

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: BACK BAY OF BILOXI SHIPWRECK SITE  
other names/site number: 22JA542

**2. Location**

street & number: [redacted] X  
city or town: [redacted] vicinity X  
state: [redacted] code [redacted] county [redacted] code [redacted] zip code [redacted]

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_\_\_ nationally X statewide \_\_\_ locally. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth H. P. Paul MARCH 10, 1999  
Signature of certifying official Date

DEPUTY STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( \_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
✓ entered in the National Register,  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action  
Edson H. Beall 4/22/99

Name of Property

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property:**

PUBLIC/State

**Number of Resources within Property:**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

**Category of Property:**

SITE

Contributing

Noncontributing

buildings  
sites

1

objects  
Total

1

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:**

TRANSPORTATION/water-related

**Current Functions:**

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification(s):** N/A

**Materials:** N/A

foundation:

roof:

walls:

other:

**Narrative Description:**

See Continuation Sheets

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**DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY**

The Back Bay of Biloxi Shipwreck site (22Ja542) is a submerged archaeological site [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Mississippi [REDACTED]

The site extends approximately 12 meters (40 feet) north-south by 4.2 meters (14 feet) east-west, [REDACTED]

In 1892, local oysterman Eugene Tiblier, Jr., discovered the remains of a sunken vessel which had been recently uncovered by a hurricane (Hudson 1973:1). For the next 12 days, Tiblier, Jr., his father, and Jose Suarez, dove on the wreck recovering a variety of artifacts, including iron braces, rigging equipment, ballast, 4 cannon, cannon balls, gunpowder, bricks, a sword scabbard, and muskets (Krivor 1998:1). Based on their observations, the men thought the vessel was approximately 16.5 meters (55 feet) long by 6 meters (20 feet) wide, comprised primarily of oak and mahogany, held together principally with wooden pins (treenails), and in a fair state of preservation (Krivor 1998:1; *New Orleans Daily Picayune* September 19, 1892; *Biloxi Herald* September 24, 1892). The recovered artifacts and the wreck's proximity to the purported locations of the early 18th century French colonial settlements of Fort Maurepas and Vieux Biloxi, suggested to many locals that the wreck could be the remains of the *Pelican*, a French vessel known to have been lost during a 1722 hurricane (Hudson 1973:1). Before any additional salvage expeditions could occur, silt reclaimed the vessel (Hudson 1973:1).

In 1973, Jack D. Hudson of Gulf South Research Institute located the sunken vessel through magnetometer survey (Hudson 1973). Considering historical accounts, Hudson (1973:2) observed that large colonial vessels, like the *Pelican*, were forced to dock at Ship Island 24 kilometers (15 miles) offshore due to Biloxi Bay's shallow waters. From Ship Island, colonists would launch smaller craft into the bay area to transport people and deliver provisions to the mainland. Upon examination of the previously recovered cannon, Hudson (1973:3) suggested a possible date of around 1700 for them and the sunken vessel. Based on these data, Hudson (1973:2), contended that the wreck could not be the *Pelican* or any other similarly large colonial vessel, but more likely a smaller transport boat classified as a pincre (or pinnace; traversiers) that possibly dated

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to the 1700s. Although Hudson managed to locate the shipwreck through his magnetometer survey, the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), which funded the survey, opted not to conduct further investigations at that time.

Between November 18-20, 1997, Panamerican Maritime, L.L.C., under contract with MDAH, conducted underwater investigations at the site. Panamerican used a variety of remote sensing technologies, such as magnetometer and sidescan sonar, to re-locate the shipwreck (Figure 1). Once the location had been verified, diver investigations at the site were conducted. A preliminary exploration of the site with a 7-foot stainless steel probe revealed the remains of a wooden structure, approximately 12 meters (40 feet) by 4.5 meters (15 feet) in width, "beneath [30-90cm] 1-3 feet of soft sediment and a layer of oyster shell" (Krivor 1998:28). Panamerican's archaeologists recorded several sections of the sunken vessel's hull, including the keelson, bilge ceiling planking, floors, rising floors, offset first futtocks (lower part of a ship's rib), and outer-hull planking (Figure 2) (Krivor 1998:28). Because the ship's keelson was oriented north-south, with the stern located to the north and extant framing timbers oriented east-west, Krivor (1998:28) concluded that the bow, now missing, pointed south. Examination of the vessel's hull tentatively suggests a vessel constructed sometime during the 18th century (Krivor 1998:33). Dimensions suggest the vessel was originally 15-21 meters (50-70 feet) in length by 4.5-6 meters (15-20 feet) in width, and was tightly framed, indicating it could make ocean voyages (Krivor 1998:33). Furthermore, this vessel, though relatively small, possessed a V-shaped hull configuration, again indicating it was "capable of handling offshore conditions" (Krivor 1998:33).

