4 Form No. 10-306 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES **INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The wreck site of S.S. Winfield Scott

is a unit of Channel Islands National Park, Ventura, California. The vessel wrecked on December 2, 1853. The remains of the ship lie in variable depths of 15 to 30 feet on a sand and rock bottom which is obscured at different times of the year by a heavy growth of kelp and sea grass.

S.S. Winfield Scott As Built

Launched on October 27, 1850, Winfield Scott was a 225-foot-long wooden-hulled side-wheel steamship of 1291 tons, with a 34-foot, 8-inch beam, and a 29-foot-2-inch depth of hold. [1] The hull, built principally of oak, was fastened with yellow metal (copper, brass, and bronze) fittings and was reinforced by heavy straps of wrought iron running diagonally between the frames and planks throughout the hull. The bottom of the hull was sheathed with copper for protection from marine organisms. A contemporary account noted that "her stem is very sharp, and her line partakes somewhat of the 'hollow' kind, beautifully swelling to her extreme width, and as beautifully tapering off again as they approach her stern." [2] The ship was rigged with a moderate barkentine rig.

There were three decks and four levels in the ship. On the spar deck, in addition to the masts, rigging, funnel, lifeboats and other deck gear, was the long cabin housing the galley, wheelhouse and offices. Below decks lay accommodations for 315 passengers. Descending from the main deck the embarking passenger passed first through the general drawing room, lined with sofas along its entire length, with entrances to first-class cabins and staterooms on the sides. Forward on the same deck was the general saloon, its sides also lined with doors that opened into cabins. One deck below was the dining salon, its sides also lined with doors that opened into cabins, where 100 people could be seated and eat in comfort. The next level was that occupied by the steerage passengers, and below that the spaces for baggage, coal, cargo, and the engines. The ship was wellventilated and lighted by corridors, light wells, and by prisms of glass set into the decks. [3]

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The double side-lever engines, manufactured by T. F. Secor and Co. of New York, were made of both cast and wrought iron, with two cylinders, each 66 inches in diameter with an 8-foot stroke. Atop each piston rod were crossheads, attached to connecting rods that ran down to the base of the engines where the side levers were mounted. Pivoting on the center, and rocking with the movement of the pistons, the side levers in turn were connected to short connecting rods that were joined by a crosstail. A single shaft ran from each crosstail to the eccentrics, which transformed the up-and-down motion of the side levers into a circular motion that rotated the paddle-wheel shafts. Two ironand wooden paddle wheels were located slightly aft of midships and could be worked independently. The engines were powered by two iron-flue boilers that were coal-fired. Coal bunkers fed by scuttles that ran from the main deck flanked the engines. [4]

Archeological Remains of S.S. Winfield Scott

Obvious physical remains of S.S. Winfield Scott lie directly adjacent to the rock that claimed the vessel on Dec. 2, 1853. preliminary survey and reconnaissance in 1982 produced a scale map of the visible portions of the wreck, which is appended to this nomination. Approximately 10% of the area of the ship is exposed, the midship portion of the hull complete with the engine bedplates and substantial portions of the engines. Considerable wooden structure has survived, partially covered by sand and iron Through-hull fittings, yellow-metal drifts and spikes, wrought iron diagonal strapping, and exposed copper sheathing can be observed. Frames and outer-hull planking can be seen, and it is likely that inner-hull planking (ceiling planking) has survived where protected by a sand overburden. Conversations with sport divers who have visited the wreck during a 20-year period also indicate that additional portions of the stern section are exposed by seasonal sand migration from a large, open sand pocket adjacent to the almost constantly exposed midship portions.

Substantial pieces of engine remain on the site. Observed and identified remains include both paddlewheels, one paddle shaft, a crosshead with connecting rods attached, the base of a cylinder, a crosstail, numerous intermediate shafts, a substantial pile of anthracite coal, fire bricks, and a side lever. Heavy concretion

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obscures dozens of additional large iron objects and defy precise identification at this time. It is estimated from both the identified and unidentified engine remains that approximately 50% of the large engine components, perhaps more, are in place on the site. This, as well as the known survival of approximately 20% of intact hull structure, and a surmised but not verified survival of an additional 10 to 15% of bottom hull structure, points to a remarkable amount of integrity for physical remains of the ship in a shallow-water exposed environment.

