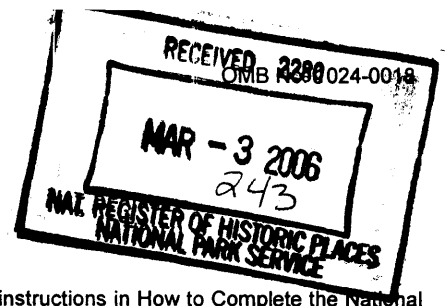


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Vamar Shipwreck Site

other names/site number Kilmarnock, Eleanor Bolling, Vamar State Underwater Archaeological Preserve/BY887

2. Location

street & number 3.7 miles offshore Mexico Beach n/a not for publication

city or town Mexico Beach vicinity

state Florida code FL county Bay code 005 zip code n/a

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara C. Mattick 2/28/06
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida Division of Historical Resources, State Historic Preservation Office
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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Verika K. Martin Gebert 4/10/02
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	1	objects
1	1	total

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

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: Water-related (ship)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: Water-related (shipwreck)

Landscape: Underwater (underwater site)

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

20th Century steam vessel (screw)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Metal: iron (hull)

walls

roof

other Metal: iron

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or 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

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Archeology: Historic-Non-aboriginal

Period of Significance

1928-1930

Significant Dates

1928-1930

Significant Person

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

British

American

Panamanian

Architect/Builder

Smiths Dock Company of Middleboro, England

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State Agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of Repository

#

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	6	6	4	8	4	0	0	3	3	0	8	3	1	0
	Zone		Easting					Northing							
2															

3													
	Zone		Easting					Northing					
4													

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Della A. Scott-Ireton, Archaeologist III & Barbara E. Mattick, DSHPO

organization Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research, Division of Historical Resources date February 2006

street & number R. A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 245-6333

city or town Tallahassee state FL zip code 32399-0250

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

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name State of Florida, c/o Ms. Eva Armstrong, Direct, Division of State Lands, DEP

street & number 3900 Commonwealth Boulevard telephone _____

city or town Tallahassee state FL zip code _____

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 amend 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 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

SUMMARY

The *Vamar* Shipwreck Site(8BY887) is the site of an iron-hulled screw steam ship that was carrying a cargo of lumber from Port St. Joe, Florida, to Havana, Cuba, when she sank under mysterious circumstances off Mexico Beach, Florida, in 1942. The wrecksite is in the Gulf of Mexico 3.7 miles offshore of Mexico Beach, Bay County, in 25 feet of water on submerged lands belonging to the State of Florida. The site includes the remains of the 170 foot-long vessel and associated artifacts. Non-contributing resources consist of a cement monument with inset bronze plaque that designates the shipwreck an Underwater Archaeological Preserve and Florida Heritage Site.

SETTING

The wreck of *Vamar* lies on a sand bottom at a depth of 25 feet, 3.7 miles from shore just north of the channel leading into St. Joseph Bay. The sunken ship is situated with her bow pointing in a southerly direction. The vessel was considered a hazard to navigation and was dynamited by the Army Corps of Engineers. Water clarity generally is good although variable due to prevailing currents. The wrecksite has attracted much marine life including tropical fish, game fish, mollusks, and crustaceans.

DESCRIPTION

The *Vamar* wrecksite is approximately 200 feet long by 60 feet wide; the bow is to the south. A bronze plaque designating the shipwreck an Underwater Archaeological Preserve is set into a cement monument placed on the sand near the midship area of wreckage. The non-contributing plaque does not adversely affect the site's historical or archaeological integrity as it is placed away from the shipwreck itself and does not interfere with the wreck in any way. Furthermore, the plaque may easily be removed if necessary.

