

MORICHES INLET

Anchor salvaged from 1886 wreck



Patrick Rooney, left, realizes his dream of salvaging a 3-ton anchor from an 1886 shipwreck. He hauled it up off Moriches Inlet with help from Robert Hart, center, and Charles Hart.

BY BILL BLEYER

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In three decades of scuba diving off the South Shore, Patrick Rooney of Copiague has visited one of his favorite wrecks, the Cunard liner Oregon, more than a thousand times.

He has filled a room with portholes, watches, dishes, rings, gold coins and other artifacts from the vessel that sank in 1886, 15 miles south of Moriches Inlet, after colliding with a schooner.

But on Saturday he came home with by far the biggest relic yet — a 13-foot-high anchor weighing 3 tons.

It took two boats, a winch and crane and five divers to bring the anchor to the surface and to a West Sayville marina.

Rooney, 45, a tile-setter who spends his weekends working as a mate on the diveboat Lockness out of Freeport, first spotted the anchor about 10 years ago.

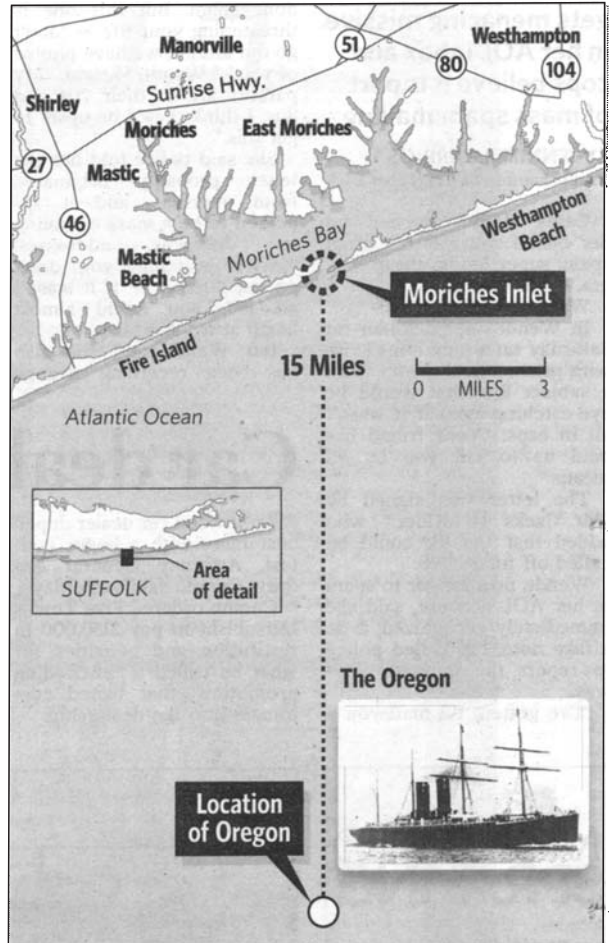
"It was just lying there next to the wreck," he said. It is a rare Trotman anchor that the Oregon used as an auxiliary or backup anchor stored on deck.

The idea of raising it had been bouncing around inside Rooney's head for about five years.

On Saturday, he chartered the Lockness and invited 16 diving buddies along. He arranged with Charles and Robert Hart, owners of Shellfish Marine in West Sayville to bring their 62-foot surf clam fishing boat, Susan H., out to do the lifting.

After the Lockness arrived over the wreck around 9 a.m., Rooney and other divers attached ropes and a chain bridle, which was attached to a winch cable on the Susan H.

The winch pulled the anchor up to just below the surface in under 20 minutes, Rooney said.



SOURCE: MAPSTUDIO.COM

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"It felt like an eternity," he added. A crane took over for the final lift up to the side of a fishing boat, Robert Hart said.

Rooney said he's making arrangements with a local company to sand off marine growth and rust and coat the anchor with a preservative.

Then he plans to exhibit his find at Long Island Scuba, a Lindenhurst dive shop, and his front lawn before donating

it, probably to the Long Island Maritime Museum in West Sayville.

"Wow," museum director JoAnne Brintrup said when told of the recovery. "I'm sure our board would be very happy to accept it."

In the meantime, Rooney's wife, Susan, is resigned to having a large lawn ornament. "The house is already decorated with a nautical theme so it will fit right in," she said.