages were subject to alteration over time as well as variations in measurements.<sup>1</sup>)

**Propulsion:** Originally equipped with a 50-60 horsepower Kahlenberg diesel engine

**Date of Construction:** 1937

**Owners:**

Lawrence E. Voight	1937-1948
Voight Brothers	1948-1960
Dennis McDonald	1960-1961
Alvin E. Anderson	1961-1971
Roy E. Nelson	1971-1973
James P. Dura	1973-1985
Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore	1985-present

**Disposition:** Museum exhibit

**Significance:** Fish Tug *Aloha* is an example of a type of commercial fishing boat developed for use on the Great Lakes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dimensions from *Aloha* Registry and Rig Information, available at Great Lakes Vessels Online Index, <http://greatlakes.bgsu.edu/vessel/view/000823>, accessed January 2013.

**Description:** Fish Tug *Aloha* is representative of Great Lakes fish tugs dating from the 1930s. The 45'-long wood hulled vessel features a fan-tailed stern. It was initially equipped with a 50 to 60-hp Kahlenberg diesel engine. As was typical of the type, a superstructure extends the length of the vessel to enclose the work space and provide protection from the harsh conditions of the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes fish tugs were generally 25' to 50' long. After World War II, all-steel construction began to replace wood. Architectural historian Michael Chiarappa has investigated the built environment of the Great Lakes' fishing industry and notes that "quite simply, the unique design and appearance of this boat type was a function of the Great Lakes gill-net fishery's long time and emerging demands: protection from the difficult weather conditions of the Great Lakes; the ability to set and tend greater amounts of gill nets; and greater versatility in the selection and range of fishing grounds."<sup>3</sup>

**History:** Lawrence Voight, a fisherman from Gills Rock, Wisconsin, had Sturgeon Bay Boat Works of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, build *Aloha* in 1937. He operated the tug until 1948, when his sons Walter, Robert, and Leland, operating as Voight Brothers, took over ownership. The Voight Brothers sold *Aloha* to Dennis McDonald in 1960, and he in turn sold it to Alvin "Gabby" Anderson the next year. Gabby continued fishing off the tug out of Algoma, Wisconsin. He recalled a storm the crew survived on January 9, 1971, while fishing for chub in Milwaukee.

It wasn't that bad of a day to begin with, if I remember right....But that day, something happened—some freak sea hit us on the way home. It came up fast out of the south, and one big sea hit us and cleaned the doors right off her. Busted them right off the hinges—busted everything. She took so much water that she was right down to the rail in the water after it hit. That old Kahlenberg bilge pump clogged up and wasn't pumping. I couldn't believe it—the stern doors were gone—busted in! The port stern door came in immediately when we got hit by the south sea, and when she hit, the *Aloha* leaned so far over that the other door on the starboard side busted in. They were both gone!

The pilot house on that boat was in the stern. We had just stepped off the deck to go down and start to dress the fish....We all just go down below the stern deck, when all of a sudden she hit and I didn't see nothing but blue sky and green water....I got up into the pilot house by the wheel and everything was out, the radar, radio—everything was all wet and washed out. The bilge pump was out. We had the sump pump working, but we didn't have any side gas-powered pump to pump the water out.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Michael Chiarappa, "Great Lakes Commercial Fishing Architecture: The Endurance and Transformation of a Region's Landscape/Waterscape," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 10, Building Environments (2005): 224.

<sup>4</sup> Trygvie Jensen, *Wooden Boats and Iron Men: History of Commercial Fishing in Northern Lake Michigan & Door County, 1850-2005* (De Pere, Wisconsin: Paisa Publishing Co., 2007), 136.

The boat and crew survived the ordeal. Anderson sold the tug in 1971 to Roy Nelson, who operated it out of Milwaukee until 1973, when Jim Dura of Marinette, Wisconsin, bought it. Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, a unit of the National Park Service, acquired the boat in 1985. A grant from the Eastern National Parks and Monuments Association provided the necessary funding for the sale, but there were no additional funds for preservation. For nearly six months, the boat was docked at Frankfort until it sank, despite daily operation of the bilge pumps. Funding was obtained to raise the boat, and it was shipped to Glen Haven, where it could be put on display as part of the National Park Service's interpretive efforts. The boat is now cradled at Glen Haven, with economic stimulus money providing funding for restoration.<sup>5</sup>

**Historian:** Justine Christianson, HAER, 2013

**Project**

**Information:** Documentation of the Fish Tug *Aloha* was undertaken as part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), a long-range program to document historically significant engineering and industrial works in the United States. The Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, administers the HAER Program. Todd Croteau, HAER Maritime Program Coordinator, directed the project and produced the large-format photographs.

**Sources:**

*Aloha* Registry and Rig Information. Great Lakes Vessels Online Index, <http://greatlakes.bgsu.edu/vessel/view/00823>, accessed January 2013.

Chiarappa, Michael. "Great Lakes Commercial Fishing Architecture: The Endurance and Transformation of a Region's Landscape/Waterscape." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 10, Building Environments (2005): 217-232.

Jensen, Trygvie. *Wooden Boats and Iron Men: History of Commercial Fishing in Northern Lake Michigan & Door County, 1850-2005*. De Pere, Wisconsin: Paisa Publishing Co., 2007.

Karamanski, Theodore J. *A Nationalized Lakeshore: The Creation and Administration of Sleeping Bear Dune National Lakeshore*. National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2000.

---

<sup>5</sup> Information on the operational history of the tug compiled from "Aloha," <http://www.harveyhadland.com/pics081.htm>, accessed January 2013; Jensen, *Wooden Boats and Iron Men*; Theodore J. Karamanski, *A Nationalized Lakeshore: The Creation and Administration of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore* (National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 2000), Chapter 5; and *Aloha* Registry and Rig Information.