The 1997 investigations recorded only a limited number of artifacts, consisting of bricks, a fairlead bead, sheaves, wooden shingles, iron stock, and metal concretions. This lack of more artifacts may be reflective of repeated scavenging occurring at the site over the years by local collectors and curiosity seekers. The handmade, mortared brick and brick fragments found in 1997 at the site, suggest the presence of a on-board hearth used for food preparation (Krivor 1998:35). Other loose brick fragments may have functioned as ship ballast (Krivor 1998:35). According to Krivor (1998:38), the single wooden fairlead bead/shroud truck recovered from the vessel's stern, functioned as part of the ship's rigging. These common objects guided the vessel's small to

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medium-sized running lines and ropes (Krivor 1998:38; see Chapman 1768:115-116; Kemp 1993:294). Other wooden objects recorded include three sheaves made of a native West Indies hardwood *Lignum vitae* (Krivor 1998:39). Sheaves functioned as large rigging blocks on the vessel (Krivor 1998:39). In addition, a stack of pine shingles possibly intended as roofing materials for houses was also recorded (Krivor 1998:42). According to Krivor (1998:39), a "substantial amount of iron stock was found approximately [7.2 meters] 24 feet off the southern starboard side of the vessel." The lack of holes in the material, suggests it was to fulfill a variety of functions, such as repairs, fasteners, and barrel hoops (Krivor 1998:39). Additional stock items recorded at the site include several replacement barrel staves and heads (Krivor 1998:40). The investigation also recorded several ferrous metal concretions, one identified as the remains of an eye bolt (Krivor 1998:42).

While Panamerican did not locate any additional cannon during their investigation, a brief analysis of the previously recovered ones did not seem to corroborate Hudson's original age estimate (Figures 3, 4 and 5). Through a series of measurements, it was determined that these five cast iron, small-caliber cannon are likely typical of the weaponry carried by small vessels that probably sailed the Back Bay area during the 18th century (Krivor 1998:35). Unfortunately, neither the cannon nor the other artifacts recorded provide absolute data on vessel origin (i.e., nationality) or span of use within the 18th century.

Unfortunately, it is "almost impossible to discern the type of vessel the Biloxi wreck was due to the amount of hull remaining" (Krivor 1998:33). A variety of small, light-draught vessels were undoubtedly utilized in Biloxi Bay during the 18th century to transport "supplies and people from Ship Island to both Old and New Biloxi during the 18th century" (Krivor 1998:33). The remains could be that of a traversier, felucca, pinnace, or shallop, since all possess similar hull configurations and are only differentiated by their rigging (Figures 6-7) (see Krivor 1998:33). Kevin Foster, Maritime Historian (1998), also believes the vessel may have been a patache (Figure 8), a type of Spanish dispatch vessel. Foster (1998) bases his views on the belief that the described vessel size is too large to be a shallop or pinnace, the hull too sharp to be a shallop, and that pinnaces and shallows were unlikely to possess hearths (Kevin Foster, personal communication). Again, however, the small amount of remaining hull

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precludes any definite vessel type from being identified. Based on Morris et al.'s (1995) framing pattern hypothesis, the vessel could possibly date from the mid to late 18th century. However, due to an overall lack of specific temporal indicators, Krivor (1998:46) could only suggest that "the vessel does not post-date the 1780's, and most likely represents an earlier time period."

Furthermore, the preliminary investigations and wood samples could not determine whether or not the vessel was of new world or old world origins (Krivor 1998:43). The only determination made with any certainty, is that the vessel probably underwent some form of repair somewhere in the tropics (i.e., West Indies, Central/South America, Mexico) (Krivor 1998:46). According to Krivor (1998:46), "[m]any vessels frequented the tropics during the settlement of the New World, and repair of structural components during travel was not uncommon." Further research at the site may recover the necessary diagnostics to help identify cultural and chronological affiliations.

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- X D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

ARCHAEOLOGY/Historic - non-aboriginal

Period of Significance

18th Century

Criteria Considerations:

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation(s)

European

Narrative Statement of Significance:

See continuation sheets.

Architect/Builder

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository:

PANAMERICAN MARITIME, L.L.C.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Although the 1997 investigations of the Back Bay of Biloxi Shipwreck site provided inconclusive information related to its precise age, nationality, and specific vessel type, it is the first (and so far only) colonial period European shipwreck to be identified in Mississippi waters. As such, the site has yielded, and retains the potential to yield, information important to knowledge of Mississippi's history. Therefore, the Back Bay of Biloxi Shipwreck archaeological site possesses statewide significance under the Historic Archaeology Area of Significance of National Register Criterion D.

While the major questions regarding the nationality and precise age of the wreck remain to be answered, some general conclusions can be made. First, although the vessel has been subjected to damaging salvage activities, it "does retain a major portion of its hull" (Krivor 1998:48), and thus possesses considerable integrity. Examination of the intact hull components (i.e., keelson, rising floors, floor timbers, offset first futtocks, ceiling planking, and outer-hull planking) revealed a tightly framed, V-shaped vessel hull originally 15-21 meters in length and 4.5-6 meters in width (Krivor 1998:33). Second, based on Morris et al.'s (1995) framing pattern hypothesis, the vessel probably dates to the mid to late 18th century. The recovered cast iron cannon also seem to support this time designation. These newly acquired data indicate that this vessel was similar in size and shape to a variety of small, light-draught vessels of the 18th century (e.g., feluccas, patache, pinnaces, traversiers, shallops) that were capable of negotiating shallow coastal waters, such as those of the Back Bay of Biloxi and the adjacent Mississippi Sound (Krivor 1998:33).

