Science, Service, Stewardship

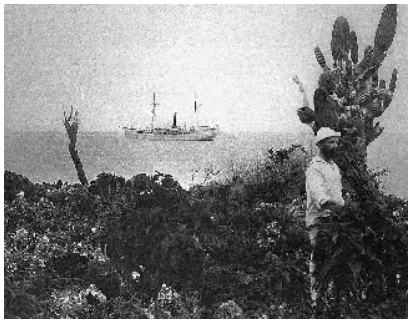
NOAA SHIP *ALBATROSS I*

NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Albatross I: In Service 1882-1921

- Length 234 feet
- Beam 27 feet 6 inches
- Draft 12 feet
- Displacement 384 tons
- Cruising Speed 10 knots

http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/history/ships/albatross1/albatross1.html



Albatross I in the Galapagos Islands

Albatross I

This 234-foot steamer, also rigged as a brigantine with more than 7,500 square feet of sail, was the first research vessel in the world constructed exclusively for marine research. In 1881, at the suggestion of Commissioner Spencer Fullerton Baird, first head of the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries (today NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service), Congress authorized an appropriation of $148,000 for the construction of the vessel. The keel was laid in March 1882, and the ship was launched in Wilmington, Delaware in October.

After trial runs in the winter of 1882 -83, *Albatross* made its first scientific cruise in the summer of 1883 between Washington, D.C., and Woods Hole, MA, where Baird had established a research laboratory in 1871, investigating the fishes and ocean bottom in a wide area of the coastal shelf and Gulf Stream. On this first cruise, *Albatross* began amassing what was destined to become one of the greatest collections of marine organisms ever made by a single vessel. Hundreds of scientific research papers have been written based on specimens collected and observations made from this vessel.

During its forty years of service *Albatross* surveyed the Newfoundland Banks and Northwest Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, the Pacific Ocean, and the Bering Sea. The vessel visited scattered archipelagoes of the Pacific, including the Philippines and the Hawaiian and Galapagos Islands, and worked off the west coasts of Mexico and Central and South America. Among its special Pacific expeditions were three led by Alexander Agassiz of Harvard University.

The vessel left research briefly to serve in two wars, with assignment to the U.S. Navy in 1898-99 during the war with Spain and again from 1917-19 conducting patrol duty in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico during World War I.

After World War I *Albatross* returned to marine research in the North Atlantic after a 30-year absence. A 1920 survey in the Gulf of Maine under the direction of biologist Henry B. Bigelow of Harvard University, conducting hydrographic and biological investigations, was its last scientific trip. The vessel was decommissioned on October 29, 1921 at its home port in Woods Hole.