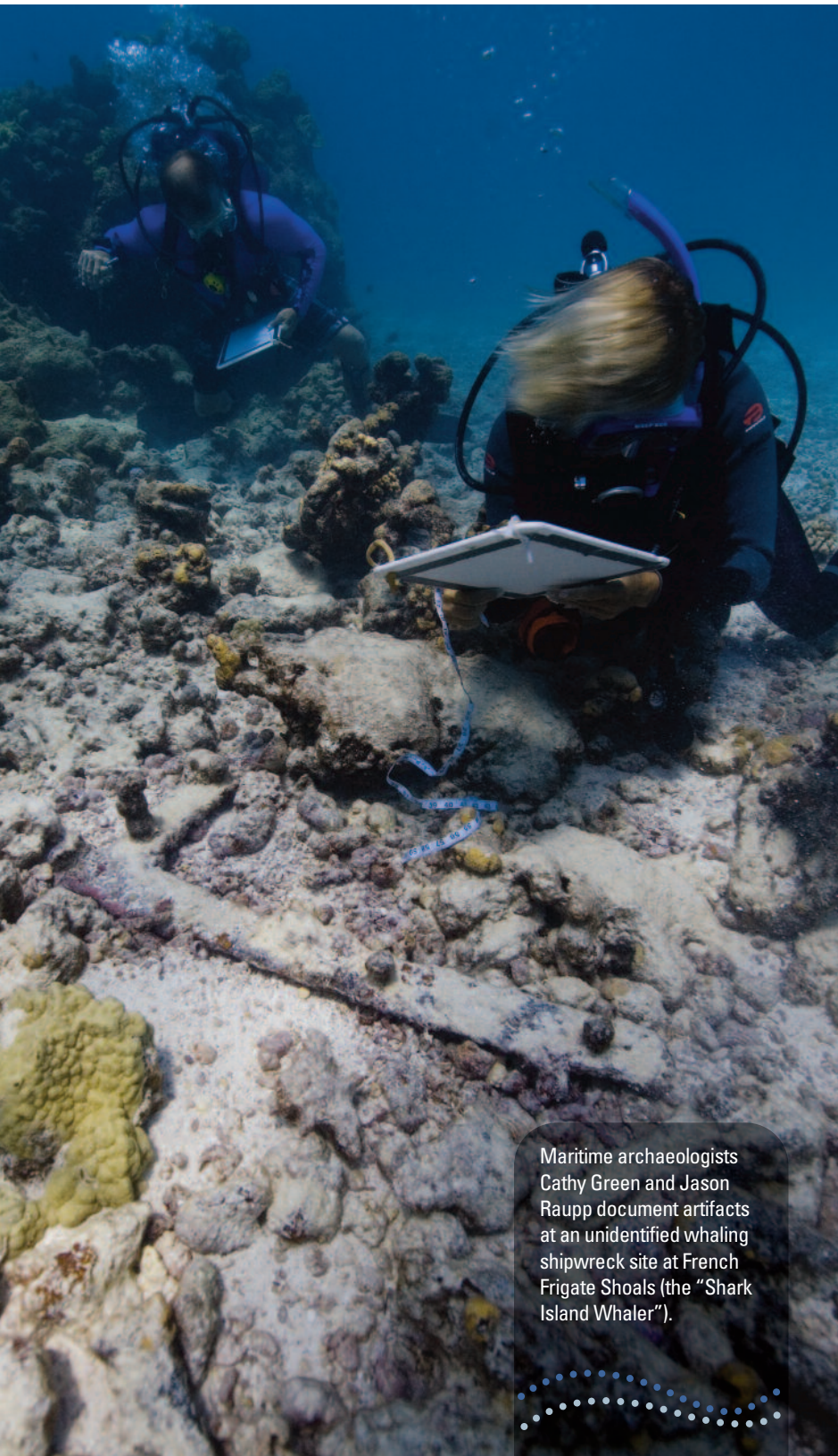


LOST & FOUND

In Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument: The Possible Wreck Site of the Nantucket Whaleship *Two Brothers*

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One of four large trypots discovered at an unidentified whaling shipwreck site at French Frigate Shoals in the NWHI (the “Shark Island Whaler”).