Because only a small portion of the wreck has been archaeologically investigated, it very likely retains intact diagnostic artifacts needed to provide additional information on the sunken vessel. For example, more thorough examinations of the remaining hull, such as keelson and offset first futtocks, as well as the recovery of any additional rigging elements, could inform us of vessel type and very possibly provide a more accurate determination of vessel age. This supplementary information could also answer the question of whether or not the vessel was capable of handling offshore conditions. All this additional research could provide more accurate dates for colonial expansion and activity along the Gulf Coast, identify the myriad of vessel types utilized by the

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colonizing countries in this region, as well as provide a more accurate picture of colonial life. The results, possibly providing insights on colonial naval and commercial activities of great relevance to the history of European colonial expansion and settlement along the Gulf Coast and lower Mississippi Valley during the 18th century.

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**BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

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1892 *A Mysterious Find, The Wreck of an Ancient Man-of-War*. September 24, 1892 as transcribed by Edmond A. Boudreaux, Jr.

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1953 *A History of French Louisiana, The Reign of Louis XIV, 1698-1715*. Volume 1. Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge.

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Higginbotham, Jay

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1977 *Old Mobile, Fort Louis de la Louisiane, 1702-1711*. The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.

Hudson, Jack D.

1973 Field Report and Magnetometer Survey Analysis, Back Bay, Mississippi. Performed for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, by Gulf South Research Institute, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

Kemp, Peter, editor.

1993 *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, England.

Krivor, Michael

1998 *Relocation and Evaluation of the Back Bay Biloxi Shipwreck Site 22Ja542, Jackson County, Biloxi Bay, Mississippi*. Performed for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, by Panamerican Maritime, L.L.C., Memphis, Tennessee.

McWilliams, Richebourg Gaillard, editor.

1981 *Iberville's Gulf Journals*. The University of Alabama Press, University.

*New Orleans Daily Picayune*

1892 A Mysterious Find under the "Rock Pile" in Biloxi Bay supposed to have laid under the water for two Centuries. September 19, 1892. As transcribed by M. James Stevens.

Name of Property

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property: N/A (50.4<sup>2</sup> meters or 560<sup>2</sup> feet)

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]			

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

**Verbal Boundary Description** See continuation sheet.

**Boundary Justification:** See continuation sheet.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: DOUGLAS C. SIMS/ARCHAEOLOGIST	date: JUNE 12, 1998
organization: MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND HISTORY	telephone: (601) 359-6940
street & number: P.O. BOX 571	zip code: 39205-0571
city or town: JACKSON	state: MS

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner(s)**

name: [REDACTED]	telephone: [REDACTED]
street & number: [REDACTED]	state: [REDACTED]
city or town: [REDACTED]	zip code: [REDACTED]

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The Back Bay of Biloxi Shipwreck archaeological site occupies approximately 50.4 square meters in the Back Bay of Biloxi, [REDACTED]. Site boundary is location by a single Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) reference point: [REDACTED].

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries for the Back Bay of Biloxi Shipwreck site have been delimited by magnetometer survey, systematic probing, and limited archaeological investigations at the site. The boundary is restricted to an area 12 (40 feet) x 4.2 (14 feet) meters.

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

The poor visibility (0-90cm) of the Back Bay of Biloxi prevented the marine archaeologists from photographing the vessel's remains. Therefore, no photographs are submitted with this nomination. See Figure 2 for a site plan of the vessel.

