



OBJECT ID	2003.36.1.1
OBJECT NAME	Card, Souvenir
MATERIAL	Paper
OBJECT ENTITIES	Sponge diver, Daisy Farmakis (is related to)
ACCESS POINTS	Sponge Diving, Boat, Greeks in Tarpon Springs

OBJECT DESCRIPTION

A black and white postcard of a man in a diving costume. He is holding a basket of sea sponges in his left hand, and a stick with a sponge on it in his right hand. He is standing in front of a boat with "Nicholas" painted on it. At the bottom of the postcard, in white writing, it reads, "Captain Mike Billiris/ The Diver on diving boat/ St. Nicholas III/ Tarpon Springs, FL."

ORIGIN

Daisy Farmakis donated various postcards of the Greeks of Tarpon Springs, FL. Particularly, sponge divers.

It is unknown when exactly the sponge became an article of use. In Ancient Greek writings, Plato and Homer mentioned the sponge as an object used for bathing. Through trading, Europeans used soft sponges for many purposes including padding for helmets, portable drinking utensils and municipal water filters. Until the invention of synthetic sponges, they were used as cleaning tools, applicators for paints and ceramic glazes and discreet contraceptives. However by the mid-20th century, over-fishing brought both the animals and the industry close to extinction.

In Kalymnos, only 18% of the steep volcanic land could be cultivated, so the main professions were trading, boat building and sponge fishing, which perhaps was the oldest profession on the island. Diving for sponges brought social and economical development to the island where the free-diving method was used. Kalymnos was the main center of production in the Aegean, and still now is a traditional occupation with related exhibitions, along with other local folklore, at three local museums.

The crew went out into the Mediterranean Sea in a small boat, and used a cylindrical object with a glass bottom to search the ocean floor for sponges. When one was found, a diver went overboard to get it. Free diving, he was usually naked and carried a 15 kilograms (33 lb) skandalopetra, a rounded stone tied on a rope to the boat, to take him down to the bottom quickly. The diver then cut the sponge loose from the bottom and put a special net around it. Depth and bottom time depended on the diver's lung capacity. They often went down to about 30 metres (100 ft) for up to 5 minutes. [

CITATION

Card, Souvenir, *National Hellenic Museum*, <https://collections.nationalhellenicmuseum.org/Detail/objects/>. Accessed 04/25/24.
