

## Preserving the Past Under Water

The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) oversees the exploration and development of the Nation's offshore resources. It seeks to appropriately balance economic development, energy independence, and environmental protection through oil and gas leases, renewable energy development, environmental reviews, and studies. There are many laws passed by Congress that BOEM must follow to ensure this is done in a way that is safe for people and protects the environment. One of these laws is the National Historic Preservation Act, which says that Government agencies, like BOEM, must take steps to protect places that are important in American history. In the Federal waters of the United States, most of these sites are historic shipwrecks.

## Protecting Historic Shipwrecks

Shipwrecks are like time capsules, preserving a record of what life was like in the past. People who study historic shipwrecks are called marine archaeologists. Marine archaeologists at BOEM work with other archaeologists and historians to determine where shipwrecks are likely to be found by studying historic documents and maps. Unfortunately, historic records rarely give a very precise location of an old shipwreck. As a result, BOEM requires the oil and gas industry to survey the seafloor to detect potential shipwrecks. Oil and gas companies are required to avoid impacting potential shipwrecks before they can drill wells or lay pipelines.

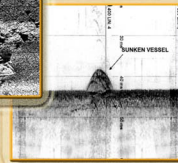
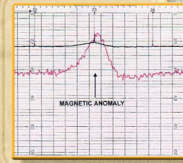
# Historic Shipwrecks of the Gulf of Mexico

### Colonial Shipwrecks



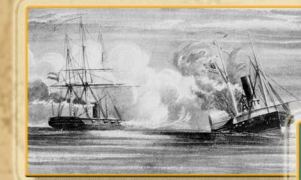
The Spanish explorer Alvarez de Pineda was the first European to sail along what is now the coast of the northern Gulf of Mexico in 1519. Spanish treasure ships regularly sailed through the Gulf transporting gold and silver from Mexico back to Spain. Three of these ships from the 1534 fleet, *Santa Maria de Yciar*, *Espiritu Santo*, and *San Esteban*, wrecked on Padre Island off South Texas. By the end of the 1600s French explorers and colonists were active in the area that is now Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. When the Spanish regained control of Louisiana in 1762, Spanish naval and merchant traffic became more active along the Gulf Coast. Several shipwrecks from this period are documented in BOEM's Shipwreck Database and most have not yet been found.

### Finding Shipwrecks



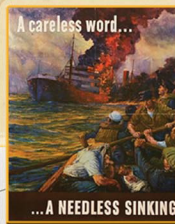
BOEM requires oil and gas companies to conduct surveys before an area can be developed to avoid harming potential shipwrecks. The companies use sophisticated electronic instruments towed from a ship to tell them what is buried in the seafloor. These instruments include a magnetometer that detects iron (like cannons or anchors), a sidescan sonar that uses sound waves to make a picture of the seafloor, and a subbottom profiler that shows the layers in the soil beneath the seafloor. Other instruments used for deepwater surveys include an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) and a remotely operated vehicle (ROV). The data collected by these instruments are studied by marine archaeologists looking for clues that a shipwreck might lie hidden under the sea.

### Civil War Shipwrecks



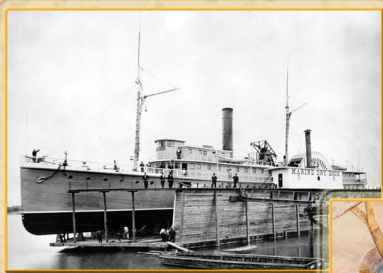
The only U.S. warship sunk in the Gulf of Mexico by the Confederacy during the Civil War was the U.S.S. *Hatteras*. Assigned to the Gulf Blockading Squadron in January 1862, the U.S.S. *Hatteras* captured seven Confederate blockade runners before she was sunk by the C.S.S. *Alabama* on January 11, 1863, off the coast of Texas. Today the vessel rests in 58 feet of water about 20 miles from Galveston. Her 210-foot long iron hull is completely buried under about 3 feet of sand. Only the remains of her 500-horsepower walkingbeam steam engine and her two iron paddlewheels remain exposed above the seafloor.

### World War II Shipwrecks



During the years 1942 and 1943, a fleet of over 20 German submarines, known as U-boats, cruised the Gulf seeking to stop the vital flow of oil carried by tankers from ports in Texas and Louisiana. They succeeded in sending 56 vessels to the bottom. As a result of remote-sensing surveys required of the oil and gas industry by BOEM, several U-boat casualties, such as the passenger ship *Robert E. Lee*, have been discovered on the seafloor. In addition, the only German U-boat lost in the Gulf during the war, *U-166*, was discovered in 5,000 feet of water during a pipeline survey.

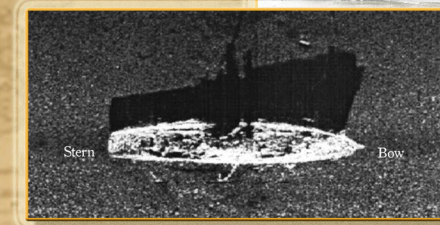
### 19th-Century Shipwrecks



The 19th century saw the change in shipbuilding technology from the Age of Sail to the Age of Steam. Examples of both types of shipwrecks have been discovered in the Gulf of Mexico through oil company surveys.

Several examples of early 19th-century, wooden-hulled sailing ships have been found in the Gulf. Two of these were armed with cannon during a turbulent period of the Gulf's history. Steamships were introduced in the Gulf in the 1830s. The wrecks of two steamships, *New York* (1846) and *Josephine* (1881), have been studied by marine archaeologists from BOEM.

### Early 20th-Century Shipwrecks



For thousands of years ships had been built of wood and powered by sails. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, hulls of wood began to be replaced by hulls of iron and steel, and sails gradually gave way to steam. The steam yacht *Anona*, built in 1904 for a wealthy Detroit industrialist, represented the height of the shipbuilder's art for her time and even boasted electric lights. The wreck of *Anona* lies in over 4,000 feet of water off the coast of Mississippi.



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management  
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