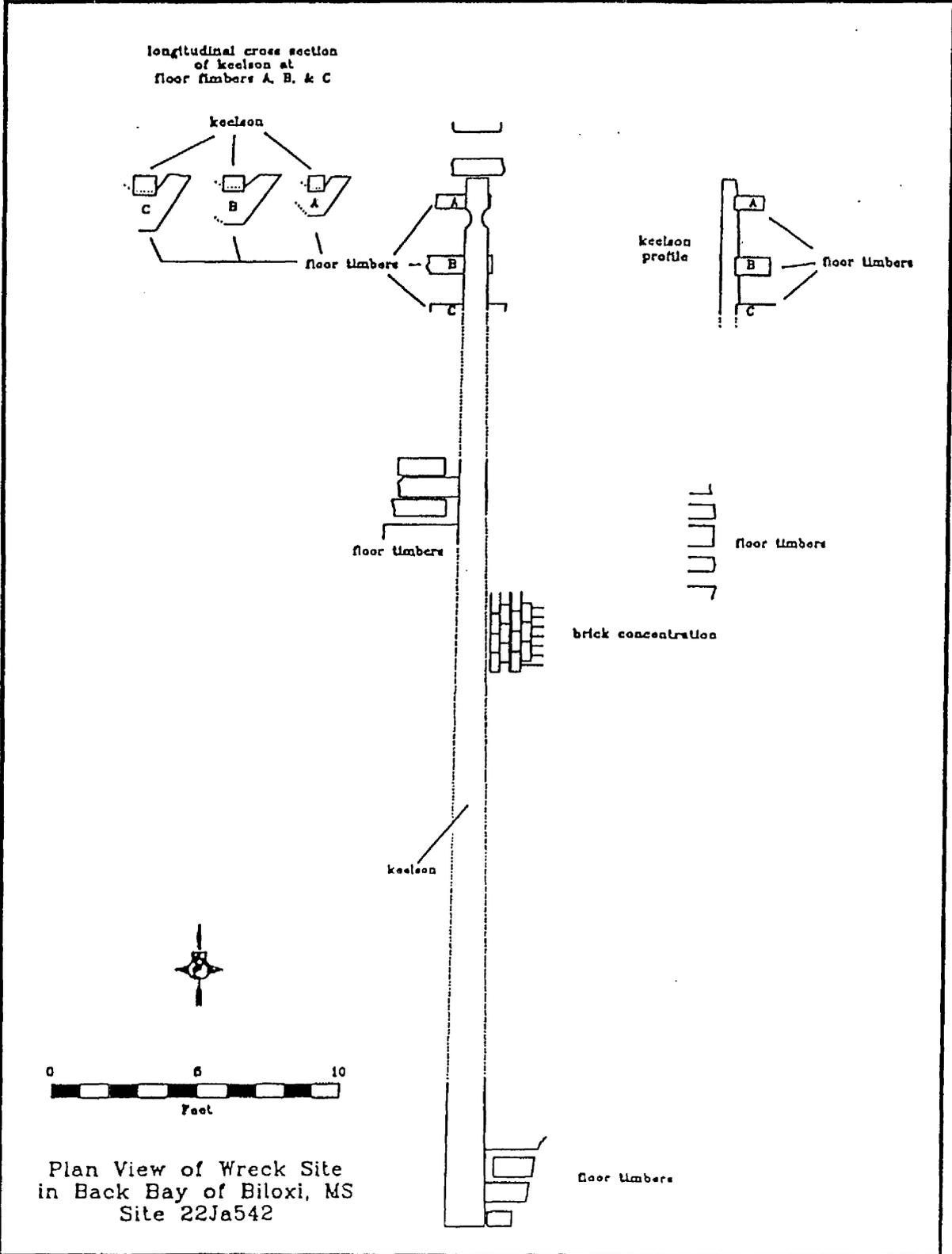


Figure 2. Site Plan of the Biloxi Bay Shipwreck (taken from Krivor 1998:29)

