

MARITIMES

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Maritime Archaeological Research Institute



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Hello *Maritimes* Subscribers.

It has been an eventful few months. The news since our last includes some remarkable treasure finds as well as the passing of a treasure diving pioneer and legend Robert F. Marx

Long time historical shipwreck salvor Captain Kym Ferrell recently made a significant find of coins and artifacts at the 1715 fleet wreck site commonly known as the Cabin Wreck, just south of the Sebastian Inlet. He and the crew of the M/V *Carib*, along with support from partner Bill Black, recovered some 44 silver coins and several nice silver artifacts. Most of the coins are 8-reales specimens including some fused together in small clumps. One unique coin appears to have had its origins possibly from an old-world Spanish mint. More will be learned upon cleaning and conservation of the coins and artifacts. Congratulations to Captain Kym, Bill and the crew of the M/V *Carib*!!

Bill Black graciously wrote the story about the impressive find exclusively for the Fall issue of *Maritimes*.

Other 1715 Fleet news includes a blast from the past as Bruce Ward's passing went largely unnoticed by the treasure diving community, but that seems about to change as his treasure collection is about to go to auction. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to travel to Arkansas and assess the collection. Thus, twice in a little over a month I had the chance to hold piles of uncleaned Spanish cobs from the 1715 Fleet in the palm of my hand. To say they represented the extreme opposite ends of the spectrum as to when they were recovered would be an understatement. The first were the coins found by Bill Black's group just a couple months ago, (almost fresh off the bottom) about as recent as can be (bottom right). The second batch of coins (bottom left) were those found by Bruce Ward and his colleagues over half a century ago! They were discovered during the midst the bygone era known as the "Great Florida Gold Rush." I was privileged to hold two impressive piles of silver coins and although they were discovered over fifty years apart, some things never change... Treasure is Treasure and as such it will always and forever be...

THE STUFF DREAMS ARE MADE OF!



IT WAS A VERY GOOD DAY ON THE FLEET

Bill Black



The famed 1715 Plate Fleet on the Treasure Coast of eastern Florida no longer gives up her treasures willingly but every once in a while she lets the salvage fleet get a taste of what is left to find. The Cabin Wreck has been stingy with treasure for several years, but some salvors believe strongly that she still has much to give.

One of the most persistent of those Cabin Wreck fans is Captain Kym Ferrell. Captain Kym and I have been partners in our 1715 efforts for the last three years and I have not always shared his enthusiasm but Kym's experience on the Fleet almost always gets the nod, and ... he's driving the boat.

"The Boat" in this case is the *Carib*, a Stamas Americana built in 1965, repowered several times as a diesel inboard, she now sports a new 300 hp Cummins 6BT engine. She carries a 32-inch diameter blower and all the usual electronics, winches and about a ton of anchors and dive gear. *Carib* is owned by Search and Salvage (Bill Black) and operates under our C31 subcontract for 1715 Fleet - Queens Jewels, the folks who own the rights to all the 1715 wrecks. Due to Kym's ongoing 6-year battle with cancer, he declared the day we signed our subcontract that this was his last year as a salvor, coinciding with his 70th birthday.

On July 18th, 2019 the *Carib* headed out of the basin at the San Sebastian Marina, just like every day during the past three seasons on the 1715 Fleet salvage. Captain Kym Ferrell (as usual) at the helm with 50 years as a treasure salvor and boat captain all over Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean and the Bahamas under both power and sail. Aboard *Carib* were Captain Mike Penninger, retired Shuttle engineer and head diver, Jeff Harness, a retired teacher and full time *Carib* diver, Richard Rabon, deck boss and Andrew Tidball of Beach, North Dakota, a retired Marine and active Medevac helicopter pilot who came to dive with the crew and join in the search for lost Spanish treasure.

Leaving the basin there behind Outriggers Bar and Grill, the path is always the same...through the canal, into the San Sebastian River, a turn to port at the channel marker, head east and cross under the U.S. #1 bridge into the Indian River Lagoon. All of the San Sebastian River is a no wake zone as is the channel that leads from the River to the Intracoastal Waterway the crew chatters and jokes a bit while getting their gear and their heads ready for the day.

From the intracoastal to the Sebastian Inlet channel, under the A1A bridge, go east another half mile to swing wide around the Monster Hole sandbar and then south to where the wrecks of the 1715 Fleet lie. This day the *Carib* is headed for the Cabin Wreck, specifically to the GPS numbers that were derived from old LORAN numbers of Captain Mike's, where he found a big silver platter 26 years before on his treasure boat *Little Rosie*.