Despite actions by the Army Corps of Engineers to reduce the wreck, the ship is remarkably intact. Large portions of hull plating and internal framing are visible. Amidships, two bilge stringers run fore and aft and would have internally strengthened the hull. A major feature is the ship's large steam engine with exposed connecting rods. Along the starboard side of the ship, the hull plates have collapsed, exposing a bilge keel which would have been below the waterline to help keep the vessel from rolling in beam seas. Also among the wreckage amidships are collapsed davits and mast supports, as well as the ship's generator. To the north, the stern is twisted dramatically to port; the rudder quadrant and rudder shaft are exposed and the rudder is lying partially buried in the sand.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 2 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

SITE INVESTIGATIONS

The wreck of *Vamar* was first nominated in 1994, along with four other shipwrecks in Bay County, to become a State Underwater Archaeological Preserve. Upon receipt of the nominations, personnel from the Bureau of Archaeological Research conducted a survey of the shipwrecks to determine which one best met criteria to become a Preserve, including safe diving conditions, recognizable structural elements, abundant marine life, and public accessibility. At the time of the survey, the wreck of the steamer *Tarpon* was chosen to become the state's sixth Preserve. The wreck of *Vamar* was again nominated for Preserve status in 2000; and in 2002 the site was revisited by state archaeologists and members of the Marine Archaeological & Research Conservation Reporting (MARC) team.

The wreck was mapped by placing a baseline along the longitudinal axis of the wreck and taking 90° offsets and triangulations to accurately record the position of hull elements and features in order to prepare a site plan. No excavation was performed and no artifacts were encountered. The shipwreck also was recorded through photography and videography which was used to produce a detailed photomosaic site plan. A brochure was prepared that describes *Vamar*'s history and its role as an Underwater Archaeological Preserve and a laminated underwater guide was designed to allow visitors to take a self-guided tour of the shipwreck. In 2003, *Vamar* was dedicated as Florida's ninth Underwater Archaeological Preserve and a bronze plaque was placed on site. Bureau staff inspects the Preserve at least annually and a local dive shop has "adopted" the site to help with on-going management and site maintenance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 1 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

SUMMARY

Vamar is significant at the local, state, and national levels under **Criterion D** in the area of **Archaeology: Historic-Non-Aboriginal** because of her status as the first metal-hulled vessel to successfully traverse Antarctic waters. The iron steamer, then known as the *Eleanor Bolling*, was purchased by Admiral Richard E. Byrd specifically for the purpose of exploring the Antarctic based on her size and capacious hold that proved large enough to accommodate the airplanes used for the first aerial fly-over of the South Pole. *Vamar*'s 1929 – 1930 arctic expedition is recognized as extremely important in the annals of polar exploration. The *Vamar* Shipwreck Site has stabilized in the marine environment and can, through future archaeological investigation, provide information about early oceanic exploration and maritime adaptations to polar sea travel. *Vamar*'s usage in the Antarctic was unusual due to her iron construction; most arctic vessels were wooden-hulled ships. *Vamar*'s remains, therefore, have potential to yield important information regarding Byrd's modifications to the ship's original iron steamer construction, including hull reinforcement to withstand the pressure of Arctic icepacks.

VESSEL HISTORY

The vessel that sank off Mexico Beach was built in 1919 by Smiths Dock Company of Middleboro, England. Originally christened *Kilmarnock*, the ship was built for the British Admiralty as part of the *Kil* class of patrol gun boats. Recorded dimensions were 170 feet in length, 30 feet in beam, a depth of hold of 16 feet, and 598 gross tons. The hull was of iron construction with triple expansion steam engines for propulsion. In the 1920s *Kilmarnock* was sold to a private firm and renamed *Chelsea*.

In July 1928, Admiral Richard E. Byrd, USN, acquired *Chelsea* as one of two support vessels that would carry his first expedition to Antarctica. Byrd planned to construct a polar base from which he hoped to make the first aerial fly-over of the South Pole. He purchased the small freighter for \$34,000 from the government's "rumrunner's row" of vessels confiscated for smuggling liquor. Byrd chose *Chelsea* because she was cheap and available; otherwise, he confessed, she had little to recommend her. The primary expedition ship, *City of New York*, was a sailing ship with a wooden hull ideal for advancing through polar ice packs; however, her hold was too small for the crates containing the airplanes that were to fly over the South Pole. *Chelsea*'s hold, on the other hand, contained two large cargo areas with a combined capacity of 800 tons.

Byrd renamed the steamer *Eleanor Bolling* after his mother, Eleanor Bolling Byrd. The vessel underwent some \$76,000 in repairs and upgrades at the Todd Shipyard in England. One of the most important upgrades was reinforcement of the bow area to withstand Antarctic ice; *Bolling* subsequently became the first metal-hulled vessel to be used in Antarctic waters. The ship proved to be sturdy but not especially stable; her crew, after encountering rough waves in the southern ocean, nicknamed her "Evermore Rolling."

