

A WHALE OF A JOURNEY

Whaling Shipwrecks of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument



Maritime archaeologists compare shipwreck survivor sketches of Kure Atoll with State Refuge Staff.
Credit: NOAA/NMSP



A shark swims through the site of a 19th century whaling shipwreck at Pearl and Hermes Atoll.
Credit: NOAA/NMSP



Documenting artifacts at the whaling shipwreck site Pearl at Pearl and Hermes Atoll, NWHI.
Credit: NOAA/NMSP



NOAA's Maritime Heritage Program maritime archaeologists are filmed while documenting tryposts, anchors, cannon and other artifacts at the Pearl shipwreck site, a whaling ship wrecked at Pearl and Hermes Atoll in 1822.
Credit: NOAA/NMSP

- 1000-1700AD** Nihoa and Mokumanamana inhabited
- 1778** Captain Cook anchors at Kaua'i
- 1819** *Equator* and *Balaena* first whaling vessels hunting in Hawai'i
- 1820** Sperm whale grounds discovered between Japan and Kure Atoll
- 1822** Whaling ships *Pearl* and *Hermes* wreck at Pearl and Hermes Atoll
- Whaling ship *Two Brothers* wrecks at French Frigate Shoals
- 1837** Whaling ship *Gledstanes* wrecks at Kure Atoll
- 1842** Whaling ship *Parker* wrecks at Kure Atoll
- 1844** Whaling ship *Holder Borden* wrecks at Lisianski
- 1846** Whaling ship *Konohasset* wrecks at Lisianski
- 1852** Whaling ship *Huntress* wrecks at Maro Reef
- King Kamehameha IV voyages to Nihoa
- 1859** Whaling ship *South Seaman* wrecks at French Frigate Shoals
- 1867** Whaling ship *Daniel Wood* wrecks at French Frigate Shoals
- 1885** Princess Lydia Lili'uokalani and a scientific expedition visits Nihoa on the ship *Iwalani*
- 1898** The archipelago inclusive of the NWHI collectively ceded to the United States through a domestic resolution
- 1900** Hawai'i becomes a U.S. Territory on February 22
- 1909** Theodore Roosevelt declares the NWHI the Hawaiian Islands Reservation
- 1941** Japanese military attacks U.S. forces at Pearl Harbor, U.S. enters WWII
- 1942** June 4th-6th, Japanese and American fleets meet in the Battle of Midway, a decisive turning point in the War in the Pacific. Four Japanese carriers and one American carrier are lost.
- 2006** NWHI declared the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument by President George W. Bush



A WHALE OF A JOURNEY TO THE PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT

HALF A WORLD AWAY TO THE NORTHWESTERN HAWAIIAN ISLANDS: AROUND THE HORN AND UP THE COAST...

In the first half of the 19th century, whaling operations spread north into the Pacific in search of lucrative whaling grounds off South America, Australia, Japan and finally the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea. Soon after the *Balaena* and the *Equator* harpooned the first whale off the coast of Maui in 1819, Hawai'i won its place on whalers' charts. American and British whalers, in their early voyages into the Pacific, first encountered the low and uncharted atolls of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) on their passages westward from Honolulu and Lahaina to the seas off Japan in 1820.

At least ten whaling ships have been reported lost in the NWHI. To date, three of these whaling ships have been located and investigated by NOAA maritime archaeologists. Some of the sites that have been documented so far include the New Bedford whaler *Parker*, lost on September 24th 1842 at Kure Atoll during a fierce storm. The seas crashed through the cabin windows at 2:00 AM, and immediately the vessel went onto the reef. After drifting on a raft made of the remains of the *Parker* for eight days, the sailors made it to Ocean Island (now known as Green Island) at Kure Atoll. The castaways spent a hard eight months fighting for survival on the low island at the atoll. The Captain and a few others were finally picked up from Ocean (Green) Island on April 16th, 1843 by the ship *James Stewart*. The rest of the crew remained on island until May 2nd, when they were rescued by the New Bedford whaler *Nassau* and taken to Honolulu.