Assemblage of Material Culture Recovered From Site

The range of artifacts from the site fall into two major groups: maritime architectural elements and material associated with shipboard life, and personal items carried as baggage. Maritime architectural items include ship fastenings, such as copper and brass drifts, brass spikes, brass nails, copper-sheathing nails, and copper sheathing, both fragmentary and complete. Many recovered drifts and spikes have fragmentary wooden remains attached, and clinch rings are evident on some drifts. Fastenings from the upper works joinery include brass wood screws, nails, and small bolts. Hardware includes locking mechanisms, keyholes, brass skeleton keys, pivot hinges for salon doors, pull rings, portholes, and brass double hinges.

Ornamental-pane glass, glass prisms (embedded in the decks to allow light below), and fragments of glass lamp chimneys have also been recovered. Smaller portions of the engines include brass steam-gauge housings, lead steam pipes, brass rivets, a large piece of a "rose" (seawater intake filter), copper tubing, copper wire, tin glass mounts (from gauges), and brass bolts and nuts. Additional material includes brass maul heads, brass luggage tags, firing mechanisms from flintlock and percussion muskets, rifles, and pistols, lead pistol and musket balls, cannonballs (from the ship's signal gun), gold and silver coins of varying denominations, belt buckles and buttons (some military), gold jewelry, gold flakes and nuggets, a range of ceramics including earthenware plates, spittoons, chamberpots, and hundreds of sherds, some maker-marked. A large quantity of glassware includes intact and broken champagne, wine and liquor bottles, medicine bottles, and glassware containers for preserved The latter category includes fluted catsup bottles foodstuffs.

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and square "cathedral glass" bottles. Cut-crystal wineglasses, salt cellars, and bowls have been recovered both in fragments and intact.

Undoubtedly present at the site are a wide range of ship fittings of all types, smaller portions of the engines and machinery, and considerable portions of shipboard provisions, tools, serving wares, private baggage including organic materials in untested, undisturbed areas of the sea bottom adjacent to the exposed sections of the wreck.

Archeological Documentation

In April 1982 and May 1983, National Park Service archeologists and divers visited the wreck site for the purposes of diver training and documentation of the resource. A site map has been produced showing visible structural elements and natural features. Numerous photographs and video footage, divers' sketches, and magnetometer readings have been made of the site and its features. Artifacts known to have been taken from the wreck site have been inventoried, photographed, and described. An Archeological Site Survey form has been completed documenting the wreck site in the State of California, Office of Historic Preservation's site survey system. Marine metal detectors indicate considerable buried metallic materials hidden by sand drifts and between seabed rock outcroppings.

- Enrollment #45, Port of New York, May 21, 1851. Certificates of Enrollment for American Flag Vessels, Record Group 46, National Archives, Washington, D.C.
- 2 Eric Heyl, <u>Early American Steamers</u> (Buffalo, New York: Author, 1953) pp. 457-458.
- 3
 Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion (Boston) July 15,
 1851.
- 4 Ibid.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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SPECIFIC DATES 1851-1853

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Westervelt and McKay

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The steamship Winfield Scott, which wrecked on the California coast on December 2, 1853, during the Calliornia Gold Rush, was one of a handful of pioneer steamships to initiate and sustain steam passenger service between Panama and San Francisco, and as such, she served an important role in the development of both regions. In her hold she carried mail, passengers and baggage, all important to the development of the region as well as to the development of coastal maritime trade, which was the principal economic activity on the Pacific for almost a century after the Gold Rush. As such she is of Regional Significance in the area of Transportation. The intact and nearly intact portions of the vessel's hull and steam-propulsion machinery can be studied and valuable hitherto undocumented evidence obtained, because Scott was one of a few located and accessible steamships built in the earliest years of regular steam navigation in the United States. Hence the remains are of Regional Significance in the areas of naval Architecture and marine Engineering. The remains of the vessel, her machinery, and the assemblage of material cultural items associated with the site can offer valuable information about shipboard life and the role of ocean-going steamers on a principal American frontier. Utilizing archeological techniques, historical research through a variety of surviving documents and anthropological evaluations, and combining all approaches into a comprehensive interdisciplinary study of the site, a number of research questions could be formulated and answered. Therefore the site is of Regional significance in the area of Historic Archeology. Additionally, S.S. Winfield Scott, because of her role in the California Gold Rush, an event of national significance and impact, is also Nationally significant in the area of Exploration/Settlement.

