Nimrod
Anchor Recovery



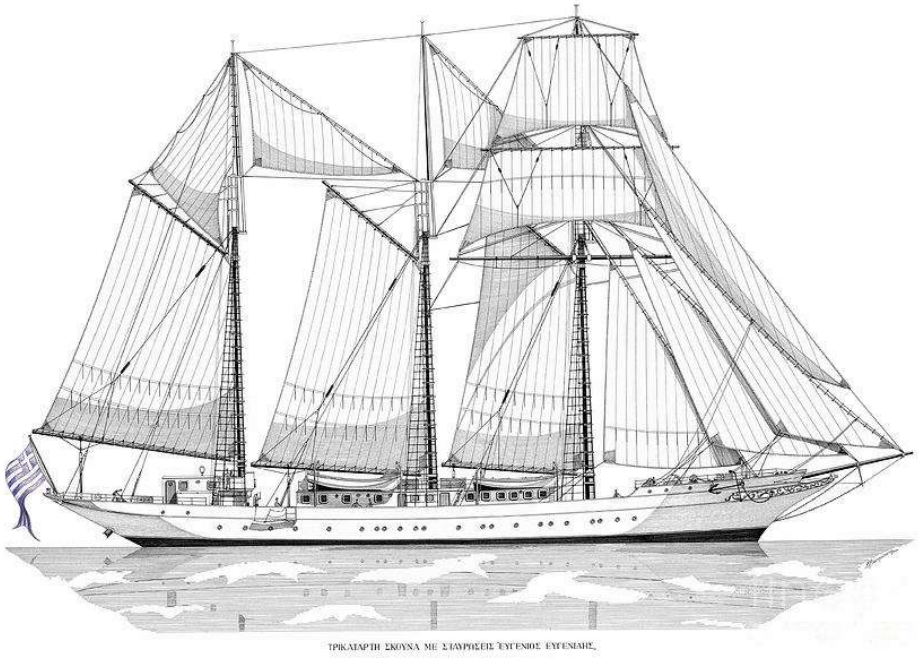
A Dossier

By *Frank Lama*

Donated to PBHS November 10, 2026

Rediscovering the Nimrod: Lake Erie History Brought Ashore

Beneath Lake Erie's waters, the schooner *Nimrod* lay as a reminder of the Great Lakes' demanding maritime trade. Built at Toledo, Ohio, in 1873, the three-masted wooden schooner sank near Port Stanley following a collision with the schooner *Michigan* in November 1874. Her crew survived.



Typical Great Lakes Schooner

The wreck was a three-masted wooden schooner named *Nimrod*, U.S. Official No. 18773, built at Toledo, Ohio, in 1873 by Bailey Brothers. Modern wreck databases give dimensions of roughly 172 x 32 x 13 ft and 559 gross tons. It sank after a collision with the schooner Michigan off the north shore of Lake Erie near Port Stanley in November 1874. No lives were lost.

Lake Erie schooners in the late 1800s were working freight vessels, carrying mainly grain, lumber, coal and iron ore. Schooners dominated the Great Lakes grain and lumber trade well into the 1890s.

Nimrod records online show a newspaper account describing that she carried **37,000 bushels of corn aboard her final voyage**. Some later wreck summaries say wheat instead, so "carrying a cargo of grain" is a good bet.

The Dive Team

The modern rediscovery brought this forgotten ship back into the region's historical consciousness. Mike Verbrugge, a Straffordville-area diver/salvager, captain and divemaster conducting exploratory dives on Lake Erie wrecks with historian Dave Stone, operating aboard the *Checkmate*, a 40-foot salvage tug built in Port Burwell by Tony Lama and Mike Verbrugge played an instrumental role in locating the wreck and additional salvage of the Nimrod artifacts. According to the local account supplied various articles, Tony Lama and other divers participated alongside Verbrugge in the discovery and recovery story.



Mike Verbrugge's Dive Team aboard the Ungas with Anchor
(Pictured Left Right Tony Lama, Mike Verbrugge, Dave Stone, Unknown)

An article by Ian Johnston preserved in the Oxford County historical newspaper archive, headlined approximately "Book in the works / Stone helps with video on shipwrecks," describes the production of *Exploration Erie*. It identifies **Mike Verbrugge as a Straffordville-area diver and salvager**, says his assistance and **Dave Stone's** were integral to the project, and states that Verbrugge served as captain and divemaster aboard his dive boat Checkmate. It further describes Stone and Verbrugge making exploratory dives before the film crew entered the wrecks.

