



## NEWS FROM NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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### SHIPWRECK IN NOAA'S STELLWAGEN BANK NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY ADDED TO NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, today announced that the wreck of the Steamship *Portland* has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Registry is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. The *Portland* rests on the sea bottom in the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary off the Massachusetts coast.

"Three years of historical and archaeological studies by sanctuary researchers and other technical specialists have culminated in this significant achievement," said Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Superintendent Craig MacDonald. "The *Portland* is the first shipwreck from the sanctuary to be included on the National Register of Historic Places."

The *Portland* qualified for listing on the National Register of Historic Places by meeting three criteria. First, the steamship was associated with events that made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. Second, the *Portland* embodied the distinctive characteristics of a type, period and/or method of construction. Third, its archaeological remains have yielded, or will likely yield, important historical information. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service, part of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

In compliance with President Bush's Preserve America Executive Order (E.O. 13287), NOAA is stepping up efforts to inventory, preserve and protect historic resources in the agency's care, from shipwrecks to historic buildings.

The *Portland* was also found to be significant to the history of New England and more specifically to the histories of Maine and Massachusetts. The archeological integrity of the *Portland* wreck contributed significantly to its listing. The steamship's remains are the best preserved of any New England "night boat" found to date. Further archaeological research is expected to yield information about New England night boat construction, the cause of the *Portland's* demise, and the passengers and crew who typically used steamships for passage along the coast.

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Launched in 1889, the *Portland* was one of the most palatial coastal steamships afloat as it traveled between Portland, Maine and Boston. Measuring over 280 feet long, the Maine-built wooden-hulled side paddle wheel steamship transported passengers and freight along the New England coast with a relatively uneventful record until its loss with all hands, an estimated 192 persons, in November 1898. The *Portland* became known as the "Titanic of New England" due to the scale of the tragedy and its impact on the region. The shipwreck also represents New England's greatest steamship disaster prior to 1900.

NOAA researchers confirmed the *Portland's* location within Stellwagen Bank sanctuary in 2002. Since then, sanctuary scientists and archaeologists have visited the wreck annually with underwater robots to monitor, study and document its condition. The location of the *Portland* within the sanctuary's boundaries provides protection unavailable in other federal waters off Massachusetts. Sanctuary regulations prohibit moving, removing or injuring, or any attempt to move, remove, or injure any submerged cultural or historical resources, including artifacts and pieces from shipwrecks. Anyone violating this regulation is subject to civil penalties.

Congress designated the Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary in 1992 as "an area of special national significance." Virtually the size of the state of Rhode Island, the sanctuary stretches between Cape Ann and Cape Cod in federal waters off of Massachusetts. The sanctuary is renowned as a major feeding area for marine mammals, particularly humpback whales, and supports an ecosystem of diverse wildlife.

The NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Program seeks to increase the public awareness of America's maritime heritage by conducting scientific research, monitoring, exploration and educational programs. Today, the sanctuary program manages 13 national marine sanctuaries and one coral reef ecosystem reserve that encompass more than 150,000 square miles of America's ocean and Great Lakes natural and cultural resources.

The NOAA Oceans and Coasts manages the NMSP and is dedicated to exploring, understanding, conserving and restoring the nation's coasts and oceans. The NOAA Oceans and Coasts balances environmental protection with economic prosperity in fulfilling its mission of promoting safe navigation, supporting coastal communities, sustaining coastal habitats and mitigating coastal hazards.

The Commerce Department's NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

National Ocean Service: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov>

National Marine Sanctuary Program: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary: <http://stellwagen.noaa.gov>