ANTH318
Nautical Archaeology of the Americas

Class 14

Sea Venture, 1609

Left Plymouth, England, on June 7 1609 with six other ships and two pinnaces bound for Jamestown. The fleet carried 600 new settlers under the command of Sir George Somers. Caught by a hurricane, the Sea Venture was separated from the fleet and ran ashore on the north coast of Bermuda.

All the 150 passengers and crew reached the shore alive. During the next nine months they built two small vessels with whatever they could rescue from the wreck, and sailed to Jamestown.

The early Bermuda settlers salvaged what was left from the vessel between 1619 and 1622, and soon it would be forgotten.

The wreck was found by sport divers in 1958 and not extensively salvaged by treasure hunters because there was very few left from the ship and its original cargo.

In 1978 the Bermuda Maritime Museum Association launched an archaeological excavation campaign

Hull remains
The bottom of a hull was found, confirming the large size of this vessels, reported to be around "300 tunnes."

Armament
Only one gun was found, in a stored condition. When the tompion was removed a cannon ball rolled out. In total 77 cannon shot were found, together with thousands of shot for small arms.

Artifacts
Several types of ceramics and cooking pots were found, sometimes matching the types found on the excavations of Jamestown.

Together with Devon coarse ceramics, Spanish jars, salt-glazed stoneware from Germany, and fine China shards were also found on site.

Tyjger, 1613

In 1613, soon after the establishment of a Dutch colony in lower Manhattan (in 1610) Captain Adrien Block lost his vessel Tyjger to fire during preparations to set sail to Spain.
He spent the winter building another vessel, the *Onrust*, with the help of the Indians, and made it to Holland next Spring.

In 1916 the remains of a charred vessel were found by the Interborough Rapid Transit Company while excavating subway tunnels in south Manhattan. Both the wood (dated by C14 to the early 17th century) and the artifacts suggest that this could be the *Tyjger*.

**Hull remains**

The hull remains were removed to the City of New York Museum, and the artifacts are in unknown part.

**Artifacts**

On the wreck were found a broad headed axe, trade beads, clay pipes, chain, a cannon ball, and blue and white porcelain shards.

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**Mayflower, 1620**

Around 180 tons’ burden, the Mayflower was not new when it sailed to Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1620.

The earliest documents referring the *Mayflower* are from 1609, when it was a merchant ship traveling in the Baltic routes, mostly transporting lumber, fish, and tar. Later it is mentioned in the Mediterranean trade, probably transporting wines and spices.

In March 1621, after leaving the pilgrims in the New World, the *Mayflower* set sail for England, arriving in May.

During the next year the *Mayflower* engaged in a few more trading voyages, to Spain, Ireland, and France. But in 1622 its captain, Christopher Jones, died and the ship was left abandoned until 1624, when a probate inventory refers it as a derelict worthing about £128, roughly 1/5 of its original value.

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**Sparrow Hawk, 1626**

The *Sparrow Hawk* is thought to have been a small ketch lost at Cape Cod in 1626 while carrying 40 people to Plymouth.

The remains of an old and small vessel were uncovered by a storm in 1863 and were thought to be those of the *Sparrow Hawk*. No artifacts were found on or near this wreck, the arguments that this was a ketch rigged vessel are not convincing, and no other clue allows us to confirm this supposed identification.

**Hull remains**

The hull remains were removed to the 17th-Century Room of the Pilgrim Hall, in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

They consist of the bottom and lower sternpost of an old vessel, probably similar in size and construction to the pinnaces and other small ocean going craft of the colonial period.
Belle, 1686

The Belle was lost by the Chevalier de la Salle at Matagorda Bay, during a failed attempt to establish a French colony at the mouth of the Mississippi river.

The Belle was found by the Texas Historical Commission in July 1995.

To overcome the problems created by the strong currents and low visibility a cofferdam was built around the wreck site and the water drained out.

The excavation was carried out by the Texas Antiquities Committee under the best archaeological criteria.

Hull remains

The hull was disassembled, each timber carefully recorded, cleaned, and reassembled before conservation treatment started.

A vat was built for the conservation treatment of the reassembled remains of the Belle.

The drawings of each timber were immensely useful in the reconstruction of the hull.

Basing his reasoning on a series of carpenter’s marks found on some of the timbers NAP student Taras Pevni developed a theoretical model that allowed the full reconstruction of the Belle’s hull.

At the same time Glenn Grieco, another NAP student built two models of the Belle.

The first is now in exhibition at the Texas Maritime Museum in Rockport.

The second is about to be completed and will stay at Texas A&M University.

These models are actually slightly different, and allowed to experiment different solutions in the design of the upper works, the rigging, and the disposition of the armament.

