



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**May 21, 2025**

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**Bone Fragments Found on New Jersey Beaches Linked to 19th Century Shipwreck**

*The captain of schooner "Oriental" was identified using investigative genetic genealogy at Ramapo College of New Jersey*

Mahwah, NJ— Skeletal remains that were found on a number of beaches in South Jersey between 1995 and 2013 are now confirmed as belonging to the captain of the 19th century schooner *Oriental*, thanks to the work of the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) and Ramapo College of New Jersey Investigative Genetic Genealogy Center (IGG).

A skull washed ashore in Longport in 1995, and more bones were found in Margate in 1999, both in Atlantic County. In 2013, additional remains were found in Ocean City, Cape May County. Scattered Man John Doe went without a name for 30 years since traditional methods of investigation could not deliver an identification.

In the fall of 2023, the New Jersey State Police partnered with the [Ramapo College IGG Center](#) to see if they would be able to use investigative genetic genealogy to solve the mystery of the scattered bones along NJ beaches. That November, a sample was sent to [Intermountain Forensics](#), who uploaded the sample to [GEDmatch](#) and [FamilyTreeDNA](#) in February of 2024.

That is when Ramapo College undergraduate students conducting field studies and [IGG Center certificate program](#) students began their research. They found ancestry dating back to the 1600s, with genetic relatives hailing from Litchfield and Fairfield counties in Connecticut.

Throughout the remainder of 2024 to February of 2025, students from the certificate program volunteered their time to continue finding ancestral ties to Connecticut. They also began looking into shipwrecks off the coast of New Jersey. They discovered clips from two newspaper articles dated December 20 and December 24, 1844.

The students learned that five crew members were aboard the *Oriental*, which departed from Connecticut en route to Philadelphia, PA, to deliver 60 tons of marble for use by Girard College, a college preparatory boarding school that opened in 1848. The ship was wrecked off the coast of Brigantine Shoal in 1844. It was reported the ship likely sprung a leak and went down less than one mile from the shoreline, and all crew members died. The captain of the ship was 29 year-old Henry Goodsell.



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Given the mounting evidence discovered by students in the IGG Center, the candidate Henry Goodsell was delivered to the NJSP for consideration.

On March 7, 2025, the NJSP collected a family reference sample from a great-great grandchild of Henry Goodsell. His identity was confirmed by the NJSP on April 8, 2025.

"Identifying human remains is one of the most solemn and challenging responsibilities law enforcement is charged with," said Chief of County Detectives Patrick Snyder at the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office. "Law enforcement works hard knowing that behind every case is a promise: that no one will be forgotten, and that we will pursue the truth until families have the answers they deserve."

This is one of the oldest cold case identifications using investigative genetic genealogy. "Using modern genealogy testing to identify bone fragments from the 19th century is a powerful reminder of our unwavering commitment to resolving cases no matter how old," said Colonel Patrick J. Callahan, NJSP superintendent. "The ability to bring answers to families—even generations later—shows how far science and dedication can take us. Our partnership with Ramapo College has been instrumental in making this possible, and we are incredibly proud of the meaningful progress we continue to make together."

While the findings in this case did not resolve an unsolved crime, Cape May County Prosecutor Jeffrey Sutherland is pleased that it did uncover a fascinating piece of local history. "The hard work of Ramapo College's IGG Center and working with the New Jersey State Police Cold Case Unit has demonstrated the power and accuracy of this new technology combined with classic detective work in solving complex cold cases that will bring offenders to justice and provide closure to victim's families."

Nationwide, the Ramapo College IGG Center, which is the only center of its kind to offer case work, research, and hands-on learning, has been consulted on [92 cases](#). To learn more about the IGG Center's work, visit [ramapo.edu/IGG](https://ramapo.edu/IGG).

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## **ABOUT RAMAPO COLLEGE**

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and



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international and intercultural understanding. The comprehensive college is situated among the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, is within commuting distance to New York City, was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *Condé Nast Traveler*, and boasts the best on-campus housing in New Jersey per Niche.com. Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.