The Cabin Wreck has given up treasure for 304 years. From the Spanish salvors to the pirates who came to pluck the bones of the ships and scour the seabed "fishing" for treasure to the beachcombers who have happened upon coins on the beach and in the dunes and today's crews armed with every sort of metal detection device known to man, hoping to score "The Big Pile".



The routine every day is much the same...Carib uses a three-anchor setup most days, so it goes like this: drop a buoy on your carefully chosen starting position for the day. Drop your port anchor, steam south to your second anchor spot and drop your starboard anchor...then east to drop the bow anchor and back down to the buoy where you tighten up on your anchor lines and pray your anchors bit deep into the bottom and hold tight.

After setup comes suit-up time. Richard, Jeff and Andrew get the anchor lines tight and help Mike get dressed out to dive. Captain Kym assembles the Aqua Pulse AQ1B and tests it. As first diver, Mike has to check the rudder and prop for clearance and pin the blower in place. The deck crew lowers the 32-inch diameter blower into the water and Andrew steps off the transom onto the blower to hold it stationary for Mike to slide the pin through the blower and the bracket on the keel of *Carib* in just 8 feet of water.

That task completed, Mike returns to the dive ladder to wait while Captain Kym slips the Twin Disc transmission into gear and starts the first excavation of the day. After about 10 minutes of propwash diversion, the engine is idled down and the command "First Hole" sends Mike Penninger off the ladder and down to the seabed. Mike comes up about 5 or 6 minutes later and shakes his head and gives Kym his report on the bottom conditions, the visibility and the depth of the overburden, which in this case was about 4 feet. In response, the boat gets hand lined 6 feet back to the west and Hole #2 for the day is commenced. "Nothing" in that one", comes the call. On the third hole of the day, head diver Penninger eased off the dive ladder and dropped into the latest excavation. At the bottom of the hole he gets a light hit on the Aqua Pulse and hand fans a small tool on the bottom that looks unusual and takes it to the surface where it is well received, but Mike has had other hits in the hole...down he goes.

Just a few minutes later, Mike is back to the surface with the first coins for the *Carib* crew in two years, a nice chunky clump containing two 8-reales! Everyone on the boat is amped up, but Mike tells them that he needs to go dig some more hits in this hole. Just a couple minutes later he's back, with two pretty little 1-reales in his hand. More joy on the *Carib* but again, Mike says, "More hits" and dives again, this time returning with a four-coin clump! (This clump is the same one pictured with the beautiful round 8-Reales coin dated 1617 encrusted with three Mexican cobs). More joy... "More hits" and down he goes.



For another hour, Mike, assisted by now by Jeff Harness just keeps detecting and keeps fanning and brings up one here, two there, five then six then seven, well...then Mike and Jeff finally run out of air and Andrew gets a turn...



The North Dakota refugee finds a couple more 8-reales, two pieces of olive jar sherds and an encrusted object that I believe holds another coin or two. Kym and Richard spent the entire day bagging and tagging and admiring what was coming over the side of *Carib*. More coins in one day than any of us had seen in a very long time!

The total for this day was FORTY-THREE 8-reales coins, TWO 1-reales, one period tool, two pieces of a *botijas* jar and one 4-pound encrusted object.

By 4 o'clock, the afternoon sea breezes had kicked up enough to generate enough swell to make it unwise to try to keep working, so *Carib* carried her very happy crew back to the dock, where I met the crew and we admired and photographed and talked about the day over a drink or two.

About the coins: The 1617 coin that caps off the four-coin clump is a beautifully round coin that appears to be milled. If it is a milled coin with the Segovia mintmark (an aqueduct) on the reverse side, it is still a very rare coin to be found on a New World shipwreck and may be the only one found in the 1715 areas. If, when they clean it, it has a New World mint mark (L or P) then it is the rarest of rare...a "Silver Royal" and we'll all be even more blown away by how fortunate we have been to have made this find.

The two 1-reale coins are very nice, good remaining detail and almost full weight. The 8-reales are ALL very nice, well centered coins that are almost full weight on the scale. I have been asked if I have any idea why these coins were all together in one spot and of such uniform high quality. I do have a theory that I will share. It can never be proven, but I do like to try to understand how things happen.

I believe this was someone's personal coin purse/pouch. I feel that the owner was either a little OCD about symmetry and sorted through the coins he was given or earned and kept the prettiest ones or he worked in some capacity with coins...in the mint or something similar. Heck, maybe he was just a very early coin collector. Either way, we are in his debt.