Eleanor Bolling made several voyages between Antarctica and New Zealand before the expedition was completed in 1930. On 19 June 1930, she and *City of New York* sailed into New York harbor amid enormous

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section number 8 Page 2 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

fanfare. Later that year, Byrd sold the vessel to an Arctic sealing company for \$15,000, considering her unseaworthy for a second Antarctic expedition.

In 1933, the ship was purchased by Vamar Shipping Company and renamed *Vamar*. By 1942, *Vamar* was owned by Bolivar-Atlantic Navigation Company under Panamanian registry and used as a tramp freighter. Various Coast Guard reports indicate the steamer was falling into disrepair, with her equipment in poor condition and no radio operator onboard. On 19 March 1942 *Vamar* entered Port St. Joe with a crew of 18 (Yugoslavian, Cuban, and Spanish) to take on a load of lumber for Cuba. On 21 March *Vamar* left the dock and headed south through the channel toward the Gulf of Mexico. According to an incident report given by Harbor Pilot J. Melvin Beck, who was aboard the ship when it sank, the steamer was overloaded and seemed to be top-heavy from too much cargo stowed on the deck. As Mr. Beck guided *Vamar* through the channel, she listed to port and began to go down by the stern. After managing to get the sinking freighter out of the channel, Mr. Beck and all the crew abandoned the ship and returned safely to Port St. Joe.

For several weeks, *Vamar*'s captain and crew remained in Port St. Joe. Unnerved by the foreign crew's continued presence and suspicious of their motives, the townspeople grew uneasy. War-time concerns for security led the Coast Guard to initiate an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the sinking. Two Coast Guard investigators were sent to Port St. Joe in May. The investigators questioned salvage divers working to raise the wreck, as well as many people in the town who had knowledge of the sinking incident and the crew's activities during the incident and in the aftermath. Some of those who were questioned suggested that the ship had intentionally been sunk by saboteurs to block the channel and provided information about the dubious circumstances surrounding the sinking. For example, when *Vamar* went down she had already navigated two sharp turns in the channel and was on a straightaway in calm water. Additionally, Mr. Beck told *Vamar*'s captain she was overloaded and top-heavy but his advice to shift her cargo was ignored.

Although the investigators noted the concerns of the local people and followed leads on the questionable behavior of the crew and rumors of holes in *Vamar*'s hull, they could not find enough evidence to substantiate the suspicions. The exact reason why *Vamar* sank has never been determined, although overloading and shifting cargo generally are blamed. Nevertheless, the specter of foreign war-time sabotage still looms over the shipwreck.

In 2002, *Vamar* was nominated to become Florida's ninth Underwater Archaeological Preserve. The site was recorded and the ship's history researched by State archaeologists and the Marine Archaeological Research & Conservation Reporting (MARC) team. The *Vamar* Preserve was dedicated in 2003, and a cement and bronze plaque was placed on the site.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The *Vamar* Shipwreck Site is significant under **Criterion D** in the area of **Archaeology: Historic-Non-Aboriginal** because of the high potential for new information the site can yield. Although the wreckage is scattered and disarticulated, large portions of the hull and internal framing remain intact and can potentially provide important information about metal-hulled screw steamship technology and the vessel modifications

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 3 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

necessary for polar exploration and supply. Finally, *Vamar* is one of a family of shipwreck sites that have been determined to be historically and archaeologically significant by the State of Florida. *Vamar* was designated a State Underwater Archaeological Preserve based on its integrity and its potential for public education.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 1 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The site boundary of the *Vamar* Shipwreck Site is defined as a circle of 500 yards radius around the geographic coordinates Latitude 29° 53.941' N, Longitude 85° 27.806' W, lying offshore and below the mean low water mark of the Gulf of Mexico and encompassing the area of vessel wreckage and plaque.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The *Vamar* Shipwreck Site boundary is based on the observed area of extant wreckage. The purpose of the 500 yard radius around the site is to encompass the scatter of material culture relating to the shipwreck that may have dispersed with wave and current action away from the primary area of wreckage.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number Photo Page 1 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