Maritime archaeologists Cathy Green and Jason Raupp document artifacts at an unidentified whaling shipwreck site at French Frigate Shoals (the “Shark Island Whaler”).



MANY ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE FATE . . .

of the Nantucket whaleship *Essex*, stove by a whale in the Pacific Ocean and well known as the inspiration for Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. After the tragedy of the *Essex*, Captain George Pollard Jr. and other survivors endured a journey of more than ninety days in small boats that resulted in sickness; starvation; and, ultimately, cannibalism. However, that dramatic experience was not the final chapter in Pollard’s career as a whaling captain.

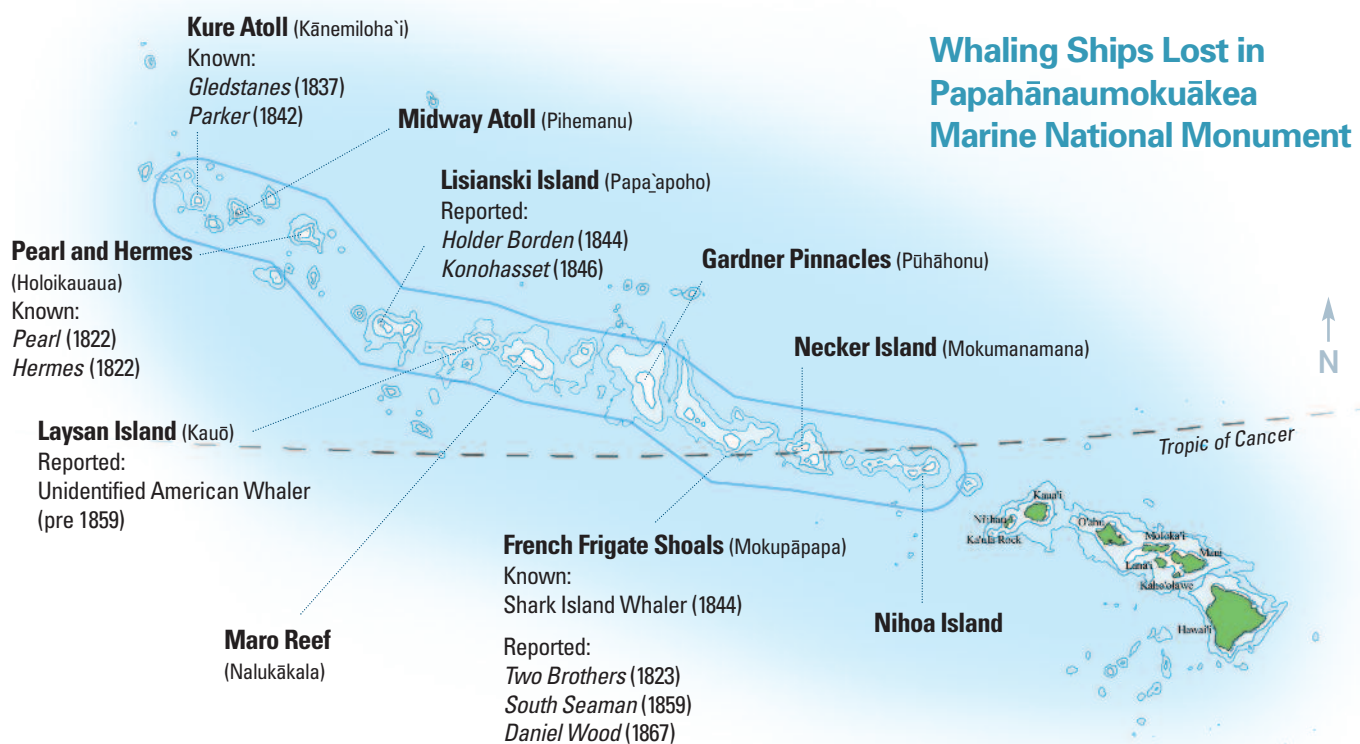
After his return to Nantucket, Pollard was entrusted with command of the whaleship *Two Brothers*, a vessel smaller than the *Essex* at 217 tons. The *Two Brothers* set sail for the Pacific, leaving Nantucket on November 26, 1821. She made her way around Cape Horn, up the west coast of South America, and headed for newly discovered whaling grounds in the Pacific. Sailing in consort with the whaleship *Martha*, they encountered stormy weather in the vicinity of French Frigate Shoals in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands [NWHI]. Not long afterwards, the ship struck a reef and was surrounded by breakers. Stunned by the disaster and by his recurrent misfortune, Captain Pollard was reluctant to abandon the ship. The crew pleaded with their captain to get into the small boats, to which they clung for survival throughout the night. When they awoke, the crew found the *Martha* anchored in the lee of a fifty-foot-tall rock (now called La Perouse Pinnacle). The *Martha* rescued the entire crew of *Two Brothers* and headed back to Oahu.

