

HOW TO FIND

Lofthus

The wreck of *Lofthus* is located in 15-20 feet of water, approximately 3/4 of a mile north of Boynton Inlet and 175 yards off-shore Manalapan at latitude 26° 33.776' N and longitude 80° 02.309' W. The site is marked as wreck #133 on NOAA Chart 11466. Wreckage rises as much as 6 feet off the sea floor depending on sand movement. To avoid anchor loss or damage to the shipwreck, please anchor in the sand. Remember to display a “divers down” flag when diving or snorkeling. A laminated underwater guide is available from local dive shops to orient divers on a self-guided tour of the preserve.

As with all other historical and archaeological sites on public uplands and submerged bottomlands, *Lofthus* is protected by Florida laws prohibiting unauthorized disturbance, excavation, or removal of artifacts. Please help keep the site intact for others.

“Take only photos and leave only bubbles.”



For more information call
850.245.6444
Or visit
museumsinthesea.com



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Division of Historical Resources
Bureau of Archaeological Research
500 South Bronough Street
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Lofthus State Underwater Archaeological Preserve

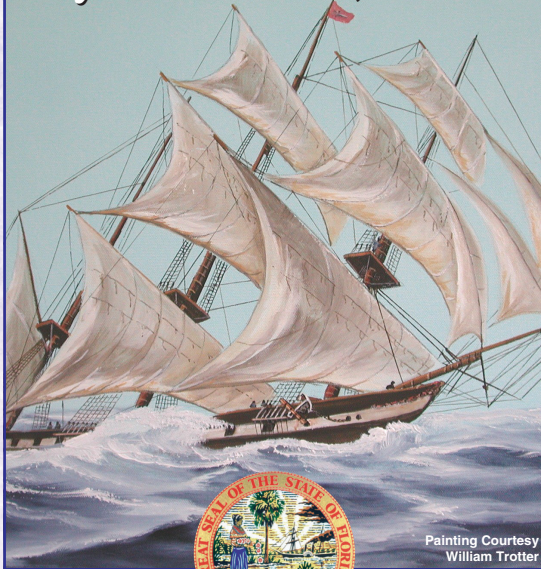
The remains of *Lofthus* are scattered over an 80 x 15 yard area with the vessel's bow to the northeast. Three main sections of wreckage protrude above the sandy bottom. Sand movement around the wrecksite is dramatic, and entire portions periodically cover and uncover due to wave action, currents, and storms, presenting a unique visual experience with every dive. Pieces of the barque lie at odd angles among sections of inverted decking,



evidence of the dynamite used to blast apart the ship to gain access to her valuable cargo of lumber. Many species of tropical and game fish now inhabit the twisted wreckage and spiny lobsters hide under deck plates. Anemones and sponges can be found inside sections of the iron masts, and sergeant-majors fiercely guard their homes among hull frames. Beware of scorpionfish that lie hidden on the rusty iron as you explore the shipwreck.



Lofthus
UNDERWATER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
PRESERVE
Boynton Beach, Florida



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Division of Historical Resources
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MARINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH
& CONSERVATION REPORTING



HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF
PALM BEACH COUNTY
FRIENDS OF LOFTHUS

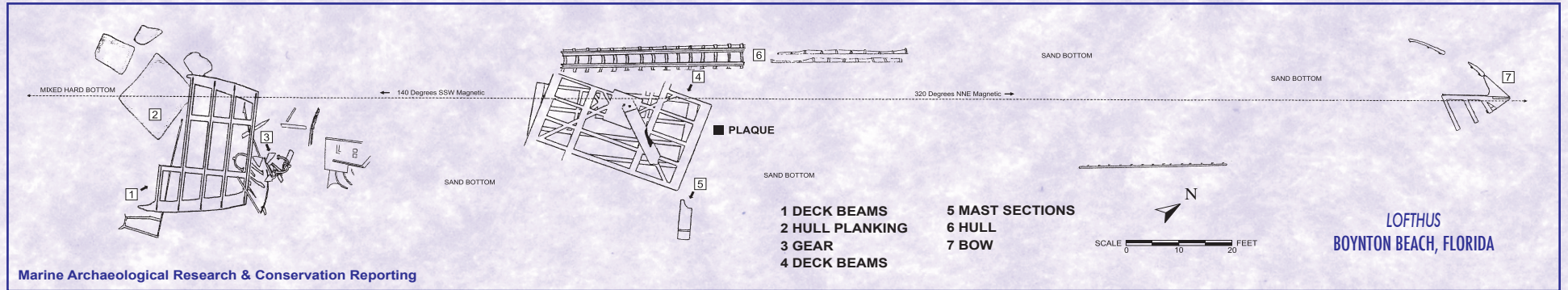
Lofthus

The Age of Iron Sailing Ships

In the mid-1800s, ship builders began to use metal materials in place of traditional wooden construction and many new sailing vessels were built of iron and, later, steel. The advantages of iron construction were touted by engineering firms that specialized in metalwork and often produced vessels without the aid of shipyards. These advantages included: strength combined with lightness, great capacity for cargo, safety, speed, durability, economy in repair, reduced construction and maintenance costs, and the need for fewer crew members. By the early 1850s, the cost of a new iron vessel was less than the cost of a comparable wooden vessel. Nevertheless, the wooden sailing vessel remained predominant until the development of the compound steam engine and its use in merchant shipping.

