**Preliminary Investigations of the Glenn Mayne Shipwreck**

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Glenn Mayne, a tuna clipper turned fishing barge, ran aground on a beach near Oceanside, California, in 1939 after its anchor chain snapped. It broke up, and much of the ship was covered by sand. In February 2018, locals noticed Glenn Mayne uncovered and alerted California State Park's Maritime Heritage Program of its existence. In August 2018, Maritime Heritage Program volunteer divers documented a portion of the shipwreck uncovered by sand, consisting of several wooden futtocks, planking, and a machinery wheel. This article presents the history of Glenn Mayne and the results of a preliminary survey.

**Introduction**

California’s coastline stretches 840 miles along the Pacific Ocean, so it is no surprise that the state has a long and rich maritime history. The coastline is notoriously rocky, and the weather is rough and unpredictable; shipwrecks abound on the shores. However, the forces that contributed to the sinking of many of these vessels are the same ones that often hide them from view today. California’s dynamic coastline often prevents shipwrecks and other cultural resources from being found for long periods of time. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate California’s dynamic coastline that can often hide and reveal shipwrecks. Such is the case of Glenn Mayne, a vessel that spent most of its career as a tuna clipper and ran aground at what is now Carlsbad State Beach in 1939. Wave action quickly broke up the ship and covered the site with sand, hiding the shipwreck from view and largely removing it from public memory.

Since then, the shipwreck has occasionally been revealed, but it has never been officially recorded or investigated by archaeologists. Unfortunately, this is the case for many submerged cultural resources in California. Due to difficult access, the cost of equipment, and lack of information, underwater archaeological sites are often neglected or altogether unknown. Luckily, a large portion of Glenn Mayne was uncovered at the beginning of 2018, and water conditions were favorable enough to allow drone photography, amateur snorkelers, and local journalists to document the site. State archaeologists were notified and were able to officially document a portion of the site and prepare an archaeological site form. Archaeologists are hopeful that submerged sites throughout the state will continue to be documented, as the majority of California’s underwater cultural resources are underdocumented, especially as compared to their terrestrial counterparts.

**History of Glenn Mayne**

*Glenn Mayne* was constructed in 1918 in Somerset, Massachusetts, by Crowninshield Shipbuilding Company for the U.S. Shipping Board as an oceangoing salvage tug (Figure 3). Weighing 431 gross tons, the vessel measured 142 feet long, 31.60 feet wide, and 14.40 feet deep. It was wooden-hulled and powered by twin 350 horsepower Atlas Imperial Diesel Engines, which was a somewhat unusual arrangement at the time, but it gave Glenn Mayne the capability of traveling in excess of 12 knots (San Diego Evening Tribune [SDET] 1930:2). There was not much salvage work to be had in the post-war economy, and it was quickly converted to a tuna clipper with large deck tanks and space for fish storage. The owner, Otto Poulson, and California’s booming tuna industry certainly found use for Glenn Mayne. It was the largest of all tuna clippers and the only one to ever have twin screws. It had a cruising radius of 10,000 miles (SDET 1929:10). In 1929, and the *Los Angeles Times* “Shipping News” reported that the vessel was sailing towards Hawai’ian waters with a
Figure 1. California coast at high tide with no apparent cultural resources. Photo courtesy of John Herrald.

Figure 2. Same California coast at low tide, revealing a shipwreck. Photo courtesy of California State Parks.
crew of eight to ten deep water fishermen and Captain C. W. Nickerson in search of the best fishing grounds. In 1930, Captain John Hansen brought *Glenn Mayne* to moderate fame when he carried in 190 pounds of yellowfin in a single voyage, a record at the time. Hansen claimed to have found the “almost mythical” Allaire Bank, a chain of submerged mountain peaks thought to be about 500 miles southwest of Cape San Lucas off of the Mexican mainland on a 34-day journey. His tuna haul, which filled *Glenn Mayne* to capacity, was valued at more than $22,000 (Los Angeles Times [LAT] 1930:46).

Later on, in 1932, when the tuna clipper was idle for a year since its older equipment needed to be replaced, Poulson sold the vessel to get out of financial troubles. The new owner, Hartley Caldwell, remodeled the clipper for further service, adding electricity, a new 60 horsepower diesel auxiliary engine, a 15-ton ice machine, and other improvements. However, the vessel was soon laid up again, and Caldwell sold it to E. W. Bartell in 1936 (Ries 2000:43-44). Bartell had recently obtained the sportfishing concession at Oceanside and anchored *Glenn Mayne* off the pier as a fishing barge. More bench seating, a rack of bamboo jack poles, and cork life jackets were added, and *Glenn Mayne* had a successful few years bringing in sand bass, halibut, and black seabass from around Oceanside (Figure 4).

Only three years passed before *Glenn Mayne* was out of commission again, this time permanently. On July 13, 1939, at 8 a.m., shortly after two shore boats delivered the fishing parties to the barge at Oceanside, the barge’s anchor chain broke and it drifted toward Carlsbad Beach. Those on board did not realize that they were in danger until the vessel began pounding in the breakers (Omaha World Herald 1939:4). About a mile from where it had been anchored, campers noticed *Glenn Mayne* drifting in the tide and called for help (Richmond Times Dispatch 1939:7). Patrol boats and a Coast Guard plane rushed to the scene to assist. The patrol boats tried to tow the barge with no luck as it began to be pounded by the surf, and the salvage efforts were abandoned (San Diego Union [SDU] 1939:2).