This nomination is submitted by both the National Park Service and the State of California inasmuch as the site, while resting

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within the boundaries of Channel Islands National Park and the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary, rests on portions of the sea bed controlled by the State of California, State Lands Commission.

S.S. Winfield Scott in the Gold Rush

The discovery of gold in California sparked a major migration by land and sea to the western shore of the North American continent. A large number of vessels were pressed into service to carry passengers to California; among these were a number of steamships. Beginning with the steamer Tennessee, first of a number of steam-powered ships to be interrupted in service and sent into the Pacific, a variety of steamers were impressed into gold rush operations. As the number of steamers sent from the Atlantic increased, new vessels were laid down to replace them. One such steamer was Winfield Scott. A product of the veteran New York shipyards of Westervelt and MacKay, Winfield Scott was named for the popular Bvt. Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott who had led the United States Army to victory over Mexico in 1847-1848. Unlike his compatriot, fellow war hero Maj. Gen. Zachary Taylor, Scott never achieved the presidency (despite an 1852 candidacy). Nevertheless, he was foremost in the minds of some of his countrymen, as the christening of Winfield Scott indicates. As a further honor Scott carried a gilded bust of her namesake in a niche on her straight stem.

After operating between New York and New Orleans through 1851, Winfield Scott was sent to the Pacific Coast to profit from the Gold Rush. She was intended to run between Panama and San Francisco in opposition to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, then the principal steamship line on the West Coast. Joining the steamer United States, Winfield Scott became part of Davis, Brooks and Co.'s newly incorporated New York and San Francisco Steamship Line. United States would operate between New York and Chagres; passengers would hike overland across the Isthmus to connect with Winfield Scott on the Pacific side. In a handbill advertising the new line, the company noted:

The reputation of this line of steamers, for speed and accommodations for passengers, cannot be surpassed. The UNITED STATES has made two

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trips to Chagres, performing admirably, and the WINFIELD SCOTT earned her reputation in the New-York and New-Orleans line. [1]

Winfield Scott left New York on Jan. 26, 1852. Just 21 days and 15 hours later she arrived in Rio de Janeiro--the shortest passage yet made to that port, according to the press--and on Feb. 26 steamed for Valparaiso, Chile, on the Pacific. Navigating the Straits of Magellan, Winfield Scott arrived in the Pacific in short order, and soon steamed into Panama Bay. Unfortunately for those customers of the New York and San Francisco steamship Line who had sailed on United States on March 26 and hoped to connect with Scott at Panama on April 10, Winfield Scott was almost a week "late." Departing Panama with additional passengers, Winfield Scott arrived in San Francisco on April 28, 1852. She was graciously greeted by the town, and despite her "tardy" arrival in Panama it was noted that her passage from New York to Panama--48 days, 10 hours-- was the quickest on record. [2] The speed of Winfield Scott soon became her hallmark, and she became a popular vessel on the Panama Passages cost \$350 for a first cabin berth, \$255 for a second cabin berth, and \$200 for a steerage berth. Fresh meat was provided for the passengers by means of pens "forward the wheelhouse" on deck, where cattle, sheep, and pigs were kept. Fresh vegetables were procured from stops along the way (usually Acapulco, Mexico). Other "refreshments" were also available; passenger L.M. Schaeffer, on board Scott for the first trip from San Francisco to Panama, remarked upon a "little crib" on the larboard side of the steamer near the foremast that "attracted" more visitors than any other part of the vessel, being the place for retailing the `ardent;' twenty-five cents would procure a glass of brandy, plain, thirty-eight cents brandy with ice." [3]

The vessel was usually overcrowded, a common feature on ships on the Panama Route, since they were generally filled with people in a hurry to get to the "diggins" or home. As Schaeffer noted, the inconveniences created by overcrowding mattered little: "all we wanted was a speedy passage home." Accommodations varied; some slept far down in the hold, well below the water line, in berths so tightly packed that a man had difficulty in getting through. For these bunks, passengers paid \$75 each, sleeping amidst the constant banging of the machinery and the oppressive heat of the

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boilers and engineroom. Other berths were arranged on higher decks, culminating in the first cabin, whose passengers paid \$350 and gained "first table" (that is, being the first served), "choice of staterooms, and the privileges and hospitalities of the whole vessel." A standard voyage lasted two weeks.