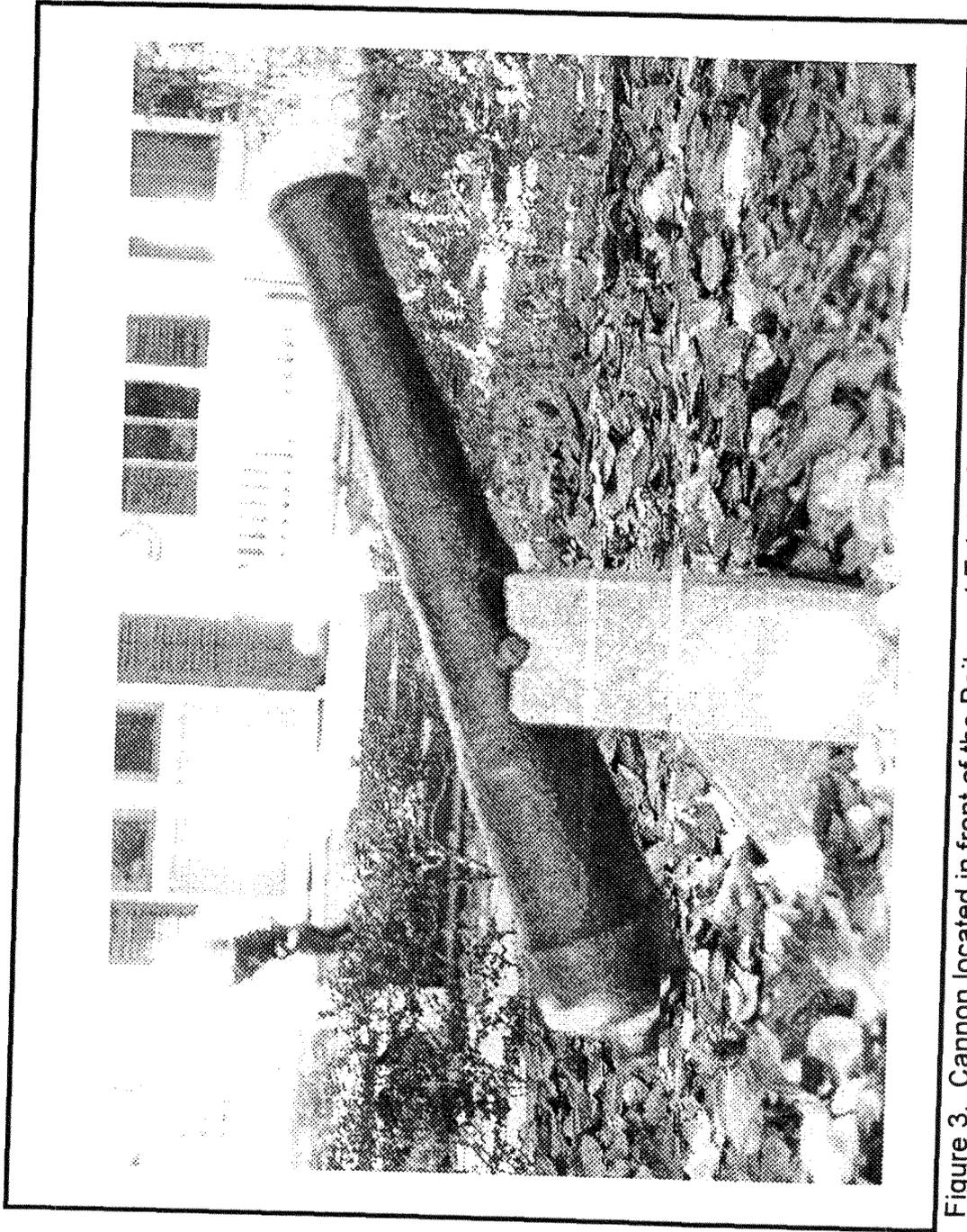


Figure 3. Cannon located in front of the Poiteviant Estate, Ocean Springs, Mississippi  
(taken from Krivor 1998:35)

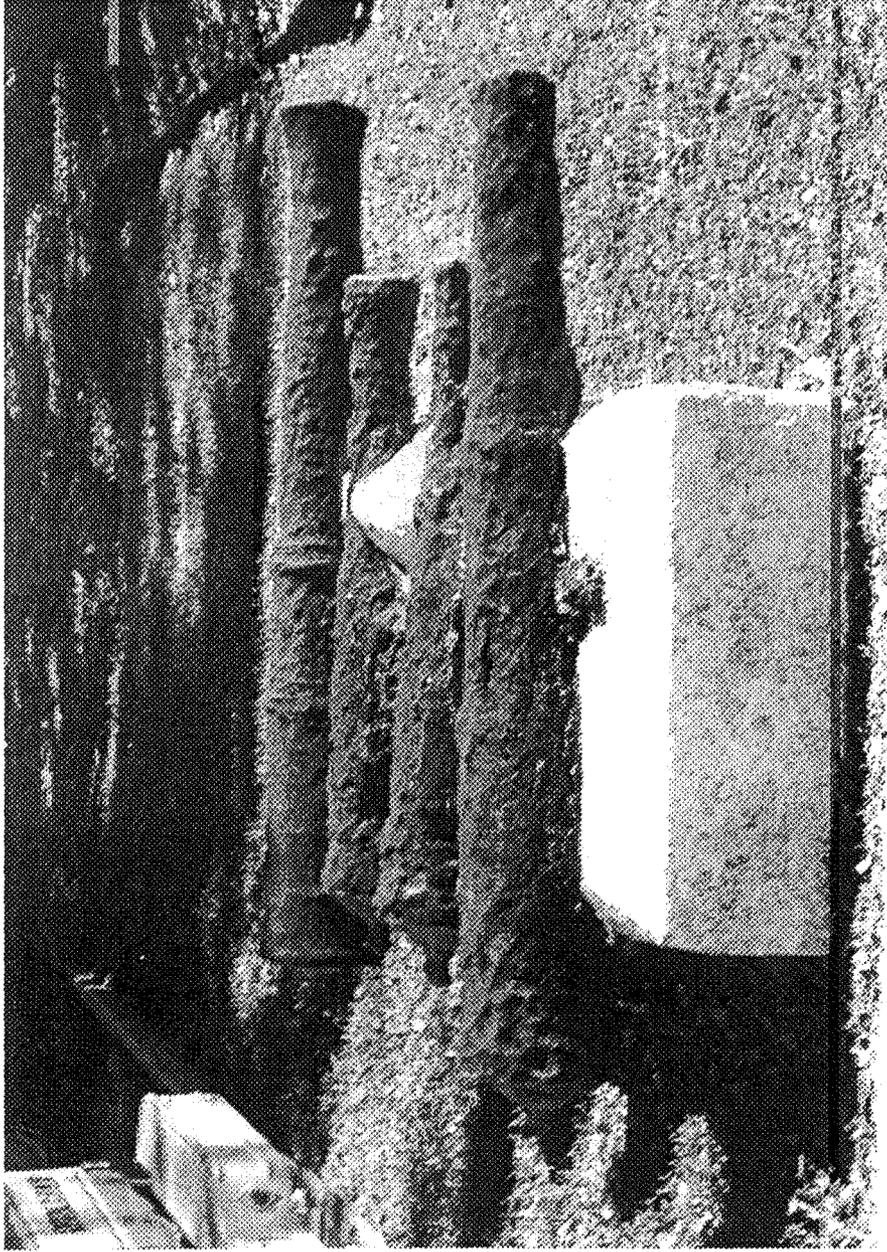


Figure 4. Cannon located in front of the Santa Maria del Mar Apartment Building, Biloxi, Mississippi (taken from Krivor 1998:34)

