

Keeper Lewich of the Sand Island Lighthouse saw the SEVONA go on the reef and heard her signal of distress, but was powerless to render aid. There was no telephone from the light station to the mainland, and the keeper felt that if he had had a good boat and some extra help, he could have gone to the wreck and rescued the seven men who were lost. Under the circumstances, however, all he could do was watch.

After the weather improved, and while the wreck remained a novelty, the little steamer SKATER did a good business running excursions out to the SEVONA, charging fifty cents per person for the trip. Several photographs of the battered stern section of the SEVONA, all that was left above water, show sightseers standing on the deck. In later years, a local resident who had been out to the wreck recalled that she had an uneasy feeling whilst aboard, because she could feel movement of the wreck whenever any sea disturbed it.

The Reid Wrecking Company, of Port Huron and Sarnia, eventually purchased the wreck of SEVONA from the underwriters and, using the big steam tug OTTAWA, (a) BOSCOBEL (03), built in 1881, recovered the boilers and some of SEVONA's other machinery. Reid also worked periodically on SEVONA during the 1906, 1907 and 1908 seasons. The wreck was dynamited by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the summer of 1909, and more scrap metal was retrieved from the wreck site during 1917 by a Duluth diver, J. B. Wanless.

The 1905 season was a particularly tragic one for lake shipping, particularly on Lake Superior, as a number of extremely violent storms swept the area during the late summer and autumn months. The storm that wrecked SEVONA claimed three other ships on Lake Superior. James Davidson's wooden schooner-barge PRETORIA broke adrift from her towing steamer, the VENEZUELA, and foundered off Outer Island (also in the Apostle Islands group), taking her crew of five down with her. The wooden-hulled Hawgood steamer IOSCO and her consort, the schooner-barge OLIVE JEANETTE, both foundered off the Huron Islands, located off the Michigan shore, to the east of Pt. Abbaye and the entrance to Keweenaw Bay. All aboard, 19 persons aboard IOSCO and seven on the OLIVE JEANETTE, were lost. In addition, the steel steamers R. L. IRELAND (13), (b) SIRIUS (26), (c) ONTADOC (I), and SAMUEL MATHER (II)(23), (b) CLIFTON, each lost a man over the side.

At least forty sailors lost their lives in this wild northeasterly storm, which some observers claimed was the worst in twenty years. Conditions were so bad out on Lake Superior that only two downbound ships arrived at the Soo in a 36-hour period. The brand new, 504-foot, steel steamer POWELL STACKHOUSE, of the Mahoning Steamship Company, arrived at the Soo with so much water in her hold that she had to be lightered in order to bring her up sufficiently for her to make it safely over the Limekiln Crossing. Another major storm, in November of 1905, wrecked more ships on Lake Superior than did the September gale, but the loss of life was not so severe.

Some good did come out of the tragic loss of SEVONA. Life rafts would be placed forward on lake freighters for the benefit of those who could not reach the lifeboats aft in an emergency; life lines would be rigged in heavy weather before ships left port, and precautions would be taken to ensure that lifeboat rudders had the proper clearance so that they could be shipped easily if launching became a necessity. A 1909 navigation chart shows the Sevona Wreck Buoy, placed over the site of the stranding to warn other ships away from the area.

SEVONA survivors believed that the ship had broken in two where the new 72-foot piece had been added. There arose a hue and cry from the shipping industry to the effect that there should be no more lengthening of ships, particularly ones like SEVONA which were of narrow beam. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin did an underwater survey of the SEVONA wreck in 1990 and again in August of 1991. These investigations proved conclusively