



PAPAHĀNAUMOKUĀKEA Marine National Monument

NEWS RELEASE
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NEWS RELEASE

Lost Whaling Shipwreck With Link to Melville's *Moby-Dick* Discovered in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands

Finding of wreckage is a rare archaeological discovery of a lost American whaler

(Honolulu, HI) Maritime heritage archaeologists working with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries have found the nationally-significant wreckage of a famous 1800's Nantucket whale ship, *Two Brothers*, on a reef off French Frigate Shoals, nearly six hundred miles northwest of Honolulu, in the remote Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument.

This rare archaeological discovery is the first discovery of a wrecked whaling ship from Nantucket, Massachusetts, the birthplace of America's whaling industry. All of America's whaling ships are now gone, broken up or sunk, except one, the National Historic Landmark *Charles W. Morgan* at Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut.

Two Brothers was captained by George Pollard Jr., whose previous Nantucket whaling vessel, *Essex*, was rammed and sunk by a whale in the South Pacific, resulting in inspiration for Herman Melville's famous book, *Moby-Dick*. Pollard gained national notoriety after the *Essex* sinking, when he and a handful of his crew resorted to cannibalism in order to survive their prolonged ordeal drifting on the open ocean. The story of Pollard, *Essex* and *Two Brothers* was reintroduced to American audiences by author Nathaniel Philbrick's New York Times bestseller, *In the Heart of the Sea*.

Captain Pollard went to sea again as the Master of *Two Brothers* and was likely the last person to think "lightning would strike twice," but it did on the night of February 11, 1823 when *Two Brothers* hit a shallow reef off French Frigate Shoals. Captain Pollard did not want to abandon ship but his crew pleaded with him and they clung to small boats for survival during a long and harrowing night. The next morning they were rescued by the crew of another Nantucket whaler.

For the past 188 years, the wreckage of *Two Brothers* has been lost on the ocean floor. The vessel was part of a fleet of several hundred whaling ships that were part of America's economic and political expansion into the Pacific, transforming the region, including Hawaii, both economically and culturally, and resulting in the near extinction of many whale species. The whaling fleets were also greatly responsible for early explorations of the Indian Ocean and the Polar regions.

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A 2008 NOAA led expedition to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands to study marine life, remove floating marine debris and look for cultural resources resulted in the initial clues about the resting place of the *Two Brothers*. Maritime archaeologists first spotted a large anchor, followed by three trypots (cast iron pots for melting whale blubber to produce oil), another large anchor, hundreds of bricks, and the remains of the ship's rigging. Those artifacts conclusively indicated the wreckage was from a whaler dating to the early-19th-century. Subsequent expeditions in 2009 and 2010 resulted in researchers discovering more artifacts, including blubber hooks, five whaling harpoon tips, three whaling lances, four cast-iron cooking pots, and ceramics and glass indicating a U.S. origin. This helped confirm the dating of the wreckage.

The team received a permit to recover numerous artifacts, which are currently undergoing analyses, conservation and treatment to provide verification that the wreckage is that of the *Two Brothers*. Additional scholarly research provided first-hand accounts from *Two Brothers* crew members, including an approximate location of where the ship grounded, which matched the location of the wreckage. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument maritime archaeologist Kelly Gleason, who led the on-site expeditions to include those onboard NOAA Ship *Hi'ialakai*, stated, "all evidence points to this site as that of the *Two Brothers* accident. Shipwreck sites like this are important in helping tell the stories of the early days of sailing, to include whaling and maritime activities both in the Pacific and around the world."

"Discoveries like the *Two Brothers* serve an important role in connecting geographically separated regions and communities (the Pacific and the East Coast), the past to the present, and provide context and human elements for better understanding of human decisions that have altered the planet," said James Delgado, the Director of the Maritime Heritage Program for NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

Papahānaumokuākea is cooperatively managed to ensure ecological integrity and achieve strong, long-term protection and perpetuation of Northwestern Hawaiian Island ecosystems, Native Hawaiian culture, and heritage resources for current and future generations. Three co-trustees - the Department of Commerce, Department of the Interior, and State of Hawai'i - joined by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, protect this special place. Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument was designated as the first mixed (natural and cultural) UNESCO World Heritage Site in the United States in July 2010.

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