Tony Lama, Great Lakes Captain, Boatbuilder, Diver, Museum Founder

Tony Lama, a Port Burwell maritime-heritage figure, boat builder and Great Lakes Captain and Port Burwell Historical Society founding member was a crucial part of the extended salvage team that raised the Nimrod Anchor ultimately salvaged and donated to the Port Burwell Historical Society and sits outside the Port Burwell Lighthouse to this day.



Tony was the builder of the Checkmate dive tug that was used by the crew on the Nimrod wreck and he also donated the Detroit Diesel Engine that sits outside the Lighthouse in Port Burwell as an example of the types of engines powering the Great Lakes Tugs like the one Tony Lama Captained as a Great Lakes Fisherman the “Maitland Clipper”.

The Nimrod Anchor

Recovering *Nimrod's* anchor required cooperation between divers, the village and Underwater Gas Developers. A published account cited in the research dossier describes the company lending its workboat *Ungas* and winch to raise the anchor and bring it to Port Burwell.



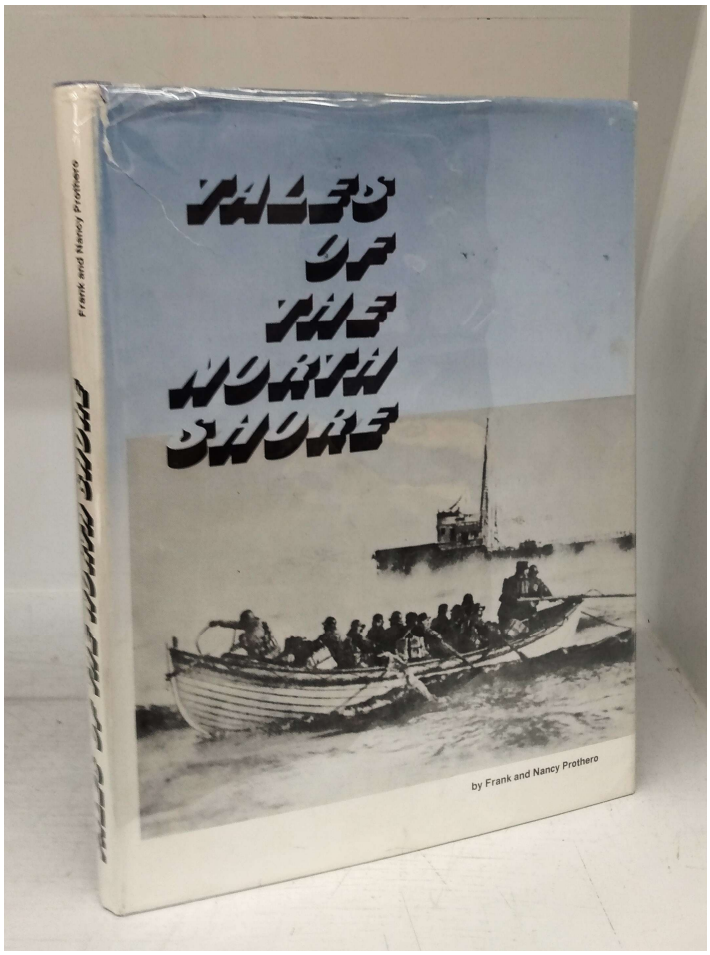
The anchor was subsequently donated to the Port Burwell Historical Society, according to the supplied account. Its preservation created a tangible connection between the lost schooner, the divers who explored her remains and the community safeguarding Lake Erie's maritime heritage.



Port Burwell Historical Society was formed in 1995 to preserve Port Burwell and Great Lakes history and support the Marine Museum/lighthouse.

Tales from the North Shore

Tales of the North Shore is an illustrated collection of **Lake Erie maritime history by Frank and Nancy Prothero**, published in **1987 by Nan-Sea Publications in Port Stanley, Ontario**. The Canadian Maritime Bibliography identifies it as a collection of stories from Lake Erie's maritime past.



Frank and Nancy Prothero's Tales of the North Shore (especially p. 20), the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee Nimrod survey/report, and the Port Burwell Marine Museum accession/provenance file for the recovered Nimrod anchor.

Historical Research Dossier

Mike Verbrugge, Tony Lama and the Rediscovery of the Schooner *Nimrod*

Lake Erie / Port Stanley - Port Burwell maritime heritage research
Research date: 17 September 2026

Purpose: To identify publishable evidence connecting Mike Verbrugge and Tony Lama with the modern discovery, identification, survey and artifact recovery associated with the 1873 schooner Nimrod (U.S. Official No. 18773).