Back and forth on her trips up and down the Pacific coastline, Winfield Scott carried thousands of eager gold-seekers north to San Francisco and the possibilities of riches. On her return voyages south to Panama she carried the few that had "made their pile," those who had called it quits after gaining much less than they had anticipated, and the many who returned home broke and broken, "stretched upon the decks, lost to all sense of hope or fear, and only wishing for grim death to remove them from this miserable world." Schaeffer remarked that they "looked more dead than alive; their constitutions completely broken down by sickness and exposure at the mines." [4] Tending these men on the trips south, and others stricken with yellow fever and malaria in Panama on the way north, the ship's surgeon always had his hands Inside her hold, Winfield Scott, like her compatriots on the Panama Route, carried the bulk of passengers, cargo, and bullion between the East and West Coasts, helping to create, in the process, a new California.

Between April of 1852 and April of 1853, Winfield Scott made several voyages for the New York and San Francisco Steamship Line. In October of 1852, she was joined by the steamer Cortes, which became her running mate. The two steamers were intended to voyage with others, since the New York and San Francisco Steamship Line was looking toward expansion. That move was forestalled in the summer of 1853 when Cortes was purchased by the Independent Steamship Line (sometimes known as the Vanderbilt Line) to run between San Francisco and an alternate route via Nicaragua, and Winfield Scott was purchased by the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. [5] The Pacific Mail had retained its first place in the Pacific, but at great cost, since many opposing companies (like the New York and San Francisco Steamship Line) had come into being. The purchase of Winfield Scott fortuitously offset the loss of the Pacific Mail steamer Tennessee on March 6, 1853, and bolstered the Pacific Mail fleet, whose steamers were too small and too old to keep pace with the more modern vessels then coming into the trade. Entering the Pacific Mail rolls on

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July 20, 1853 (having been purchased on the eighth of the same month), <u>Winfield Scott</u> was to make only a few more voyages until she met her end.

On Dec. 1, 1853, Winfield Scott, under the command of Capt. Simon F. Blunt, U.S.N., set sail for Panama. In her strongroom, Scott carried \$801,871 in gold and several tons of mail bound for the East Coast. [6] A few hundred passengers, including many Army officers, were on board. Scott made a good passage down the coast, and by the evening of December 2 was entering the Santa Barbara Channel off the California coast. During dinner a heavy fog set in, but Captain Blunt, confident of his position, ordered that the ship continue on her course. By about 9 o'clock nearly everyone on the steamer had gone to bed. Unknown to them, Winfield Scott, instead of steaming between Anacapa and Santa Cruz Islands as Capt. Blunt had intended, had missed the passage and was heading directly for Anacapa Island.

Around 11 o'clock, while running at full speed, Scott struck an outcropping of rock

the steamer began to sink, Captain Blunt gave the order to abandon ship. Life preservers were handed out, and a boat was lowered to search for a safe landing place. A group of men rushed the boat but were held off at gunpoint by the captain and his officers. Gradually all the boats were filled and passengers and crew were safely landed

Provisions were secured from the now partially submerged ship, and camp was set up on the desolate island. [7]

On the morning of Dec. 3, Capt. Blunt sent a boat to the mainland--12 miles distant--for help. Arriving in Santa Barbara, the boat carried a dispatch from Capt. Blunt addressed to the Pacific Mail's San Francisco agent. Ironically, a former PMSCC agent, Alfred Robinson (then a resident of Santa Barbara) earned \$1,000 for riding to San Francisco with the dispatch. Rescue for some came sooner, though. On Dec. 3, the Pacific Mail steamer California passed the island and took off some of the stranded passengers. Too full to take any more, California, en route to San Francisco, promised to send help. The news of the wreck created quite an uproar in San Francisco, and the steam tug Goliah, the steamer Republic, and California were dispatched to Anacapa Island.