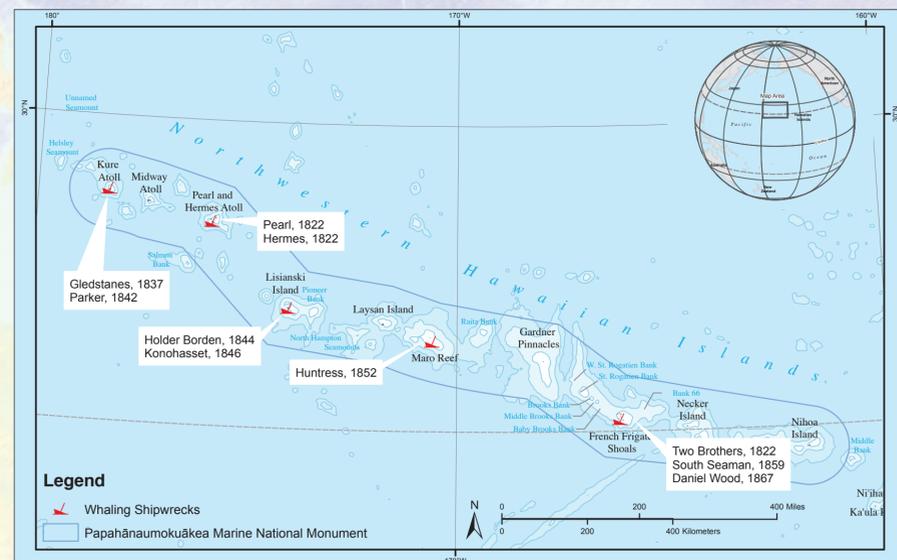
Sailors with whale jawbones in Honolulu Harbor, 1955. Credit: Bishop Museum

The opening of the Japan whaling grounds in 1820 sent many whaling ships through the low lying atolls of the NWHI. Two unfortunate whaling ships that attempted this journey in 1822 were the *Pearl* and the *Hermes*, for which Pearl and Hermes Atoll is named. In 2004, over 180 years after the wrecking event, NOAA NMFS scientists came across exciting whaling ship wreckage at Pearl and Hermes Atoll. The only records of whaling ships lost at Pearl and Hermes Atoll are, indeed, the British registered whalers *Pearl* and *Hermes* themselves, vessels of the South Seas Whaling Industry based in London. Both were sailing in consort from Honolulu to the newly discovered Japan Grounds in 1822. The 262-ton *Hermes* ran aground on the unseen reef on the 26th of April at about 4:00 AM, and the 320-ton *Pearl* ran aground nearby a few minutes later. Both were stuck fast and eventually broken on the sharp coral. The combined crew totaling 57 souls were castaway with what meager provisions they could salvage on a nearby island for months. One of the carpenters on board the *Hermes*, James Robinson, supervised the building of a small 30-ton schooner named *Deliverance* on the beach. Though most of the crew elected to board the passing ship *Earl of Morby*, Robinson and 11 others were able to recoup some of their financial losses from the wreck by taking possession of the nearly finished *Deliverance* and sailing her back to Honolulu.

The history of American whaling is a significant part of our national maritime heritage. It is a topic that encompasses historic voyages and seafaring traditions set on a global stage. Whaling also had major implications for Native Hawaiian people. In the early 1840's, up to 1000 Native Hawaiian seamen were shipping out annually and by the mid-nineteenth century as many as one-fifth of the sailors in the American whaling fleet were Pacific Islanders. Soon western ships were required to post bond to assure the return of native sailors. The whaling heritage also reminds us of how our attitude towards resource management and conservation has evolved over time. At one time, these whales were hunted to near extinction. Today, we are focused on the conservation and protection of all resources in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.



An artist depicts a whale hunt with tryworks burning on the ship around Cape Horn to the whaling grounds in the Pacific. Credit: Library of Congress



Map of 10 whaling ships reported lost in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Credit: NOAA/NMSP

EXPLORING WHALING SHIPWRECK SITES IN THE PAPAĀNAUMOKUĀKEA MARINE NATIONAL MONUMENT

The discovery of whaling shipwreck sites in the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument begins several phases of management that involve the investigation, documentation and interpretation of these time capsules on the seafloor.

DISCOVERY

The search for shipwreck sites begins many months before underwater archaeologists head out into the field. The researchers spend many hours digging through archives, looking for ship's log books and historic maps. Remote sensing operations include magnetometer and side scan sonar surveys off of small vessels. If potential sites are discovered, divers will visit these locations and search for potential shipwreck sites. In the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, maritime archaeologists rely heavily upon the assistance of partnerships with other scientists who often discover shipwreck sites during other types of scientific survey in the area.



Diver investigates the bow of the USS *Macaw* at Midway Atoll. Credit: NOAA NMSP

DOCUMENTATION

Once shipwreck sites have been located and confirmed, maritime archaeologists begin their work using standard methods that replicate archaeological methods on land. The tools that maritime archaeologists use underwater include tapes, slates and other measuring tools which they use to acquire data from the artifacts scattered on the seafloor. Divers work in teams to create scaled drawings of artifacts, and take measurements of artifacts to a "baseline" set down the middle of the shipwreck site. In some cases, permits are obtained to sample a few, small diagnostic artifacts from shipwreck sites in order to identify the vessel. For whaling ships, artifacts such as trypots (the large iron cauldrons used for boiling the blubber down to whale oil), the bricks that would make the tryworks structure, casks for holding the oil and the whaling implements are all evidence of a whaling shipwreck site.