We must keep in mind that the archaeological evidence only extends to the beginning of the 3rd futtocks, and there are no plans of this vessel.

The historical accounts contain descriptions that are, at times, contradictory.

Very little is known about its rigging.

The discovery of the Belle naturally stirred the attention of the French scholars, and François Boudriot, an excellent naval historian and editor has sponsored the construction of another model of the Belle, based in a set of precious documents pertaining to this ship that were retrieved from French archives.

Built slightly later, the Texas A&M models were based not only on these documents, but also on the archaeological information and stand as the best proposed reconstructions of this ship.

Models can be very insightful tools in our attempts to understand the past. On its voyage to the New World the Belle carried 43 persons between passengers and crew...
**Armament**
The Belle carried 6 four-pounder iron cannons, 8 swivel guns, and 4 bronze guns stored in the hold (although only 3 were in fact there).

Many pole arms (halberds, spontoons, and partisans).

**Artifacts**
The conservation of the more than 1,000,000 artifacts was entrusted to Texas A&M University, and carried out by a team of the Nautical Archaeology Program (NAP).

**Human remains**
A skeleton was found in the hold.

**Ronson Ship, early 18th Century**
This early-18th century ship was found on Water Street, several blocks away from the 20th century waterfront.

It was a three-masted ocean trader about 30.5 m long, 8 m in beam, at least 200 tons burden.

Found by the contractor during the excavation for the construction of an office building, the developer – after whom the ship was named – decided to postpone the construction to allow an archaeological excavation of the site.

The Ronson Ship was an old hull, a condemned vessel that was positioned on the bank of the East River and filled with rubble to act as a crib for a wharf or an expansion of the waterfront.

Its excavation revealed that the ship had been stripped of its rigging, gear, and decorations, before being filled with debris.

**Hull remains**
This was the hull of a sturdy early 18th century merchantman, double-framed, with a round bow almost solid with naval timbers.

Frames had been cut of oak timber, decks of pine.

Timbers were fastenings with treenails (hickory and juniper) and iron spikes and bolts.

The bow of the Ronson Ship was removed for conservation.

Its reconstruction revealed a typical 18th century bow assemblage, as it is described in the documents of that time, but showed many practical aspects of the construction which are never described on written sources.
Reader's Point Vessel, a Mid-18th Century Sloop

This vessel was found in 1992 by the INA at St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica, during one of the expeditions in search of Columbus lost ships Capitana and Santiago de Palos (forth voyage).

It was excavated in 1994.

Dating to the mid-18th century, this vessel proved to be an 18 m long abandoned sloop.

Hull remains

Its hull was built in the New World and showed a very interesting framing pattern.

Artifacts

In spite of being a derelict the Reader's Point vessel yielded over 700 artifacts ranging from kaolin pipes, bottles, a clothing iron, a bone comb, and several carpenter's tools.

Brown's Ferry Vessel, c. 1740

The Brown's Ferry vessel was found in 1971 near Georgetown, in the Black River.

Its hull was raised in 1976, studied by J. Richard Steffy in 1979 and preserved in PEG until 1990, when it was again studied by Fred Hocker.

This was a river boat designed for cargo, but capable of river and coastal navigation, a type of vessels sometimes called periauger.

After reconstruction it was thought to have measured 15.32 m long, 4.32 m in beam, and 1.22 of sheer height.

Hull remains

This is a very interesting vessel with a flat bottom, no keel, but the sides built frames first, following the traditional whole molding way of the Mediterranean shipbuilding world. It had five pre-designed frames.

Its planking was cut of pine and cypress trees. The frames and posts of live oak.

Artifacts

It was carrying 12,000 bricks when it sunk, a cargo that left only 25 cm of freeboard.

On the site were found a beer mug with the arms of George II (1727-1760), four millstones, two dozen bottles, three iron pots, a slipware cup, a straight razor and several smoking pipes.

Perhaps the most interesting artifact was a quadrant, a deep-sea navigating instrument that was certainly not needed on the kind of navigation this vessel could perform.
Clydesdale Plantation Vessel, 18th Century

Found near Savannah, Georgia, in a secondary channel of the Savannah River called the Back River, this was a fast sailing sloop intended for the short sea trade between Savannah, Charleston, and Georgetown.

Perhaps around 20 m long, it had been buried on the bank to build a peer, its bow cut along a straight line. The remains of a house were found in the back of this peer.

Hull remains

The floors alternated with half-frames, a pattern paralleled in another 18th-Century American wreck, the Boscawen of 1759, lost on Lake Champlain during the French and Indian Wars.

Its floors and futtocks were not fastened together.

Its keel, planking and ceiling were cut of yellow pine. The frames of live oak.

Artifacts

No artifacts were found on the site.


See: Additional texts in the Readings Volume.