

Vessels – Schooner Stafford

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Built in Tonawanda, New York by Parsons & Co., in 1868, the schooner Stafford was 112 feet in length with a 25-foot 6-inch beam and a depth of 9 feet 6 inches.

In the local newspaper on Thursday, October 8, 1888, it was reported that the schooner Stafford, in tow by the tug Hunter, struck the South pier here while trying to make the harbor. A hole about four feet square was bashed in her side near the bow. All hands turned to the pumps, and she was kept afloat until the tug had run her inside the harbor and onto the north bank of White Lake where she sank with her bow resting on the shallow bottom of the bank and her stern sunk in about 35 feet of water.

The Stafford was owned by T. D. Stimson of Muskegon and had a capacity of 250,000 feet of lumber. Word was dispatched to Muskegon as soon as possible and on Tuesday, October 6, the fire tug Ira O. Smith and the tug Hunter brought two pile drivers and the owner of the vessel to the scene of the accident.

The work of pumping and lifting began at once, after the hole had been battened. After most of the water was removed, chains were passed under the schooner and the drivers began to lift her, but

her bow slipped off the sandbar and she careened back, sinking again. The tugs then drew her into the old channel and soon she was raised and taken to Muskegon for repairs.

Monday night, October 5, the night of the accident, was a very dark night and the vessel's pilot claimed he could not see the pier lights on account of the tug's smoke. She struck the pier with a crash, carrying away the heavy timbers at the end, and breaking the tow post off the tug. The timbers on the side of the boat were also broken. The boat hands had plenty of time to clear the cabin before the schooner went down.

The Stafford had been carrying lumber from the Staples & Covell mill docks to Mr. Stimson and was after a cargo of lumber at the time of the accident. The loss to Mr. Stimson was upwards of \$1,500 besides the delay in getting the schooner ready to sail again.

And sail again she did. Over the years that followed, she had a few other misadventures until 1928 when she was listed as abandoned.