

ACTIVITY: Swimming

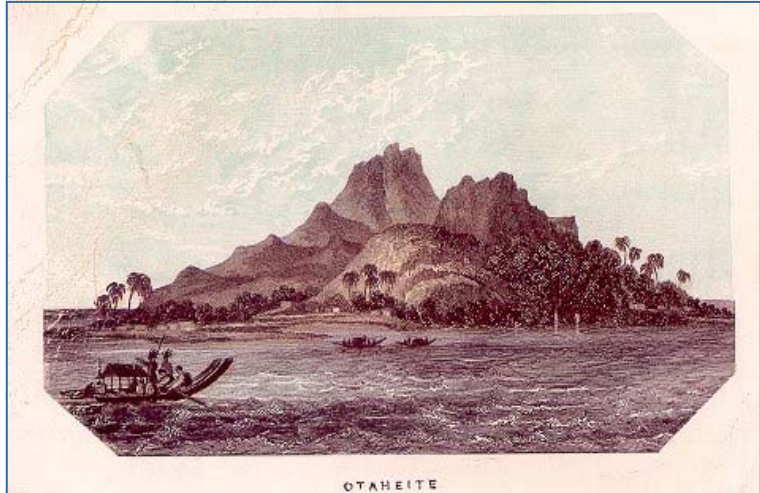
CASE: [GSAF 1834.07.15.R](#)

DATE: Reported July 15, 1834

LOCATION: The incident took place at Tahiti (formerly Otaheite), French Polynesia, or in the harbor at Tongapatu, Kingdom of Tonga.

NAME: Kaugatava Orurutm

DESCRIPTION: She was a female from Tahiti and the wife of Captain F. Spooner of the *Erie*, a whaling ship from Rhode Island, USA.



BACKGROUND

The Erie, sailed on her South Pacific whaling voyage in April, 1832. F. Spooner was her commander, but he left the ship at the Society Islands (French Polynesia), and the command then devolved upon A. W. Dennis.

NARRATIVE: "Soon after her marriage, in order to gratify her beloved spouse with a specimen of her skill in the art of swimming, she leaped from the deck of the ship, and while displaying her delicate form in the most enchanting manner on the unruffled water, a hammer-headed Shark bit her in two, and swallowed her in two mouthfuls."



INJURY: Fatal

SPECIES: The incident allegedly involved a hammerhead shark.

SOURCES: Republican Banner (Gettysburg, PA), Tuesday, July 15, 1834; Robert McNab (1913) *The Old Whaling Days: A History of Southern New Zealand from 1830 to 1840*, Whitcomb and Tombs (see Chapter XI. *The American Whalers, 1834 to 1837*).

FISH AND FLESH.—It was announced but a few weeks since that captain SPOONER, of the whale ship *Erie*, of Warren, R. I. had been married to Mademoiselle KAUGATAVA ORURUTM, a lovely, delicate and beautiful maiden belonging to Otaheite. Soon after her marriage, in order to gratify her beloved spouse with a specimen of her skill in the art of swimming, she leaped from the deck of the ship, and while displaying her delicate form in the most enchanting manner on the unruffled water, a hammer-headed Shark bit her in two, and swallowed her in two mouthfuls.

Another source gives the location of the accident as the harbor of Tongatapu in the

British whaler *Japan* in 1832-33, recorded an interesting meeting with the *Erie* of Fairhaven, whose captain had his Tahitian wife aboard, "considered a remarkably handsome female"; sadly, shortly thereafter she was killed by a shark while swimming in the harbor of Tongatapu.⁴⁷

Whaling Will Never Do For Me: The American Whaleman in the Nineteenth Century
by Briton Cooper Busch. Page 145