

# Mighty Fitz: The Sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald

On November 10, 1975, the Edmund Fitzgerald, a massive ore carrier, vanished in a violent storm on Lake Superior, taking the lives of all 29 crew members on board. The sinking of the Fitzgerald remains one of the greatest maritime disasters in American history, and its cause has been the subject of much speculation and debate.



## Mighty Fitz: The Sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald

by Michael Schumacher

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## The Ship

The Edmund Fitzgerald was built in 1958 at the Great Lakes Engineering Works in River Rouge, Michigan. She was the largest ship on the Great Lakes at the time of her launch, with a length of 729 feet and a beam of 75 feet. The Fitzgerald was powered by a steam turbine engine that produced 13,500 horsepower, and she could carry up to 26,000 tons of iron ore.

The Fitzgerald was a well-respected ship, and her crew was considered to be among the best in the industry. Captain Ernest McSorley had been with the ship since her launch, and he was known for his skill and experience. The Fitzgerald's crew was also known for their camaraderie, and they were often referred to as the "Fitzgerald family."

## The Voyage

On November 9, 1975, the Fitzgerald departed from Superior, Wisconsin, bound for Detroit, Michigan. She was carrying a load of 26,116 tons of iron ore. The weather forecast for the trip was favorable, and the Fitzgerald was expected to arrive in Detroit on November 13.

However, as the Fitzgerald sailed into Lake Superior, the weather began to deteriorate. A strong storm front moved into the area, and the waves began to build. By nightfall, the Fitzgerald was facing winds of up to 70 miles per hour and waves of up to 30 feet.

## **The Storm**

The Fitzgerald struggled to stay afloat in the increasingly violent storm. The waves crashed over the ship, and the wind howled through the rigging. By midnight, the Fitzgerald was taking on water, and the crew was fighting to keep the ship from sinking.

At 2:00 AM, the Fitzgerald sent out a distress signal. The message was brief and to the point: "We are holding our own." It was the last communication ever received from the Fitzgerald.



The storm on Lake Superior

## **The Sinking**

At approximately 7:30 AM on November 10, the Edmund Fitzgerald disappeared from radar. The ship had sunk in just a matter of minutes, taking all 29 crew members with her.

The cause of the Fitzgerald's sinking is still unknown. However, there are several theories that have been put forward. One theory is that the ship was struck by a rogue wave, which is a large, unexpected wave that can swamp a ship. Another theory is that the Fitzgerald's hull was damaged by

the storm, causing her to take on water. A third theory is that the ship's cargo shifted, causing her to lose stability and sink.

## **The Aftermath**

The sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald was a devastating loss for the Great Lakes shipping industry. The ship was one of the largest and most modern on the lakes, and her loss was a major blow to the economy of the region.

The sinking of the Fitzgerald also had a profound impact on the families of the crew members who died. The loss of so many lives in such a sudden and tragic way was a devastating blow to the families, and many of them never recovered from the loss.

The sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald remains one of the greatest maritime disasters in American history. The ship's disappearance and the loss of her crew have been the subject of much speculation and debate, and the cause of her sinking remains a mystery. However, the Fitzgerald's legacy lives on, and she is remembered as a symbol of the dangers of the Great Lakes and the courage of the men who sailed them.

## **Gordon Lightfoot's Song**

In 1976, Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot released a song about the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald. The song, titled "The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald," became a hit and is considered to be one of Lightfoot's most enduring works. The song tells the story of the ship's final voyage and the tragic loss of her crew.



Lightfoot's song has helped to keep the memory of the Edmund Fitzgerald alive. The song is a powerful and moving tribute to the ship and her crew, and it serves as a reminder of the dangers of the Great Lakes and the importance of maritime safety.

The sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald is a tragedy that will never be forgotten. The ship's disappearance and the loss of her crew were a devastating blow to the Great Lakes shipping industry and to the families of the crew members who died. However, the Fitzgerald's legacy lives on, and she is remembered as a symbol of the dangers of the Great Lakes and the courage of the men who sailed them.



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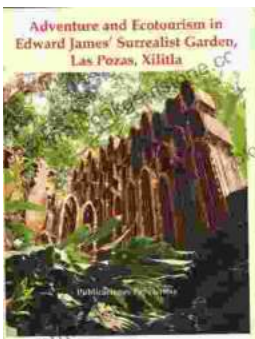
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