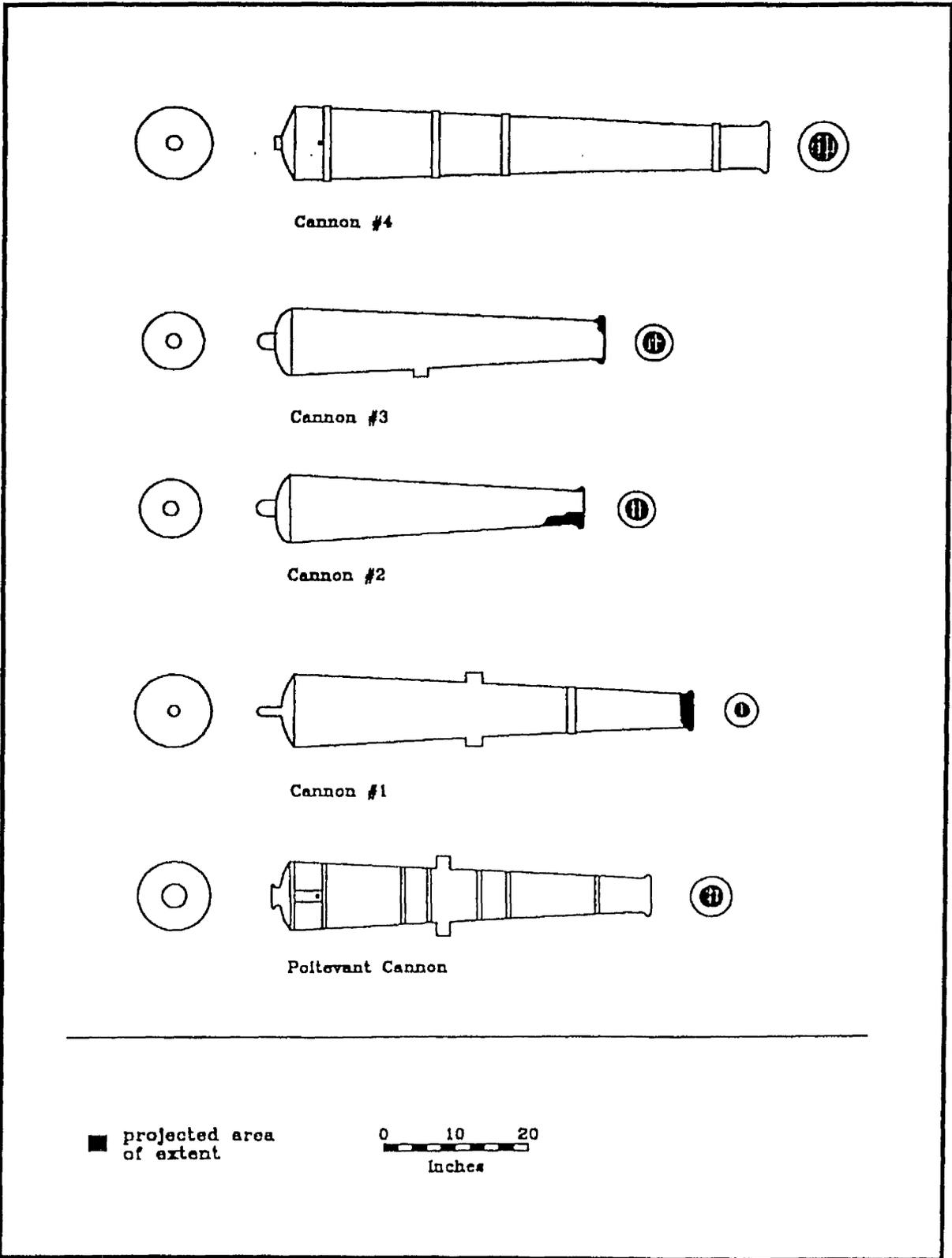


Figure 5. Illustration of the Santa Maria del Mar and Pointevant Cannon (taken from Krivor 1998:36)

