

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION OF USS SCORPION

www.history.navy.mil
NHHCunderwaterarchaeology@navy.mil



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In August 1814, after weeks of delaying the British advance on Washington D.C., Commander Joshua Barney scuttled his fleet of gunboats and barges in the Patuxent River in order to prevent capture. Among those vessels was the USS *Scorpion*, flagship of the fleet.

In 1979, a team of researchers uncovered what are believed to be the remains of USS *Scorpion*, just north of Wayson's Corner, MD. A brief excavation followed shortly thereafter recovering numerous artifacts and assessing the state of preservation of the site. Several surveys have followed since then, including two sponsored in 2009 by the Underwater Archaeology Branch (UAB).

PROJECT PARTNERS

As part of the Navy's War of 1812 Bicentennial Commemoration, UAB, supported by the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, partnered with a number of institutions to undertake the excavation of the USS *Scorpion* site, beginning in the summer of 2010.

- Maryland Historical Trust
- Maryland State Highway Administration
- U.S. Naval Academy
- SUPSALV
- Marine Corp History Division
- Prince George's County Parks and Recreation

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

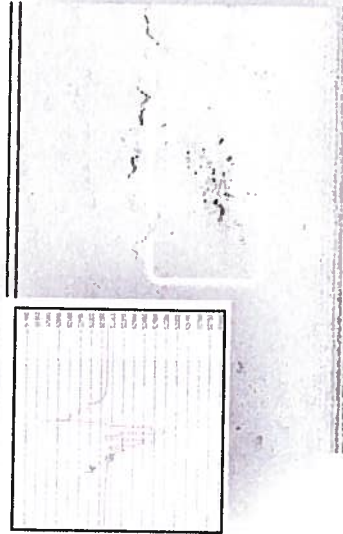
1. Collect archaeological data through artifact recovery and site mapping.
2. Document and analyze the ship wreck for scientific interpretation and site preservation.
3. Preserve, study, interpret, and display recovered artifacts.
4. Commemorate U.S. Navy resilience in the defense of Washington and emphasize Navy's role in the protection of homeland security during wartime.
5. Involve and educate Navy midshipmen, students, and schoolchildren across the nation in the excavation, conservation, and interpretation of Navy heritage.
6. Inspire the next generation of sailors.



Illustration showing USS *Scorpion* and Commodore Joshua Barney's flotilla in an engagement with the British Force. The gunboat in the forefront is of the type that archaeologists are expecting to



A sample of the artifacts recovered from the USS *Scorpion* site during preliminary artifact sampling. Depicted above are ceramic vessels, a frog cup with the owner's initials inscribed in it, and implements belonging to what may be the Navy's earliest surviving medical kit.



Magnetic anomaly and side-scan sonar data collected over the site of USS *Scorpion* during the 2009 UAB remote sensing survey. Several hard contacts can be seen on the river-bottom indicating the presence of the wreck.