Executive finding

Current evidence supports Mike Verbrugge directly. Indexed diving-community material attributes an instrumental role in the discovery of the wreck to Mike Verbrugge and his vessel Checkmate, while an independently archived Ontario newspaper article documents Verbrugge as a Straffordville-area diver/salvager, captain and divemaster conducting exploratory dives on Lake Erie wrecks with historian Dave Stone.

Tony Lama is independently documented as a Port Burwell maritime-heritage figure, but the key discovery link remains unverified in an indexed source. The Port Burwell Historical Society identifies Tony Lama as a founding member. However, this research did not locate an openly indexed newspaper, museum page, OMHC page, or digitized book excerpt that explicitly states that Tony Lama discovered Nimrod with Verbrugge. The strongest unresolved sources are Frank and Nancy Prothero's Tales of the North Shore (especially p. 20), the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee Nimrod survey/report, and the Port Burwell Marine Museum accession/provenance file for the recovered Nimrod anchor.

1. Identification of the correct wreck

The wreck under investigation is the 1873 three-masted wooden schooner *Nimrod*, U.S. Official No. 18773, built at Toledo, Ohio, by Bailey Brothers. Modern wreck databases give dimensions of roughly 172 x 32 x 13 ft and 559 gross tons. It sank after a collision with the schooner Michigan off the north shore of Lake Erie near Port Stanley in November 1874. No lives were lost.

Important identification warning: There was another Lake Erie schooner named Nimrod, a smaller two-masted vessel built in 1857 and lost in 1858. Researchers should use Official No. 18773, the 1873 build date and the Michigan collision to avoid mixing the two wrecks.

2. Evidence matrix

Source / record	What it establishes	Relevance to discovery question	Assessment
Ontario Divers / archived Facebook discussion (2022)	Indexed copies state that Official No. 18773 was identified on the hatch coaming and that Mike Verbrugge aboard Checkmate was instrumental in the discovery.	Direct modern attribution to Verbrugge; wording does not establish sole discovery and therefore does not exclude other team members.	High relevance; social-media source should be preserved with screenshot/archive copy before publication.
Oxford County historical newspaper archive - Ian Johnston article on Exploration Erie	Identifies Mike Verbrugge as a diver and salvager; says he acted as captain/divemaster aboard Checkmate and conducted exploratory wreck dives with Dave Stone.	Independent corroboration of Verbrugge's Lake Erie wreck-search role and vessel.	Strong secondary evidence.
Russel Brothers registry citing Prothero, Tales of the North Shore, p. 20	States that the workboat Ungas assisted divers in retrieving the Nimrod anchor and bringing it to Port Burwell; village and Underwater Gas Developers cooperated.	Places an organized diver recovery operation at Nimrod and Port Burwell; likely source trail to the individuals involved.	Very strong lead; original book page must be inspected.
Port Burwell Historical Society	Lists Tony Lama as a founding member of the Society formed in 1995 to preserve Port Burwell and Great Lakes history and support the Marine Museum/lighthouse.	Establishes Tony's documented role in local maritime heritage preservation.	Strong for Tony's historical role; not proof of discovery.
Sea-View Imaging / Art Amos biography	Lists a Nimrod survey among Amos' underwater archaeological projects and describes the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee.	Confirms that a formal or semi-formal archaeological survey existed; likely repository for participant names and field notes.	Critical unresolved archival lead.
Municipality of Bayham, Museum Advisory Committee agenda (2024)	Curator reports a block from Nimrod, found by Robert Hamilton, was donated by his son Randy Hamilton.	Shows the Marine Museum retains artifact provenance information connected to Nimrod.	Strong evidence that accession files may identify discoverers/recovery participants.
Port Burwell walking-tour material	Notes Nimrod anchor(s) displayed adjacent to the lighthouse.	Confirms local public interpretation and physical artifact presence in Port Burwell.	Useful corroboration; location wording in the page appears imprecise and should not be relied on for wreck coordinates.

Toledo Port / Shorf & Weisman, Boats Built at Toledo, Ohio	Reproduces contemporary Buffalo Commercial Advertiser accounts of the collision and identifies Nimrod US-18773.	Best online historical-loss documentation located in this pass.	Strong primary-source-based vessel history.