With the expansion of the global economy and improvements in shipping conditions – from the installation of lighthouses and navigational aids, to the wide-spread use of telegraphs to announce arrivals and to arrange the next shipment of goods – iron vessels began to be more widely used. Advances in ironworking technology and the increasing availability of cheaply manufactured iron enabled the development of iron rigging and deck machinery, including standing and running rigging, masts, yards, pumps, and winches.

In the 1870s, with iron cheap and easily produced and repair facilities available worldwide, iron ship construction finally surpassed wooden construction. In Britain, particularly, iron ship construction was a major business with few competi-



tors. The United States was focused more on rebuilding after the Civil War than shipbuilding, further contributing to Britain's dominance of the industry. Additionally, Britain was the leading exporter of coal to fuel steamships, so out-bound sailing vessels could count on a profitable cargo, returning with goods from all over the world. Between 1860 and 1890, the price of new iron sailing vessels in Britain fell by one-third, which in turn encouraged new investment in sailing tonnage and allowed British shipping to compete with the huge Canadian wooden shipbuilding industry. British shipyards churned out hundreds of iron and steel sailing vessels until the collapse of the market in 1897.

In that year, a resurgence of steam-powered shipping took place as a result of the need for transportation due to the outbreak of the Spanish-American and Boer Wars. Increasing insurance costs for sailing vessels and improvements in the compound steam engine caused the economic viability of sail-powered shipping to fall below that of steam shipping and large iron and steel sail-powered vessels ceased to be built in significant numbers. Those that survived generally were employed in carrying bulk cargoes, such as timber and lumber, grain, cotton, guano, and coal.

The Norwegian Connection

Norwegian shippers were major buyers and operators of old sailing vessels, both wood and metal. Norway lacked the capital, backing, and resources to build large vessels of its own, but the country did have an abundance of skilled maritime manpower to operate ships. Older vessels near the end of their working life could be purchased for a fraction of their building cost and then operated until they completely

wore out (or were wrecked), turning a tidy profit for the owner. Norwegian shipping companies focused on tramp shipping rather than passenger operations and their ships, including *Lofthus*, hauled bulk goods across the oceans of the world.

Vessel History

The vessel that wrecked off Manalapan was built at the T.R. Oswald shipyard in Sunderland, England, and was launched under the name *Cashmere* on 5 October 1868, in the heyday of metal sailing ships. The vessel's recorded dimensions were 222.8 feet in length, 36.7 feet in beam, a depth of hold of 22.7 feet, and 1,277 gross tons with two decks. The ship's hull was of riveted iron construction and it was rigged as a barque with three masts (the foremast and mainmast were square-rigged while the mizzenmast was fore-and-aft rigged). *Cashmere* was owned by the Liverpool Shipping Company and managed by H. Fernie & Sons. Used in the East Indian trade, the vessel had false gunports painted along her sides to deter Sumatran and Javanese pirates. In 1897, *Cashmere* was sold to a Norwegian named Henschien, renamed *Lofthus*, and transferred to the American trade.

On 4 February 1898, while en route from Pensacola to Buenos Aires with a cargo of lumber, *Lofthus* was wrecked on the east coast of Florida. The local sea-going tug *Three Friends* (which usually was engaged in running guns to Cuba) attempted to assist the stranded barque, but she was high on the beach and quickly being pounded to pieces by waves. The crew of sixteen men was saved but the vessel was a total loss. *Lofthus'* Captain Fromberg, traveling with his family, entertained local residents aboard his stranded ship and gave the ship's dog

and cat to one family.

After being stripped of all useable items, the wreck was sold along with 800,000 feet of lumber stowed in the hold for \$1,000. In September 1898, the hull, which was not nearly so valuable as the cargo, was dynamited so that the lumber could be salvaged. Interestingly, the barque *Oh Kim Soon* was wrecked in almost the same location one year earlier, causing confusion for many years as to which wreck was which until archival and archaeological investigation identified the wrecks.

In 2001, *Lofthus* was nominated to become Florida's eighth State Underwater Archaeological Preserve by the Marine Archaeological Council (MAC) of Broward County. In 2002, the Marine Archaeological Research & Conservation Reporting (MARC) team, volunteered to map the shipwreck and to perform historical research. Assisted by personnel from the Maritime Archaeological & Historical Society (MAHS), the MARC team recorded the wreck site and prepared a report of the vessel's history. The *Lofthus* Preserve was dedicated, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in 2003.



Courtesy Boynton Beach Historical Society