

STUDY TITLE: Archaeological Data Recovery on an Historic Shipwreck in the Mississippi Canyon Area, Gulf of Mexico

REPORT TITLE: Mica Shipwreck Project Report: Deepwater Archaeological Investigation of a 19th Century Shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico

CONTRACT NUMBER: 1435-01-01-CA-31178

SPONSORING OCS REGION: Gulf of Mexico

APPLICABLE PLANNING AREA: Central Gulf of Mexico

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COST: \$250,000

CUMULATIVE PROJECT COST: \$250,000

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KEY WORDS: Gulf of Mexico; marine archaeology; remote-sensing; shipwreck; deepwater; copperclad; wooden-hull

BACKGROUND: On February 16, 2001, the Minerals Management Service (MMS) Gulf of Mexico Region (GOMR) was notified that permitted construction of an 8-inch right-of-way pipeline had impacted a wooden-hulled shipwreck in Federal waters in the Mississippi Canyon Area. Water depth in this area is over 2,500 feet deep. The MMS is responsible for preservation of archaeological properties under agency jurisdiction and control and/or subject to effect by agency actions under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA, 16 U.S.C. 470, Section 110) and Executive Order 11593. The MMS regulation 30 CFR 250.1009(c)(4) requires immediate notification of the Regional Director in the event of the unanticipated discovery of an archaeological resource.

Archaeologists from the MMS GOMR conducted a site inspection on February 23, 2001, to evaluate the vessel for its potential eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. Based on their preliminary assessment, the vessel was estimated to be approximately 200 years old and is considered to be potentially eligible for listing to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D for its potential to yield

information important in history (36 CFR 60.4). Notification of the discovery was made to the Louisiana State Archaeologist and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

Though the vessel has been subject to deterioration since its loss, the placement and continued presence of the pipeline across the approximate center of the vessel is likely to accelerate its deterioration. Various mitigation options such as lifting and moving the pipeline or bridging the pipeline over the wreck were discussed but eliminated because of the potential for causing further damage to the site. As a result, the MMS GOMR, in consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) and the Louisiana State Archaeologist, elected to undertake a data recovery effort in an attempt to obtain as much information from the vessel as practical.

OBJECTIVES: The objectives of this study are as follows: 1) to determine the extent and limits of the site; 2) to obtain a sample of diagnostic artifacts in order to identify the temporal period of the shipwreck and its mission at the time of its loss; 3) to determine the type of ship, and if possible, its country of origin, and the reason for its loss; and 4) to understand the relationship of the vessel's construction to its function.

DESCRIPTION: The Mica Shipwreck project was carried out over several field seasons. An initial scientific visit to the site confirmed its scientific and historic value. Subsequent visits and fieldwork conducted resulted in a data recovery effort that was undertaken by researchers from Texas A&M and archaeologists from the MMS GOMR, with the assistance of the U.S. Navy's research submarine, NR1, and her support vessel, *Carolyn Chouest*. Finite element analysis of copper sheathing, recovered from the wreck in 2001, was completed, and analysis of sheathing from three other contemporary shipwrecks has also been conducted, for comparative analysis.

SIGNIFICANT CONCLUSIONS: After four scientific visits to the Mica Shipwreck Site, and an analysis of all the data collected during these expeditions certain conclusions can be reached: (1) the ship was built and lost sometime during the first half of the 19th century; (2) the ship was rigged as a two-masted schooner; and (3) the ship was built or repaired in a shipyard on the northeastern coast of North America.

STUDY RESULTS: The extreme depth of this wreck precluded the use of more traditional data recovery methods. Options for research on a vessel at this depth are restricted to manned submarines (or submersibles) and remotely operated vehicles (ROVs). While there are benefits and limitations with each of the two options available, a controlled data recovery effort was made to answer certain questions about the vessel before further damage could occur.

The Mica Shipwreck site has great archaeological potential. Not only because it is a contained site which would certainly reveal considerable information if the sediment inside the hull could be removed, but also, because the state of preservation of the hull remains is excellent. Developing technology that makes archaeological work at depth more cost efficient and less technologically challenging will certainly provide us with chances to study these deep and well-preserved sites with greater efficiency in the future.

STUDY PRODUCTS: The Mica Shipwreck: Deepwater Nautical Archaeology in the Gulf of Mexico. 2004. Toby N. Jones. M.A. Thesis, Texas A&M University, TX. 203 pp.

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The Investigation and Excavation of a Deepwater Shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico - Toby N. Jones

Deepwater Maritime Sites: A New Challenge for Archaeology Underwater, from Proceedings: Twenty-first Annual Gulf of Mexico Information Transfer Meeting, January 2002. Dr. Richard J. Anuskiewicz and Mr. David A. Ball, Co-chairs

DISCOVERY AND MANAGEMENT OF A DEEPWATER HISTORIC

SHIPWRECK IN THE GULF OF MEXICO -- Dr. Richard J. Anuskiewicz, Mr. David A. Ball, and Dr. Jack B. Irion, Minerals Management Service Gulf of Mexico OCS Region

INA Quarterly

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The "Mica" Shipwreck Excavation: Deep-water Archaeology in the Gulf of Mexico - Brett A. Phaneuf

Underwater Magazine

May/June 2002

The "Mica" Shipwreck - Brett A. Phaneuf, Jack Irion, and Carolina Asirifi

Affiliated WWW sites:

Deepwater Shipwrecks:

<http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/regulate/environ/archaeological/deepwater.html>

Study 31178 Press Release: **MMS Contracts with Texas A&M University to Investigate Deepwater Shipwreck Discovered by ExxonMobil**

<http://www.gomr.mms.gov/homepg/whatsnew/newsreal/011003.html>

Deepwater Maritime Sites: A New Challenge for Archaeology Underwater, from Proceedings: Twenty-first Annual Gulf of Mexico Information Transfer Meeting, January 2002. Dr. Richard J. Anuskiewicz and Mr. David A. Ball, Co-chairs

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