A Whale of a Journey
Whaling Shipwrecks of the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

NOAA's Maritime Heritage Program maritime archaeologists are shown while documenting trypots, anchors, cannon and other artifacts at the Pearl shipwreck site, a whaling shipwrecked at Pearl and Hermes Atoll in 1822.

Credit: NOAA/NMSP

1000-1700AD

1778 Captain Cook anchors at Hanalei

1778-1844 Equator and Balaena first whaling vessels hunting in Hawai'i

1822 Whaling ships Pearl and Hermes wreck at Pearl and Hermes Atoll

1822 Whaling ship Two Brothers wrecks at French Frigate Shoals

1837 Whaling ship Gladiolus wrecks at Rapa Atoll

1842 Whaling ship Zuber wrecks at Rapa Atoll

1844 Whaling ship Middle Arrow wrecks at Leinani

1844 Whaling ship Konahouewa wrecks at Kure Atoll

1845 Whaling ship Harmano wrecks at Pearl Reef

1845 King Kamehameha IV voyages to Nihoa

1849 Whaling ship South Seaman wrecks at French Frigate Shoals

1852 Whaling ship Daniel Wood wrecks at French Frigate Shoals

1855 Queen Lydia Lili'uokalani and a scientific expedition sail to Nihoa on the ship Iwalani

1859 Whaling ship Konohasset wrecks at French Frigate Shoals

1860 Whaling ship Holder Borden wrecks at Lisianski

1862 Whaling ship Konohasset wrecks at Lisianski

1867 Whaling ship Konohasset wrecks at Lisianski

1885 Whaling ship South Seaman wrecks at French Frigate Shoals

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 Papahānaumokuākea 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.

**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, shovels 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 tryots (the large iron "cudgels" used for bashing the blubber down to whale oil), the bricks that would make up the tryworks structures, casks for holding the oil and the whaling implements are all evidence of a whaling shipwreck site.

**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 artifacts. 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.

**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 sampan, transpacific collie, and the local wrecks—salvage companies from the main Hawaiian Islands in addition to naval activity.

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 Moku Manamana (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 navigational 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 canoes 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 nationalwide 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)
- ISCC (International Shipwreck Convention Act of 2004)
- 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.