

The last words heard from the captain, speaking through a megaphone, were "hang on as long as possible". Captain McDonald had required frequent boat drills aboard SEVONA, and the crew who were aft on the wreck found this experience to be of great benefit to them in their time of distress. Unfortunately, however, all of the able seamen were up forward on the wreck with the captain and the mate.

After the boats were lowered, some of the crew tried holding them off the wreck and keeping them bailed out. It was then decided, however, to have everyone come back aboard and stay as long as possible in the shelter of the dining room. But this safe haven did not last for long, as the wooden cabin started to go to pieces with the pounding of the seas, and the skylight broke inward. Those inside had to leave by climbing through the windows on the lee side of the cabin, as it was impossible to go through the door on account of the heavy seas.

Deckhand Charles Scouller, of North East, Pennsylvania, took charge of the smaller lifeboat. He was the only one of the six men in the boat who had any experience in handling small boats, and one of them, oiler Harry Van Vlack, from Erie, had an artificial arm and could not assist in rowing but could only help with the bailing.

Scouller found that he could not ship the lifeboat's rudder, as the pintles would not fit properly into the gudgeons, so he threw it away and used an oar to steer the boat. The larger boat soon was lost from sight, and Scouller and his crew tried rowing to the lee of York Island, but they could make no headway. Accordingly, Scouller turned the boat and ran with the sea toward Sand Island, which lay approximately 1 5/8 miles from the wreck. They managed to round a rocky point and enter a small bay, and they went the last few hundred feet riding one great breaker. These six men made it safely to the shore of Sand Island, and on Monday, September 4th, they were taken off by the tug R. W. CURRIE.

The second and larger lifeboat cast off from the wreck at about 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, and it contained eleven people, including the four women. Assistant engineer Adam Fiden took charge of this boat. Drenched by the rain and the waves, they rowed and bailed well into the afternoon before the boat landed in Little Sand Bay on the Wisconsin mainland. They ran in head to the beach, but the boat turned over sideways and threw everyone out. Nevertheless, all eleven persons made it safely to the shore, and the group then made its way overland two miles to a camp. One of the local residents went a half mile to telephone to Bayfield for assistance, but found that the wires were down as a result of the storm.

At 7:00 a.m. the next day, Sunday, Chief Engineer Phillipie, with a man and a team, started out for Bayfield, which lay twelve miles distant. He arrived there at 2:30 p.m., hired the tug W. G. HARROW, and sent a telegraph message to James McBrier in Erie to inform him of the fate of the SEVONA. Phillipie left Bayfield on the tug at 5:00 p.m. for the wreck. No one was found on board, and the forward end of the ship, thought to be so secure, had broken off and sunk.

Meanwhile, Captain McDonald, the two mates, two wheelmen and two watchmen had attempted to reach the shore of Sand Island using some of the wooden hatch covers as rafts, but they all were overturned in the breakers and all seven men were drowned. Their bodies subsequently were recovered. It was determined that Captain McDonald had left the SEVONA carrying approximately \$1,500 in cash with him, but when his body was recovered, only a single bill was found near him. A few weeks later, a resident of Bayfield was arrested and charged with robbery. Captain McDonald had only just celebrated his 45th birthday on August 28th, 1905, and he had spoken of retiring to his farm, Snug Harbor, located just east of the town of North East, Pennsylvania.