3. Mike Verbrugge: documented evidence

3.1 Indexed discovery attribution

The most important discovery-specific wording located online is in indexed diving-community posts. The material describes identification of Nimrod by registration number 18773 on the wreck and attributes an instrumental role in the discovery to Mike Verbrugge aboard Checkmate. Facebook access can be inconsistent and the pages may require login, so a saved screenshot or web-archive capture should be obtained before using the wording in a formal publication.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/OntarioDivers/posts/5607776595951892/

https://www.facebook.com/groups/833830096953256/posts/1874768429526079/

3.2 Independent newspaper corroboration

An article by Ian Johnston preserved in the Oxford County historical newspaper archive, headlined approximately “Book in the works / Stone helps with video on shipwrecks,” describes the production of *Exploration Erie*. It identifies Mike Verbrugge as a Straffordville-area diver and salvager, says his assistance and Dave Stone's were integral to the project, and states that Verbrugge served as captain and divemaster aboard his diveboat Checkmate. It further describes Stone and Verbrugge making exploratory dives before the film crew entered the wrecks.

Oxford County historical archive PDF: https://webresources.oxfordcounty.ca/umbraco/documents/history/img_bio_R-Z_combined.pdf

3.3 Check-Mate / Port Burwell connection

Professional Mariner later reported that the steel vessel Check-Mate III was built in 1987 by Mike Verbrugge in Port Burwell, Ontario. This is not a Nimrod-discovery source, but independently anchors Verbrugge to Port Burwell's working-maritime and diving community.

https://professionalmariner.com/newfoundland-deaths-prompt-questions-about-survival-suits/

4. Tony Lama: documented evidence and present gap

4.1 Confirmed maritime-heritage role

The Port Burwell Historical Society's official history lists Tony Lama among its founding members. The Society states that it began on 15 May 1995 as a group working with the Town of Port Burwell to preserve the

community's history and its connection to Lake Erie and the Great Lakes, with support for the Marine Museum and historic lighthouse as core goals.

https://pbhistoricalsociety.ca/about-us-1

4.2 What has not yet been found

No openly indexed source located in this research pass explicitly states that Tony Lama co-discovered Nimrod with Mike Verbrugge. Searches were run using Tony Lama / Anthony Lama in combination with Nimrod, Lake Erie, Port Burwell, Port Stanley, Verbrugge, Checkmate, diver, schooner, museum, anchor and Ontario Marine Heritage Committee. The absence of an indexed hit should not be treated as evidence that Tony was not involved; local wreck discoveries of this period were often recorded in club newsletters, museum files, dive logs, photo captions and local newspapers that are poorly indexed or not digitized.

5. The anchor-recovery trail: the best route to a Tony Lama citation

The strongest documentary bridge is the recovery of the Nimrod anchor. The Russel Brothers vessel registry cites Frank and Nancy Prothero's 1987 book Tales of the North Shore, p. 20, for the statement that the small workboat Ungas assisted divers in retrieving the Nimrod anchor and bringing it to Port Burwell. It says cooperation came from the village and Underwater Gas Developers, which loaned Ungas and its winch to raise the anchor.

Russel Brothers registry: https://russelbrothers.ca/registry.html

Frank & Nancy Prothero, Tales of the North Shore (Port Stanley: Nan-Sea Publications, 1987), 178 pp. Online bibliographic record: https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=31835181853

Research priority: Obtain a scan or photograph of p. 20 and the surrounding pages, plus any photograph captions or acknowledgements. If the Protheros named the divers involved in the anchor lift, this could provide the publishable Tony Lama link that is currently missing online.

6. Ontario Marine Heritage Committee (OMHC) trail

Sea-View Imaging's biography of underwater archaeologist Art Amos lists a “Nimrod survey” among his projects and explains Amos' connection to the Ontario Marine Heritage Committee. This is significant because an archaeological survey normally generates at least some combination of field sheets, site plans, participant lists, measurements, photographs, report drafts or submissions to the provincial cultural ministry.

https://www.sea-viewimaging.com/shipwrecks-gallery/lake-huron-shipwrecks/4-gems-of-tobermory/

Parallel Niagara Divers biography: https://www.niagaradivers.com/shipwrecks/sw2019/lindsay.html

Priority archival question: Who participated in the OMHC Nimrod survey, on what dates, from what vessel, and how did the survey team describe the wreck's original discovery and identification? A report naming Verbrugge and Lama together would be the strongest form of evidence short of a contemporaneous newspaper account.