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Goliah arrived at the island on Dec. 5, landed some provisions and stood by. She took no one off the island because they wished to await a larger vessel and the provisions were holding out.

Goliah left at 4 p.m. the same day, arriving in Santa Barbara at 6 p.m. She then steamed to San Francisco, arriving the next day. The steamer California arrived at the wreck on Dec. 10, just as the situation on the island was getting desperate. With Goliah gone and no other vessel in the area to provide them with provisions, the passengers had nearly depleted the meager resources of the island.

The officers and crew of Scott remained on the island to await the arrival of Republic, hoping to salvage whatever they could from the wreck with the crew of the rescue ship. On the 10th the steamer Southerner arrived at the island and visited with the shipwrecked crew. They reported, upon their arrival in San Francisco, that morale was high, with "not a murmur of complaint," but that Scott was in bad shape:

Considerable baggage and about half the mails are still on board the Winfield Scott, under water. There are no hopes of saving either the mails or the machinery of the ship. [8]

Southerner did report, however, that, "So far, the Scott has resisted the action of the breakers." Republic also arrived on the 10th, and found the ship "on the rocks and bilged, her midship section much sunk." Abandoning all hopes of saving the ship, Blunt turned the crews to stripping whatever could be saved from the shattered hulk. Winfield Scott was briefly mentioned in January of 1854 as possibly being worthy of salvage, but evidently nothing came of it as there is no further mention.

Archeological Potential

Despite 19th century salvage activity and periodic sport diver collection activities, <u>Winfield Scott</u> retains a high level of resource integrity. The majority of the site resources lie beneath sand overburden which has not been excavated. The 10% of the site which lies exposed on the rocks has not been "picked clean" by sport divers and recent professional surveys have disclosed intact glass bottles, copper ship fittings, and

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ceramics. The nature of the extant resources is extensive and has not been seriously depleted by minor sport diver activity. Although 19th century salvage resulted in removal of parts of the ship's engines and portions of the hull, significant portions of both structural elements remain for study.

Archeological research activities at the site can document details of Winfield Scott's wooden hull's construction, particularly the use of diagonal iron strapping, a feature commonly used in steamers of the period but rarely archeologically examined. The substantial remains of the engines offer the opportunity to document a vanished type of marine steam engine. Engine plans are extremely rare and do not depict details of connections, castings, and instruments. Archeological documentation of Winfield Scott's engines will add to the scarce record available.

Material culture known to exist at the site can be used to assess 1) shipboard life, specifically provisioning, through glass and ceramic containers and 2) baggage of passengers as indicators of goods purchased or curated for the return voyage "home." Archeological investigation of the remains of S.S. Tennessee, a Panama route steamship lost the same year as Winfield Scott, may yield information concerning items shipped to California; Winfield Scott's material cultural assemblage may yield information on what was being shipped from California during the Gold Rush era. Winfield Scott and Tennessee are unique archeological resources; both represent the only available means for assessing the Panama route's steamers in American territorial waters and are comparative resources which form a study collection.

- Broadside, original in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
- John Haskell Kemble, <u>The Panama Route</u>, <u>1848-1869</u> (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1943) p. 64.
- L.M. Schaeffer, Sketches of Travel in South America, Mexico, and California (New York: James Egbert, 1860), p. 227.

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* Schaeffer, <u>Sketches of Travel</u>, p. 223, 227.

5 Kemble, p. 65.

6
San Francisco Alta California, Dec. 1, 1853.

Asa Cyrus Call, "Diary," in the collections of the California Historical Society, San Francisco. Entry for Dec. 5, 1853; Edward Bosqui, Memoirs of Edward Bosqui (Oakland: Holmes Book Company, 1953), p. 60; Ventura Free Press, Jan. 17, 1896. Recollections of the wreck of the Winfield Scott by F.S. Crane, a passenger.

8 San Francisco Alta California, Dec. 13 and 15, 1853.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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