PHOTOGRAPHS

1.
 - 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida
 - 3) photographer unknown
 - 4) circa 1940
 - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research and National Archives
 - 6) historic photograph of *Vamar*
 - 7) 1 of 5

2.
 - 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida
 - 3) photographer unknown
 - 4) circa 1940
 - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research and The Mariner's Museum
 - 6) historic photo of *Vamar*
 - 7) 2 of 5

3.
 - 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida
 - 3) photographer unknown
 - 4) circa 1929
 - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research and Paramount
 - 6) historic photo of *Eleanor Bolling*
 - 7) 3 of 5

4.
 - 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida
 - 3) Marine Archaeological Research & Conservation Reporting
 - 4) September 2002
 - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research and MARC
 - 6) photomosaic of *Vamar* wreck site
 - 7) 4 of 5

5.
 - 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida
 - 3) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 4) September 2002

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

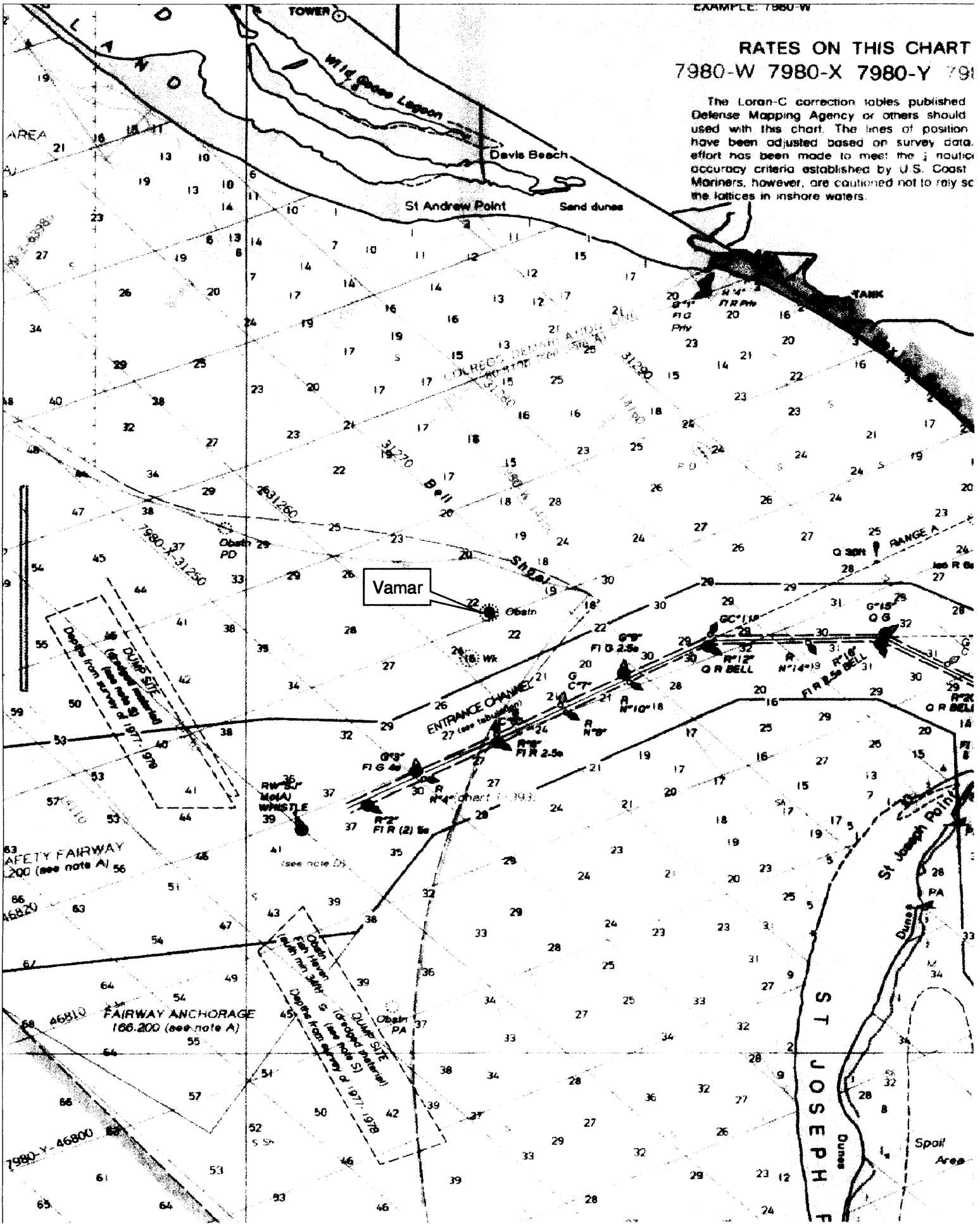
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number _____ Photo _____ Page 2 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