7. Port Burwell Marine Museum / Municipality of Bayham records

The museum is a central evidence repository. The Municipality of Bayham's April 2024 curator report records a Nimrod block brought to the museum by Randy Hamilton and states that it had been found by his father, Robert Hamilton. That entry demonstrates that Nimrod artifacts have donor/provenance histories in museum records rather than being treated merely as anonymous display objects.

2024 Museum Advisory Committee agenda: https://www.bayham.on.ca/media/0f1nflj0/x20240717-mac-agenda-final.pdf

Museum information: https://www.bayham.on.ca/our-community/marine-museum-historic-lighthouse/

Port Burwell Historical Society museum page: https://pbhistoricalsociety.ca/marine-museum

Records to request: accession card/catalogue record for the Nimrod anchor; donor form; conservation record; exhibit-label history; photographs of the recovery; correspondence concerning the lift; names of divers or boat crews; any Prothero or OMHC documentation attached to the artifact file.

8. Newspaper and diving-publication research trail

The following repositories/publication categories should be treated as the next-stage search set:

- Elgin County / St. Thomas newspapers: St. Thomas Times-Journal and predecessor/community papers, especially discovery, anchor-recovery and museum-donation coverage.
- Tillsonburg and Aylmer-area papers: Tony Lama and Mike Verbrugge were both connected to the eastern Elgin / Bayham region; community columns and photo pages may be more productive than headline searches.
- Oxford County historical newspaper image collections: the Exploration Erie article confirms these archives contain material about Verbrugge and Lake Erie wreck diving.
- Ontario Underwater Council newsletters and convention programs: the archived newspaper article says the Council assisted the Exploration Erie production; newsletters may name the active dive team.
- Ontario Marine Heritage Committee newsletters/reports and provincial cultural-ministry archaeological submissions.
- Great Lakes diving club newsletters and older wreck guides, including Save Ontario Shipwrecks chapter material and regional dive-convention programs.
- Local museum scrapbooks, accession binders, photograph albums and exhibit research files in Port Burwell and Port Stanley.

9. Historical vessel record and collision sources

Shorf and Weisman's Boats Built at Toledo, Ohio identifies NIMROD US-18773 as a Bailey Brothers vessel built at Toledo in 1873 and reproduces contemporary Buffalo Commercial Advertiser reports. Those accounts describe the collision with Michigan, the sinking in deep water off Port Stanley, the cargo, insurance and the crew's escape. This source is particularly useful because it ties the modern wreck identification to the vessel's official number and contemporary casualty reporting.

https://www.toledoport.org/s/boats-built-at-toledo-ohio-paula-shorf-and-matt-weisman.pdf

Note on conflicting details: Modern wreck databases commonly list the loss as 9 November 1874 and cargo as 35,000 bushels of wheat, while the Toledo compilation reproduces a Buffalo Commercial Advertiser item describing 37,000 bushels of corn. These discrepancies should be preserved in the research notes and resolved against original newspaper issues before publication.

10. Online source catalogue

Port Burwell Historical Society - About Us / founding members
https://pbhistoricalsociety.ca/about-us-1
Official local-history source naming Tony Lama as a founding member.

Port Burwell Historical Society - Marine Museum
https://pbhistoricalsociety.ca/marine-museum
Museum history and collections context.

Municipality of Bayham - Marine Museum & Historic Lighthouse
https://www.bayham.on.ca/our-community/marine-museum-historic-lighthouse/
Official municipal museum information and contact route.

Municipality of Bayham - 17 July 2024 Museum Advisory Committee agenda
https://www.bayham.on.ca/media/0f1nflj0/x20240717-mac-agenda-final.pdf
Contains April 2024 curator report noting a Nimrod artifact and provenance.

Russel Brothers vessel registry - Ungas II
https://russelbrothers.ca/registry.html
Cites Prothero p.20 for Nimrod anchor recovery and transport to Port Burwell.

Sea-View Imaging - Art Amos / OMHC biography
https://www.sea-viewimaging.com/shipwrecks-gallery/lake-huron-shipwrecks/4-gems-of-tobermory/
Names the Nimrod survey and explains OMHC background.

Niagara Divers - Art Amos & Dan Lindsay biography
https://www.niagaradivers.com/shipwrecks/sw2019/lindsay.html
Independent OMHC/underwater archaeology background.

Oxford County historical newspaper archive
https://webresources.oxfordcounty.ca/umbraco/documents/history/img_bio_R-Z_combined.pdf
Contains Ian Johnston article on Exploration Erie, Dave Stone, Verbrugge and Checkmate.

