

The Cooperstown Crier

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[Divers recover boat for church camp](#)

By Joe Mahoney THE DAILY STAR Cooperstown Crier

It was the summer of 1995 when a 16-foot fiberglass sailboat dubbed Blue Jeans filled with water while being towed to shore, falling to the chilly depths of Otsego Lake near Cooperstown.

The boat belonged to the Pathfinder summer camp operated by the American Baptist Church. When divers made several attempts to locate it, they could find no trace of it.

But an image that appeared to be the lost vessel showed up in a side scan sonar survey funded two years ago by a professional underwater archaeologist from the Saratoga Springs area, Joseph Zarzynski. He was working in conjunction with the dive team of the Biological Field Station that is an arm of the State University College at Oneonta.

Last weekend, a team of divers using special devices and carefully plotting their every move beforehand, went to the lake bottom and were able to remove Blue Jeans from the water.

It had been 98 feet below the surface, sitting there for 19 years in water whose temperature hovers at about 38 degrees Fahrenheit, according to Paul Lord, the master diver who coordinated the effort, leads the dive team and is an instructor at the Oneonta campus.

“For nearly two decades the Blue Jeans has been a bit of a phantom, part of the lore of our glimmering lake,” said Lord, a town of Otsego resident. “We wondered if our dive team would ever find her.”

Brought back to shore without incident this time, Blue Jeans was turned over to Pathfinder staffers on Sunday afternoon. The watercraft showed no sign of any significant damage, he said.

He said a number of other vessels remain on the lake bottom. In some cases their stories are not known and there is no information on how long they have been there.

“This is kind of a footnote in an overall effort where we are trying to identify, catalog and describe all of the underwater artifacts,” Lord said. “Anything that is in the lake for more than 50 years, and some of it is historical, we very carefully conceal the locations. This was something that was down less than 50 years, and the owner still wanted it back. It was kind of a feel good exercise for my divers.”

In 40 years of diving, he said, it was only the fourth time that he retrieved a vessel that the owner wanted to keep. Often, such boats are in serious disrepair, he said.

The Rev. John Buskey, the director of the program that oversees Pathfinder, said he was delighted to have the boat back. It will be spiffed up and should be ready for use by next season, he said.

“It’s in very good shape for a boat that has been at the bottom of the lake for 19 years,” Buskey said.

- See more at: http://www.coopercrier.com/localnews/x1927909396/Divers-recover-boat-for-church-camp?zc_p=1#sthash.xEjS1BLc.dpuf