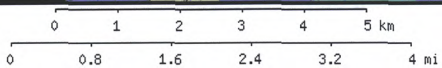
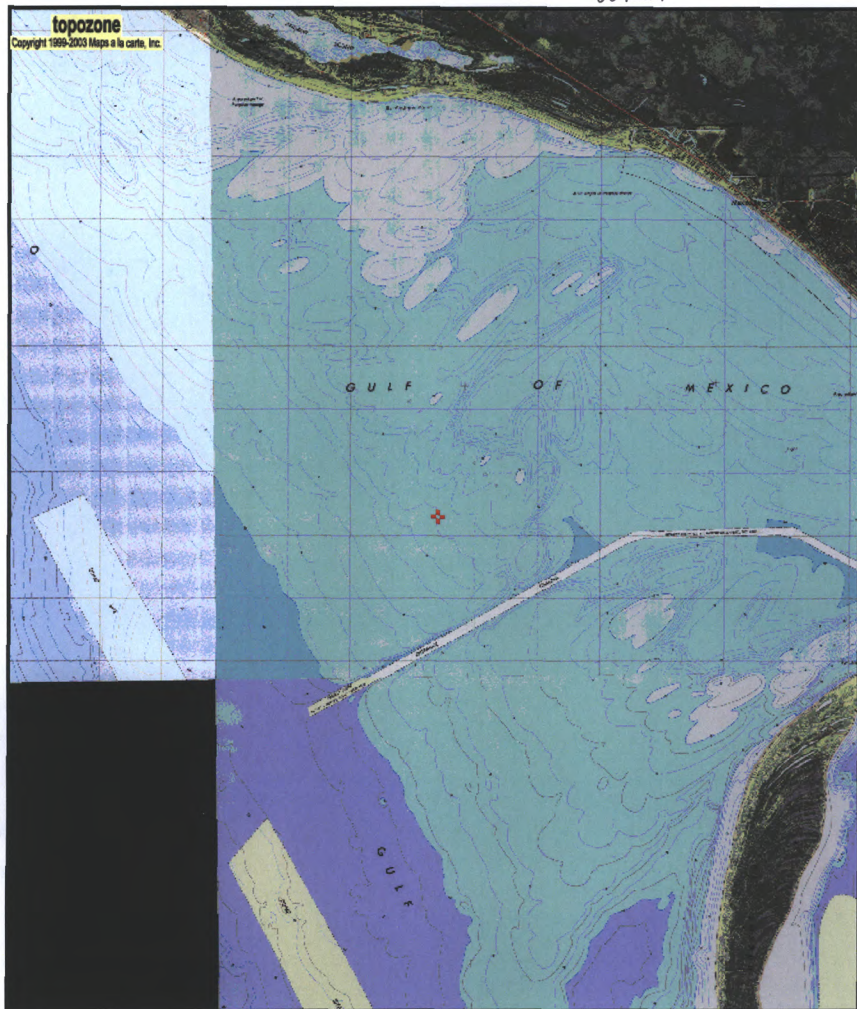
- 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
- 6) section of wreckage showing boiler, camera facing north
- 7) 5 of 5

RATES ON THIS CHART 7980-W 7980-X 7980-Y 7980-Z

The Loran-C correction tables published by the Defense Mapping Agency or others should be used with this chart. The lines of position have been adjusted based on survey data. Effort has been made to meet the nautical accuracy criteria established by U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, however, are cautioned not to rely on the lattices in inshore waters.