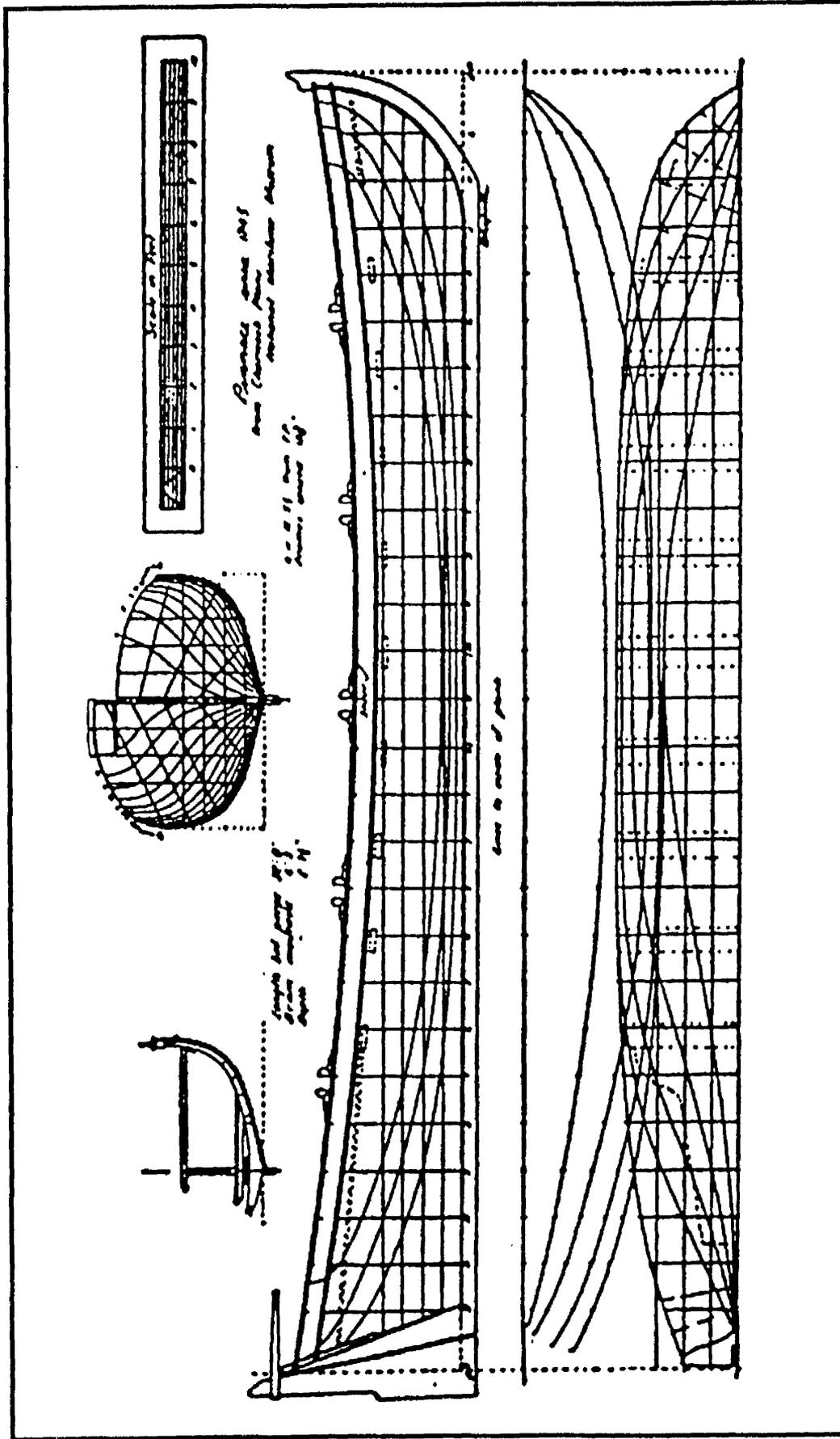


Figure 6. Illustration of a Pinnace (taken from Chapelle 1951:23)