The 26 people on board jumped overboard two or three at a time in an attempt to make it to shore. Because of the life jackets on board and deputy sheriffs, lifeguards, and other helpful bystanders, everyone made it to shore safely, with those unable to swim carried to shore. Two men from Escondido, Tom Brown and Antonio Ricca, were hospitalized from exhaustion or injuries from fighting the pounding surf (LAT 1939:1). Roy Talmadge, one of the survivors, immediately spread $70 in folding money and his pack of...
cigarettes on the beach to dry after wading to shore (Bellingham Herald 1939:2). A salvage crew tried to float Glenn Mayne, but it was full of water and settled deeply in the sand that resulted in it sinking (SDU 1939:1). The barge quickly broke up by the surf, foiling any salvage efforts, and was soon covered by sand. Reports claim it was nearly seven years before someone dared to anchor another barge off the Oceanside pier.

**REDISCOVERY**

Glenn Mayne is a case of an archaeological site that seems to exist more in local legend and word-of-mouth than in formal documentation. Although the ship was quickly buried by sand and has rarely been spotted since, most stakeholders are aware of its existence. Glenn Mayne is listed in the shipwreck database for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Office of National Marine Sanctuaries West Coast Region, although little information about the ship is given with no information on the archaeological site.

At least two large sections of historic shipwreck debris have washed ashore at Cardiff State Beach. The first occurred in 1968 when a 30-foot long, 6-foot wide piece of historic wooden shipwreck debris was discovered on Cardiff State Beach. The oak futtocks and planks were fastened with hand wrought square nails 12 to 14 inches long. No documentation on the relic except newspaper clippings are available (SDU 1968; Michael Buxton, personal communication 2019). In April 1991, another 30-foot long section of wooden shipwreck debris washed ashore at Cardiff State Beach. This artifact was collected by State Park maintenance workers to be stored at Old Town State Historic Park. The fragment consisted of five ceiling planks attached to a vertical rib or “futtock.” Metal and wooden drift pins were used as fasteners, and construction characteristics indicate the debris dates from 1860 to 1940. Research completed by the San Diego Maritime Museum Association speculated that the ship fragment may be from Glenn Mayne, possibly a piece that was affixed to its side and is visible in historic photos of the vessel. This demonstrates the reuse of material for ships (Buxton 2007). The 30-foot piece was stored at Old Town San Diego State Historic Park for several years until an employee accidentally threw it away (Michael Buxton, personal communication 2019).
Despite all of these institutions referencing Glenn Mayne, most of the information was garnered from historic newspaper clippings and local knowledge rather than archaeological investigation or documentation. Because the ship rests under the sand, revealed only by the whims of the ocean, locational data and any other site-specific information was all but impossible to find. This is largely the reason that current California State Parks archaeologists were unaware of the site, even though it is adjacent to a state beach in state-owned and managed waters.

In March 2018, a six-page article full of beautiful photos was published in Carlsbad Magazine. The photos showed what appeared to be a nearly complete shipwreck, with snorkelers exploring the wooden ribs exposed in a sand bed, beneath water so crystal clear that a drone had been used to capture the entire site from above (Figure 5). The article, “Shipwreck: Discovering the Glenn Mayne” (Hinman 2018) detailed how a local surfer had spotted the shipwreck and spread the word. According to the article, locals flocked to the site to explore the wreckage, and it did not take long for local legend, archival articles, and enthusiastic explorers to identify the site as the remains of Glenn Mayne (Hinman 2018). One thing led to another, and as employees of Carlsbad State Beach became aware of the shipwreck, the knowledge was passed to the California State Parks Maritime Heritage Program (Denise Jaffke, personal communication 2018).

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS INVESTIGATIONS

In August 2018, divers from California State Parks’ Maritime Heritage Program traveled to Carlsbad to document Glenn Mayne. They made a total of five dives on the site, spending an hour documenting and collecting locational data. Unfortunately, in the months since the beautiful drone photographs in Carlsbad Magazine were taken, most of the wreck had been re-covered by sand, leaving only a small portion of metal machinery exposed (Figure 6). The machinery is possibly part of the freezer system or the live bait wells. Archaeologists also observed sections of the hull, planking, and small wooden futtocks (Figure 7).

Divers attempted to collect imagery for photogrammetric modeling of the site, but due to large surge and sediment in the water column, this was unsuccessful. However, the brief project can be considered successful due to the locational information gathered and subsequent filing of a State Archaeological Site Form, the first official documentation of the archaeological site of Glenn Mayne (Dodds 2018).

Figure 5. Image of submerged Glenn Mayne. Photo courtesy of Carlsbad Magazine.
CONCLUSIONS

Because of California’s dynamic coastline and weather patterns which move large amounts of sand and other sediments, "Glenn Mayne" is not unique in being a site that is only exposed partially and for brief periods of time. It is important that these sites are documented quickly and site forms are filed in order to ensure that state records are accurate and that the institutions who manage these waters are aware of what resources they are responsible for. Underwater archaeological sites should be documented, protected, and managed to the same standard as their terrestrial counterparts. The "Glenn Mayne" documentation is part of a new effort to document California’s submerged cultural resources to bring underwater archaeology to the
same standard as terrestrial archaeology in California, and archaeologists hope that this trend will continue until California has an accurate documentation of its submerged archaeological sites.

Glenn Mayne is a good case study of different site formation processes acting on a submerged site. Currents that covered the site to protect it have now exposed it, which has allowed archaeologists to record this nonrenewable resource. The human element and public involvement brought the wreck to State Park’s attention, which aids in awareness and understanding of the site in order to project it and have a better understanding of the past. However, this same public awareness now also leaves the wreck vulnerable to damage. This balance between protection of sites and public awareness as demonstrated by Glenn Mayne will be a challenge that archaeologists will continue to face with such sites.

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