Captain Pollard’s career as a whaling captain was over, but the story of the *Two Brothers* remains on the seafloor at French Frigate Shoals within Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument [PNMN]. The story of this shipwreck, and the possibility of discovering its remains, connects the small island of Nantucket with one of the largest protected marine areas in the world.

Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument lies beyond the main eight populated islands of Hawaii. The low-lying atolls of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) contain years of seafaring history and the stories of over a hundred and twenty

PHOTO: TANE CASSERLE/EMDNA

Whaling Ships Lost in Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument



shipwrecked vessels and sunken aircraft. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) and PMNM Maritime Heritage Programs are committed to preserving these resources, and to date maritime archaeologists have documented many vessel and aircraft wreck sites in these remote islands and atolls. Efforts to fully document these sites are ongoing, along with work to interpret and share these virtually inaccessible time capsules with the public.

The Northwestern Hawaiian Islands are geographically and historically remarkable. On June 15, 2006, President George W. Bush established the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. Management of its resources includes the natural, cultural, and maritime-heritage resources of this remote and dramatic place. The surrounding waters contain a large percentage of all coral reefs found under United States' jurisdiction and support more than seven thousand marine species, of which one quarter are unique to the Hawaiian Islands chain. In addition, the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands have been an area of continuous maritime activity for hundreds of years. The legacy of seafaring can be seen in the record of over sixty known ship losses and over sixty-seven known aircraft crashes in these remote atolls. Vessel activities included exploration, merchant shipping, fishing, guano mining, military use, wrecking, and salvage. As a result of these activities, the wrecks of fishing vessels, copra traders, Japanese sampans, trans-Pacific colliers and bulk carriers, as well as U.S. and Japanese Naval vessels and aircraft are known to have occurred. Whaling activities in the Pacific in the early- to mid-1800s also form an important part of the seafaring legacy of the NWHI, and the material remains of this era can be seen on the Monument's seafloor.

This string of tiny islands, atolls, shoals, and banks possess the remains of at least ten whaling vessels reported lost in the most remote archipelago on earth. In the first half of the nineteenth century, global 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. Hawaii won its place on whalers' charts soon after the British ships *Balaena* and *Equator* harpooned the first whale off the coast of Maui in 1819. American and British whalers first encountered the low and uncharted atolls of the NWHI on their passages westward from the ports of Honolulu and Lahaina to the newly discovered Japan Grounds in 1820.

Whalers played an important role in early exploration of the Pacific. Midway Atoll was originally sighted by Captain Daggett of the New Bedford whaler *Oscar* in 1839; Laysan was reportedly discovered by the American whaleship *Lyra* prior to 1828; and Gardner Pinnacles was named by Captain Allen of the Nantucket whaler *Maro* in 1820, the same year the ship came across Maro Reef. Sometimes shipwrecks even played a role in giving the islands their western names. One example is Pearl and Hermes Atoll, which was named for the wrecks of the British whalers *Pearl* and *Hermes*, lost in 1822.