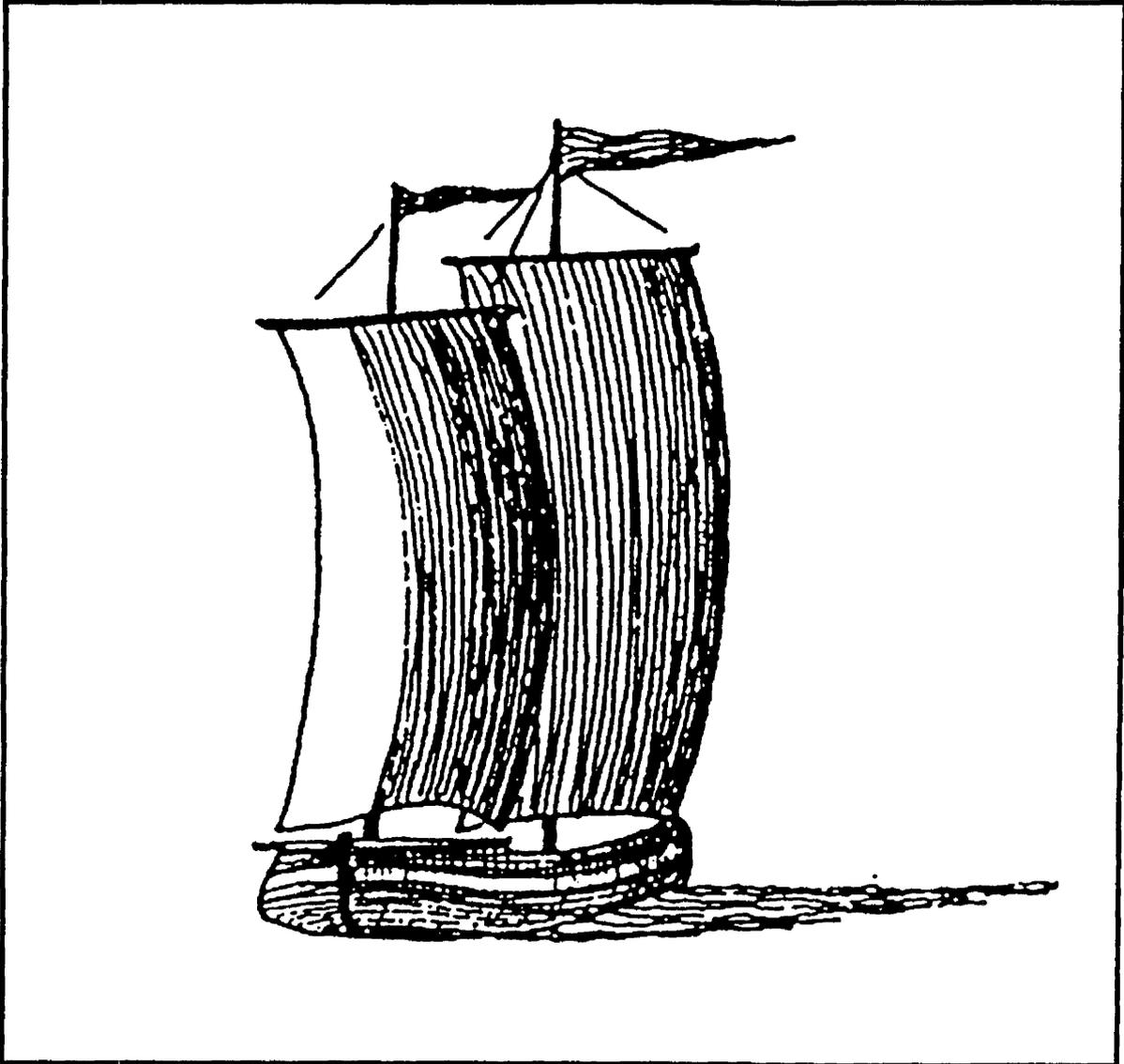


Figure 7. Illustration of a Shallop (taken from Baker 1996:66)

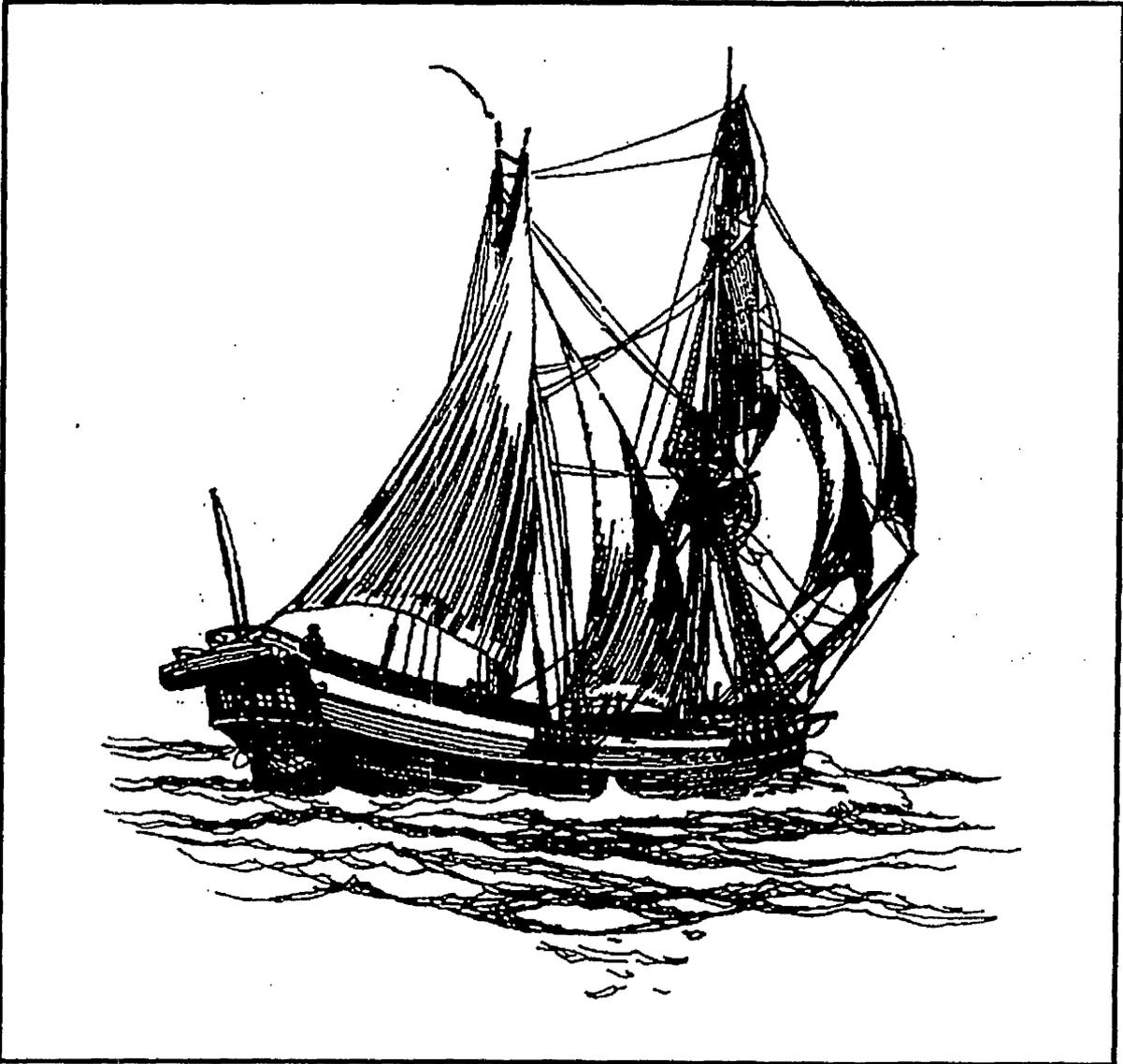


Figure 8. Illustration of a Patache (taken from Culver 1992:154)