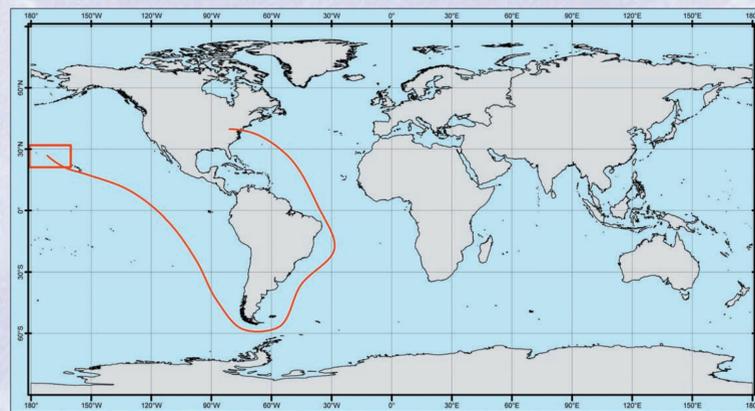
Maritime archaeologist documents an anchor at the *Pearl* shipwreck site at Pearl and Hermes Atoll. Credit: NOAA NMSP

INTERPRETATION

Once data and measurements have been obtained from the shipwreck sites, underwater archaeologists use this information to create detailed site maps and GIS projects that assist in understanding the distribution of artifacts and the way that the ship may have broken apart on the reef. During this phase of shipwreck site interpretation, maritime archaeologists piece together clues and begin to understand what they are looking at and how it got there.

OUTREACH

Communicating this exploration, research and discovery to the public is an important part of the maritime archaeologists' job to interpret the collective seafaring history of the Pacific Islands Region. The results of these expeditions become information for public lectures, articles, reports and interpretive displays so that the public is able to understand and appreciate the rich maritime heritage of these atolls. These whaling ships traveled thousands of miles, often for several years at a time. Maritime archaeologists are working to bring this glimpse of the early 19th century whaling industry in the Pacific to the public.



Map of the journey from New Bedford, Massachusetts to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Many whaling ships including the *Parker* took this dangerous route around Cape Horn to the whaling grounds in the Pacific Ocean. Credit: NOAA/NMSP

For further information about NOAA's Maritime Heritage Program please visit the website: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov/maritime>.

For further information about the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument please visit the website: www.hawaiireef.noaa.gov.

PROTECTING OUR MARITIME HERITAGE RESOURCES

With hundreds of years of continuous and intensive maritime activity, the Hawaiian Archipelago contains many historic shipwrecks and other types of submerged archaeological sites. The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands witnessed a variety of Hawaiian and Pacific vessels and activities, such as guano mining, fishing, copra traders, Japanese sampans, transpacific colliers, and the local wreckers or salvage companies from the main Hawaiian Islands in addition to naval activity.



Voyaging canoe *Hōkūle'a* in the NWHI. Credit: NOAA/NMSP

The NWHI have been a veritable graveyard of marine disaster. Two reasons for this have been the low, inconspicuous character of the islands, and their faulty or insufficient location on marine charts. The remote location of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument has kept these maritime heritage resources safe from hundreds of years of disturbance. Many of these heritage resources, as defined by State and Federal Preservation Laws, are of historical and national significance. The archaeological sites on Nihoa and Mokumanamana (Necker) Islands are listed on both the National and State Register of Historic Places for their cultural and historical significance. Although these sites occur in a terrestrial context, they are evidence of maritime contact and are testimony to the navigating skills of the ancient Polynesians. Work to interpret the rich legacy of Polynesian seafarers continues through groups such as the Polynesian Voyaging Society who have voyaged to the NWHI to honor their ancestors and perpetuate traditional practices on the voyaging canoe *Hōkūle'a*.

Until recently, many wrecksites in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands remained uninvestigated. With the support of several partners, NOAA has been able to begin the important process of identifying, documenting and protecting these maritime heritage resources in the Papahānaumokuākea National Marine Monument.

NOAA's Maritime Heritage Program is committed to preserving these resources within the Monument and to developing and implementing a nationwide program of discovery, long-term protection and education.

An important tool for maritime heritage management is legislation that provides the mandate for the protection of these resources. Some important laws are in place to help protect maritime heritage resources and assist in the management of many of the sites in the NWHI. The legislation that makes up the Federal Archaeology Program includes:

- ARPA (Archaeological Resources Protection Act, 1979)
 - NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, 1990)
 - NHPA (National Historic Preservation Act, 1966)
 - AA (Antiquities Act, 1906)
 - ASA (Abandoned Shipwreck Act, 1988)
- also important is the:
- SMCA (Sunken Military Craft Act of 2004)

These laws remind us of the significance of these historic sites on the seafloor and guide us in our attempts to protect our collective seafaring heritage.



Investigating the reef at Midway Atoll. The pinnac and gudgeon in the foreground would have held the rudder in place on the stern of the ship. Credit: NOAA/NMSP



Maritime archaeologist investigates a trypot at the whaling shipwreck site *Pearl* at Pearl and Hermes Atoll. Credit: NOAA/NMSP