Vamar



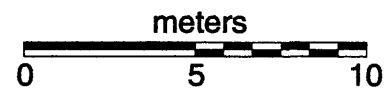
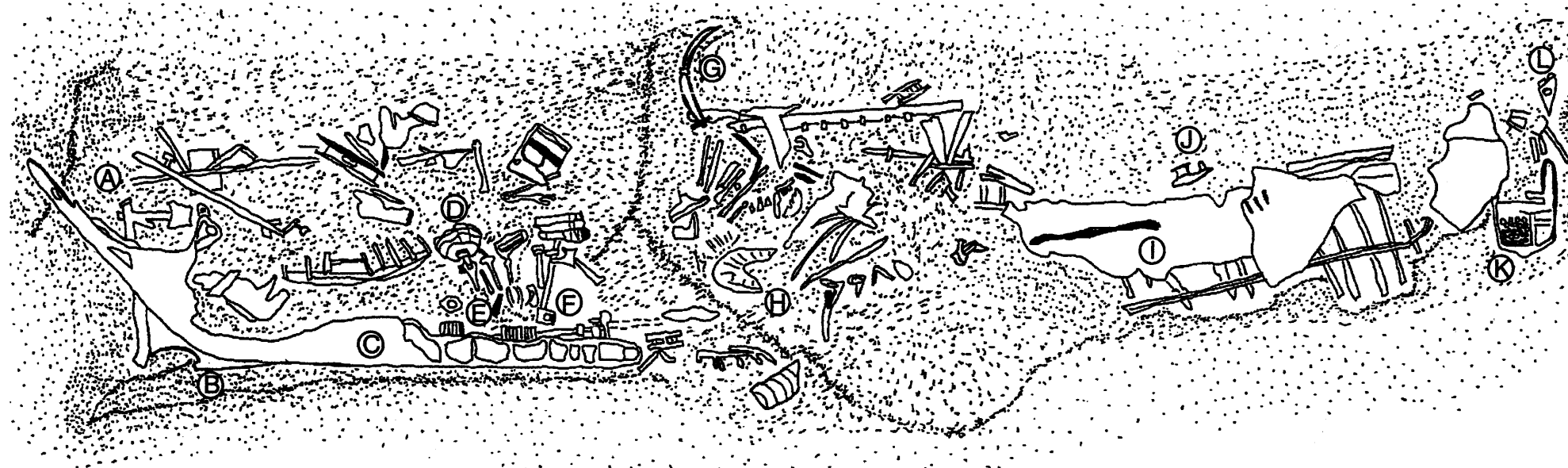
Map center is 29° 53.94'N, 85° 27.80'W (WGS84/NAD83)
Beacon Hill quadrangle
 Projection is UTM Zone 16 NAD83 Datum

MK
 G
 M=-2.674
 G=0.766

VAMAR, formerly *ELEANOR BOLLING*

Stern

Bow



Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 Marine Archaeological Research and Conservation Reporting
 June 2003

Key

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| A rudder post | G life boat davit |
| B propeller shaft | H boiler |
| C shaft alley | I bilge keel |
| D generator | J bits |
| E thrust bearing | K chain/rope locker |
| F cam shaft | L fairlead/chock |

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: Vamar Shipwreck Site

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: FLORIDA, Bay

DATE RECEIVED: 5/04/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 6/17/06
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000243

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 6.14.06 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Additional Documentation Accepted

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept

REVIEWER Edson Beall

DISCIPLINE History

TELEPHONE _____

DATE 6.14.06

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number _____ Photo _____ Page 2 VAMAR Shipwreck Site
Bay County, Florida

- 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 6) section of wreckage showing boiler, camera facing north
 - 7) 5 of 5
- 6.
- 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida Department of State
 - 3) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 4) September 2002
 - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 6) Section of wreckage showing internal stringer with framing and hull plate
 - 7) 6 of 8
- 7.
- 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida Department of State
 - 3) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 4) September 2002
 - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 6) Diver investigating section of hull wreckage
 - 7) 7 of 8
- 8.
- 1) *Vamar* Shipwreck Site
 - 2) Bay County, Florida Department of State
 - 3) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 4) September 2002
 - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
 - 6) Section of wreckage showing driveshaft coupling
 - 7) 8 of 8