

Introduction

The Norwegians have a long and proud tradition of seafaring, beginning with the Vikings and continuing through today. The repeal of the British Navigation Acts in 1849 opened world markets and stimulated shipping nations such as Norway. Relative calm and peace in Europe led to a construction boom and need for timber in the 1870s. Pensacola's timber industry responded and quickly expanded to meet Europe's need. Norwegian ships also responded and began to dominate Pensacola's port. Eventually a large Norwegian community was established in an already cosmopolitan Pensacola. It was lumber and Norway's dominance in that trade that drew the Norwegian Ship *Catharine* to Pensacola. *Catharine*, a typical nineteenth-century Canadian built merchant sailor, served most of her career in the British Merchant Marine, trading throughout the world. However, the history of *Catharine* must be told in a broader perspective. *Catharine* and thousands of ships like her aided in Norway's rise in the shipping world and witnessed Pensacola flourish into a thriving cosmopolitan city.

Catharine was christened as *Eliza* in 1870. Built in New Brunswick, Canada, *Eliza* was quickly sold to British owners and renamed *Carnarvonshire*. The ship served over twenty years in the British Merchant Marine and was eventually sold to Norwegian owners and renamed *Catharine*. Drawn to Pensacola by its growing lumber industry, *Catharine* attempted to make the pass in a heavy storm and grounded on August 7, 1894. The ship was declared a total loss and eventually broke up in the heavy surf, ending its days as a merchant sailor.

In 1998, the University of West Florida Archaeology Institute (UWF) was contracted by Gulf Islands National Seashore to investigate the site of what was believed to be *Catharine*. Uncovered by hurricanes Erin and Opal in 1995 and subsequent harsh winter storms in 1996 and 1997, major portions of the site were laid vulnerable to the environment and humans alike. Alerted by conscientious sport

divers to potential looting activities, the National Park Service requested that UWF document the vessel and her associated debris field archaeologically and carry out conservation treatments on a bronze compass binnacle, bronze porthole, several bronze spikes, two glass deck crystals, a brass nameplate, and an encrusted unidentified bronze object that had already been raised and turned over to the Park Service. The 1998 *Catharine* project had three primary goals: (1) to map and record the visible hull timbers and associated debris field; (2) to provide conservation treatments to the artifacts that had been removed from the site; and (3) to provide cultural resource management recommendations for the site (Bratten et al., 1998:3). Fieldwork commenced on June 29, 1998 and continued through August 7, 1998. Following Hurricane Georges, five additional days (October 25–29, 1998) were spent on site evaluating storm damage and recording newly exposed timbers. The vessel was also reinspected and newly exposed features were documented during preliminary diver training for the 1999 University of West Florida Nautical Archaeology Field Methods course.

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