The opening of the Japan Grounds sent many whaling ships through the low-lying atolls of the NWHI. Over the decades, ten whalers were reported lost in the area and, to date, five of the wrecks have been located and investigated by NOAA and PMNM maritime archaeologists. Sites of whaling shipwrecks from the early nineteenth century are quite rare, and those in PMNM provide a unique glimpse into our maritime past.

The annual maritime archaeological surveys conducted in the NWHI focus on the exploration and discovery of new maritime-heritage sites and the documentation and interpretation of known sites. Exploration for new shipwreck sites in the NWHI involves a combination of archival research and field work that includes diver surveys using SCUBA and tow-boarding methods (when a snorkeler is drawn behind a boat to maximize



Maritime archaeologist Kelly Gleason measures a grinding wheel at the site of an unidentified whaling shipwreck at French Frigate Shoals (the "Shark Island Whaler").

PHOTO: DERRICK SMITH/NOAA



THE FIRST OF THESE DISCOVERIES WAS MADE AT KURE ATOLL, WHEN, FOLLOWING TWO DAYS OF DIVER SURVEYS, TUCKED IN CLOSE ALONG THE FORE REEF, THE NOAA DIVE TEAM IDENTIFIED A PILE OF IRON BALLAST AND CHAIN.

coverage of the survey area). In 2008, the maritime-heritage team focused its work on diver surveys in areas of potential loss of the British whaleship *Gledstanes*, lost in 1837 at Kure Atoll, and at a historic anchorage at French Frigate Shoals. In previous years, the Monument's maritime-heritage program documented the whaling shipwrecks *Pearl* and *Hermes*, two British whalers lost in 1822 when they encountered the uncharted atoll that now bears their names, and the New Bedford whaler *Parker*, lost during a fierce storm at Kure Atoll on September 24, 1842. During the 2008 expedition, the team met with exciting success at both survey areas with the discovery of two new whaling shipwreck sites.

THE FIRST OF THESE DISCOVERIES was made at Kure Atoll, when, following two days of diver surveys, tucked in close along the fore reef, the NOAA dive team identified a pile of iron ballast and chain. The ballast led a trail into the dramatic topography of the reef where more artifacts were found scattered, including four large anchors, iron ballast, cannon, and the remains of a trypot. The team is confident that the remains are those of the British whaler *Gledstanes*, which wrecked in heavy seas on the reef at Kure Atoll in 1837. Investigation of the story of the *Gledstanes* and her survivors is under way and, though currently limited, adds to the important legacy of shipwreck survival stories at Kure Atoll. After the loss of their ship, the crew launched the ship's small boats and made for the closest dry land, which was Ocean Island on the other side of the atoll. In a short time, the ship broke apart in the heavy surf, but the crew salvaged what it could from their destroyed ship and set about fashioning a thirty-eight-foot vessel that they named *Deliverance*. Like so many other sites in the Monument, the *Gledstanes* site has truly become part of the environment over the last 170 years. Some heavy metal artifacts (such as the cannon) have been weathered and worn to the point that their features are difficult to distinguish. The trypot is also buried deeply in the sand, almost as if it has been consumed by the reef itself.

Following the exciting discovery of the *Gledstanes*, the maritime archaeology team continued its work at French Frigate Shoals. Again, the team began to explore for new shipwreck sites using tow-board surveys, this time in an area near a historic anchorage. Within minutes of the first tow, in approximately fifteen feet of water, the divers spotted a large anchor, the age and size of which led them to believe that it had not been used as a mooring in an anchorage. After further snorkeling in the area, the team came across the first clue that this site might be more than a lone anchor: a trypot set into a hole in the reef top. This discovery initiated a larger survey of the area, and soon the team found two more trypots, another large anchor, and hundreds of bricks scattered in pockets of the reef. As the

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team explored further along the shallows, they discovered hawsepipes and the remains of standing rigging.