Professional Mariner - Check-Mate III
https://professionalmariner.com/newfoundland-deaths-prompt-questions-about-survival-suits/
States Check-Mate III was built in Port Burwell by Mike Verbrugge.

Great Lakes Shipwreck Files - N
https://greatlakesrex.wordpress.com/n/
Separates the 1858 Nimrod from US-18773 and provides modern loss data.

Shotline Diving - Nimrod (1873)
https://shotlinediving.com/wreck/nimrod-1873/
Modern dive-site history and dimensions/location summary.

Alchem Incorporated - Erie/Ashtabula wrecks
https://alcheminc.com/asht.html
Modern wreck database entry for the 1874 Nimrod.

Toledo Port - Boats Built at Toledo, Ohio
https://www.toledoport.org/s/boats-built-at-toledo-ohio-paula-shorf-and-matt-weisman.pdf
Primary-source-based vessel history and contemporary collision reports.

Elgin Connects - Port Burwell walking tour
https://www.elginconnects.ca/files/8ThvKPcYK_1763920880_6f786jd02uiwsgfbrhv6b6.html
Mentions Nimrod anchor display near lighthouse; location wording should be treated cautiously.

Canadian Maritime Bibliography
https://www.cnrs-scrn.org/northern_mariner/vol01/tnm_1_4_33-43.pdf
Bibliographic confirmation of Prothero, Tales of the North Shore (1987).

AbeBooks bibliographic record - Tales of the North Shore
https://www.abebooks.com/servlet/BookDetailsPL?bi=31835181853
Confirms publication details and extent of the Prothero volume.

Ontario Divers Facebook post (archival lead)
https://www.facebook.com/groups/OntarioDivers/posts/5607776595951892/
Indexed discovery-attribution lead; preserve independently because Facebook access is unstable.

Facebook diving-group repost / parallel thread
https://www.facebook.com/groups/833830096953256/posts/1874768429526079/
Parallel indexed wording on identification/discovery; preserve independently.

11. Priority action plan to obtain a publishable Tony Lama citation

1. Obtain Prothero p. 20 and surrounding pages - This is the closest known printed source to the Nimrod anchor recovery. Check names in body text, captions, acknowledgements and photo credits.

2. Request the Port Burwell Marine Museum accession file for the Nimrod anchor - Ask specifically for accession number, donor/provenance record, recovery date, recovery crew, photographs, correspondence and prior exhibit labels.

3. Locate the OMHC Nimrod survey/report - Request participant list, field logs, site plans, photo logs, vessel used, survey dates and narrative describing how the wreck was found/identified.

4. Search local newspaper microfilm around the discovery and anchor-recovery dates - Use Mike Verbrugge, Tony/Anthony Lama, Checkmate, Nimrod, Ungas, Underwater Gas Developers, Port Burwell and Port Stanley as independent terms; photo captions often contain names omitted from article text.

5. Preserve the social-media discovery attribution - Capture full screenshots including group name, poster, date, URL and comments; where possible obtain permission from the author or identify the underlying source copied into the post.

6. Interview surviving participants / family custodians - Use oral history to identify exact dates, dive-team membership, the boat used and who first located versus who first identified the wreck. Oral testimony should be corroborated with documentary records where possible.

12. Suggested archival inquiry language

For the Port Burwell Marine Museum / Municipality of Bayham:

"I am researching the rediscovery, identification and artifact recovery history of the schooner Nimrod (U.S. Official No. 18773), lost off the north shore of Lake Erie in 1874. I am particularly seeking records that identify Mike Verbrugge, Tony Lama and other divers associated with the wreck or the recovery of the Nimrod anchor now associated with Port Burwell. Could you please check the accession/provenance record, donor files, photographs, correspondence, exhibit-label history, scrapbooks or curator research files for the Nimrod anchor and related artifacts?"

13. Research conclusion

The evidence now establishes a credible historical framework: the correct wreck is Nimrod US-18773; the wreck was formally surveyed in Ontario underwater-archaeology circles; Mike Verbrugge and Checkmate are directly linked to Lake Erie wreck exploration and are specifically attributed an instrumental role in Nimrod's discovery in indexed diving-community material; the Nimrod anchor was raised by divers with local/industrial assistance and taken to Port Burwell; and Tony Lama is independently documented as a founding member of the Port Burwell Historical Society. The remaining task is narrow but important: find a contemporaneous or institutional record that names Tony Lama as a member of the Nimrod discovery/recovery team. The Prothero account, museum provenance file and OMHC survey are the three highest-value targets.