Reset

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Work Vessel Carib

Weather and Sea State
Wind: NE@5 Seas:1-2' Sky: Cloudy

Crew
Mike Penninger/ Richardd Rabon

Visitors
/Andrew Tidball/Jeff Harness

Work Time Hrs. 10

Comments

Leave site: 4 PM Arrive dock: 430 PM

Today was a very good day!

Archaeological Field Notes and Materials Recovered and/or Located

Hole Anomaly #	Lat.	Decimal	Lon.	Decimal	Bottom Terrain Overburden Depth Water Visibility	Depth	Tag Number	Qty.	Description
155	27	49.8xx	80	25.7xx	Sand & rocks / 12' /3'	9			Nothing Found
156	27	49.8xx	80	25.7xx	" " / 6.5' / 3'	8			NF
157	27	49.8xx	80	25.7xx	" " / 7' / 2'	7	81346	1	Small tool (silver? bronze?)
158	27	49.8xx	80	25.7xx	" " /9 / 2'	7	81347	1	Clump of 2 eight reale cobs
159	27	49.8xx	80	25.7xx	" " /7' / 3'	7	81348	2	1 reales
							81349	1	8 reale
							79416	1	clump of (4) 8 reales - (top coin round)
							79417	2	8 reale
							79418	1	8 reale
							79419	5	8 reales
							79420	1	clump of (2) 8 reales
							79421	6	8 reales
							79422	1	Clump of (3) 8 reales
							79423	1	8 reale
							79424	7	8 reales
							79425	1	Clump of (2) 8 reales

Author's Note: I'm very proud of this crew. We have had a lot of days when we started early, ended late and had nothing to write on the log sheet but "Nothing Found." These guys show up and work on days when others have checked the weather forecast and gone back to sleep and it pays off!

ROBERT F. MARX

1936-2019

Indialantic - Robert F. Marx of Indialantic, Florida passed away peacefully at the age of 82 on the Fourth of July 2019 surrounded by his devoted wife and daughters. Bob was born on December 8, 1936, in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania. Leaving home at an early age, he embarked on a life of adventure that took him around the world and under the sea. A pioneer SCUBA diver, Bob was internationally known for his achievements in marine archaeology and maritime history. Besides being a mentor to many and a famous raconteur, Bob is best known for the archaeological excavation of the sunken city of Port Royal for the government of Jamaica as well as the discovery of the 1656 Spanish galleon *Nuestra Señora de las Maravillas* shipwrecked off Grand Bahama Island. His expedition was featured in a network television documentary *Treasure Galleon* narrated by Rod Serling.

A proud United States Marine, Bob was a Staff Sargent and the Director of the USMC Diving School, Vieques, Puerto Rico in the 1950s and a Korean War combat veteran.

Bob's many achievements include the discovery of previously unknown Mayan archaeological sites in Honduras and Yucatan and the reenactment of Columbus' 1492 transatlantic voyage on a replica of the *Niña II*, for which he was made a Knight Commander in the Spanish Government's Order of Isabel the Catholic. In 1964 and 1969 he was the organizer and captain of two voyages of replica Viking ships in order to demonstrate the possibility of pre-Columbian transatlantic contact.

He devoted as many years to archival research as he did to underwater exploration. His research led him to discover over 5,000 shipwrecks in over 60 countries including Phoenician and Roman shipwrecks in the Mediterranean, Chinese, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese shipwrecks in the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. Artifacts he discovered grace museum exhibits throughout the world. He also assisted in crafting shipwreck legislation for UNESCO and numerous national governments.

The author of over fifty books and 900 articles and papers Bob was Adventure Editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Archaeology Editor of *Argosy* magazine, and a movie and television consultant. A founding member of the Los Angeles Neptunes, the USMC Sea Urchins Diving Club, Camp Lejeune, N.C. and the Council of Underwater Archaeology, he was also an Explorer's Club Fellow since 1959.

A 50-year Florida resident, Bob moved to Brevard County to be Director of Research and Salvage for the Real Eight Company.

Bob is survived by his wife Jenifer Grant Marx, daughters Cheryl McKee (Knox), Man-O-War Cay, Abaco, Bahamas, India Frazier (Chris), Doylestown, PA and Hilary Gregory (John), Atlanta, GA; brothers Edward Marx, William Mehl, and Joseph Mehl; sisters Nancy Dombrowski and Gloria Gravely; grandsons Christopher and Robert Frazier, Jack and Hudson Gregory of whom he was very proud.