The discovery at French Frigate Shoals is certainly intriguing; however, the identity of this unexpected find remains a mystery. What ship could this be trapped on the sea floor beneath the waves at French Frigate Shoals for so long? The trypots and bricks clearly indicated a whaler, and features of both anchors point toward an early-nineteenth-century date. Only three whaling ships, all American vessels, have been reported lost at French Frigate Shoals: the *South Seaman*, wrecked in 1859; the *Daniel Wood*, wrecked in 1867; and the *Two Brothers*, the Nantucket whaler wrecked in 1823 and described earlier through her connection to the ill-fated career of Captain George Pollard Jr.

In the summer of 2008, the NOAA maritime archaeology team collected a considerable amount of information at the mystery shipwreck site, including measurements, feature distribution, and the location of artifacts—all clues that will help them determine the identity of this ship and how it came to its end. In 2009, the team returned to the unidentified whaling shipwreck site at French Frigate Shoals (now named the Shark Island Whaler for the sandy island nearby) in order to conduct an ecological survey. At that time, the team came across an exciting new portion of the wreck site. In addition to the discovery of a fourth trypot, three blubber hooks, a grinding wheel, and a kedge anchor, the team found four small cast-iron pots that resemble small trypots. Existing accounting records in Nantucket describe the sale of this type of cast-iron pot for use on whaleships. The team also came across what appears to be the tip of a whaling harpoon, another exciting discovery with the potential to yield information about the vessel's identity. Following the careful recovery, conservation, and treatment of this artifact in 2010, we may be able to date and potentially identify the mystery shipwreck at this site.

IT WAS OUR INTEREST in learning more about the fateful voyage of the Nantucket whaleship *Two Brothers* that ended in disaster at French Frigate Shoals in 1823 that inspired a visit to the NHA Research Library in March of 2010. The library contains the primary source material that will help maritime archaeologists discover whether the vessel at French Frigate Shoals is indeed the wreck of the *Two Brothers*.

Preliminary research conducted by maritime archaeologist Kelly Gleason of PMNM and Deirdre O'Regan of *Sea History Magazine* in the NHA's manuscript collection in March of 2010 disclosed firsthand accounts of the *Two Brothers* wreck. Crewmembers Eben Gardner and Thomas Nickerson recounted the events that occurred the night of February 11, 1823, in the remote atolls of the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands when foul weather cast the vessel on rocks in the vicinity of a few small islands. A true copy of Gardner's account included an approximate location of where the *Two Brothers* was lost, which may be helpful in comparing it to where the Shark Island Whaler rests.

In May of 2010, maritime archaeologists returned to the site of the Shark Island Whaler. The team has the permits to recover the artifact that appears to be a whaling harpoon, which will be sent to a professional conservator who will conduct analyses, conservation, and treatment in hopes of using the object to help identify the shipwreck. It is known that blacksmiths would often stamp their initials and the initials of the ship's name on the harpoon. Although it is difficult to anticipate the effects of over a hundred years on the seafloor on an iron artifact, the potential to identify this shipwreck site, as well as share this remote and inaccessible site with the public at the Monument's Mokupapapa Discovery Center in Hilo, Hawaii, add to the importance of the work that will have taken place in the summer of 2010. Important partnerships and connections developed with the Nantucket Historical Association will help to continue to build the ties between whaling in Hawaii and the community of Nantucket in the early 1800s.

Whatever the identity of the Shark Island Whaler turns out to be, it will add to the underwater museum of whaling history that rests on the seafloor of Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. These whaling ships are the material remains of a time when America possessed over seven hundred whaling vessels, and over one-fifth of the U. S. whaling fleet may have been composed of Pacific Islanders. Dozens of vessels stopped in Honolulu, and, for better or worse, transformed the islands. Many of these vessels would travel up to four years and around the world to get to whaling grounds in distant places. The whaling shipwreck sites in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands help us to tell this part of Hawaiian and Pacific history, and remind us that this remote part of the United States is connected with small communities in New England halfway around the world.

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References and footnotes are on file and available upon request.