

Wreck: Norwegian



St Paul Island – Gulf of St. Lawrence

Wrecked: June 14, 1863

The Event

On the morning of June 14, 1863, the iron mail steamer Norwegian struck the rocky coast of St. Paul Island in dense fog.

Visibility had dropped to near zero. Despite engines being reversed upon sighting breakers, the vessel could not stop in time and grounded heavily on the island's exposed shoreline.

The Ship

- Built: 1861, Dumbarton, Scotland
- Length: ~300 ft
- Iron-hulled screw steamer (barque-rigged)
- Gross Tonnage: ~3,449

Owned by the Allan Line (Montreal Ocean Steamship Company)

Service: Royal Mail, emigrants, and cargo between Liverpool and Montreal

Why It Was Lost

A classic North Atlantic navigation failure:

- Dense fog reduced visibility to yards
- Vessel maintained speed approaching land
- Limited navigation tools (pre-radar era)

St. Paul Island, known as the 'Graveyard of the Gulf', offered no margin for error.

The Wreck Event

- Lookout reported breakers ahead
- Engines ordered full astern
- Impact followed immediately

Hull struck rock with force, machinery damaged, and the vessel left hard aground

Wreck: Norwegian



The Rescue

Evacuation was conducted in order:

- Lifeboats deployed successfully
- Passengers and crew landed ashore
- Refuge found at the island's emergency shelter

The End of the Ship

- Salvage removed mail and valuable cargo
- Hull exposed to Atlantic swell

The vessel gradually broke apart, leaving a scattered wreck field along the island's eastern flank

Diver Notes

- Depth: ~50–100+ ft
- Scattered debris field
- Key features: boilers, hull plating, fittings

Strong surge and current common

Remote offshore location – advanced planning required

Requires

- Advance planning
- Proper vessel support
- Strong situational awareness of weather, currents and tides

Why This Site Matters

- A Royal Mail steamer lost without loss of life
- Part of the Allan Line transatlantic network
- One of many wrecks at St. Paul Island
- Represents early iron steamship navigation risks

Final Thought

She was not lost to storm or darkness.

She was lost to fog—and the momentum of a ship that could not stop in time.