Following His Footsteps: My Path into Marine Archaeology

Robert F. Marx was one of my childhood hero's. I suppose much like my dad idolized Duke Snider and Harold "Pee Wee" Reese of the Brooklyn Dodgers, and looked up to them, Bob Marx was my "hero." I read all his books and it was those adventurous tales that captured my imagination that ultimately led me into a career as a professional marine archaeologist.

I was barely out of high school when I wrote Ellsworth Boyd at *Skin Diver* magazine a letter inquiring as to how to contact Robert Marx. He provided his mailing address but told me that Marx "had recently left for the Philippines and wouldn't be back until sometime in April." He provided some degree of hope however, suggesting "You could go ahead and write him, and I think he might respond when he gets back and gets settled." I took his advice and wrote Marx a letter, not sure if he would ever write me back. A few months later, I was thrilled to receive a reply. Marx wrote "Just home from the Philippines with a bad case of hepatitis, will keep your letter and let you know if I can ever use you in a caper." Best Regards, (signed) Bob Marx.

We began corresponding on a regular basis and about a year later, my best friend Billy Bolander made a road trip from Toledo to Florida to meet him. It was unseasonable cold that winter and when we pulled up to his house, Bob briskly approached the car and irately demanded to know "what had taken us so long?" Apparently, he was in the middle of dealing with some frozen pipes and thought we were the plumbers. When he found out we weren't plumbers, he challenged, "Well what the hell do you want?" Thoroughly intimidated by his gruff demeanor; it was almost enough to send me back to the car and intent on beating a hasty retreat back to Ohio with my tail between my legs. Billy was the one who quickly talked some sense into me saying "We drove all this way to meet him...tell him who you are." I did and although he was still in a foul mood and growing increasingly angrier by the minute waiting on the tardy plumbers, he was kind enough to sign a book for me.

Such was the pattern of our friendship and relationship for the next 30 years. One time, I would get a "What the hell do you want?" and the next he'd invite you into his office behind his house and we'd talk for hours. It just depended upon what sort of mood he happened to be in on any particular day. We talked about the 1715 Fleet, we'd talk about Port Royal, we'd talk about the *Maravilla* and a host of other shipwreck topics. His office was like a mini museum with artifacts spread across tables and displayed on bookshelves that were already strained to over-capacity.

Bob was particularly thrilled when I gave him a framed photo mosaic image of the *U-166*. The Type IXC German U-boat was the only Nazi submarine to have been sunk in the Gulf of Mexico during World War II. After the war, many people had searched for the elusive *U-166*, but it remained missing until its wreckage was discovered in 2001.

One afternoon, I stopped by for a visit and a few hours later Bob looked around the room and said "Jenifer is afraid I am going to kick the bucket and she is going to be left with all this stuff...pick something you want and I'll make you a good deal." I hastily interjected, "Bob, I can't afford any artifacts." He responded, "Come on Rob, pick out something...I'll make you an offer you can't refuse."

One artifact in particular had always caught my attention. The glass display case hung on the back wall of his office and inside were three flintlock pistols. I said, “Well Bob, I’ve always liked those pistols.” He retrieved the case from the wall and told me to pick the nicest one and I complied. He named his price and as promised, it was too good a deal to pass up. He then confessed a secret, “a lot of people assume these came from Port Royal but they didn’t.” I was quite familiar with the sunken pirate city and the tremendous amount of archeological work he had conducted on the site. Marx then confided in me that they had originated from an unidentified French wreck off the coast of Haiti. The multi-component (wood, brass, and steel) artifact had been beautifully conserved by Douglas Armstrong.



Flintlock pistol ca 1780.

I returned a week later with cash in hand to eagerly claim my prize. Bob handed me the beautiful pistol stating, “Now I gave you a really good deal that I wouldn’t have given to just anyone, you have to promise me that I’m not going to see this thing listed on Ebay tomorrow.” I solemnly replied, “Oh no Bob, this pistol is going to remain in my personal collection. I will pass it along to one of my children someday.” True to my word, I still have the treasured pistol almost two decades later.

Bob lived a life filled with adventure. Sometimes it was difficult to tell where the truth ended and the fiction began. Still even if only 10% of what Bob claimed was true, he lived an amazing and extraordinary life. He certainly had his fair share of detractors, but I chalk most of the criticism directed at him to professional jealousy. Marx did more for marine archaeology than most academic archaeologists in their ivory towers will ever be willing to admit.

I am proud to have followed in his footsteps as a marine archaeologist. Bob was at times cantankerous and grumpy, cynical and contemptuous, kind and compassionate. I witnessed those various characteristics in action on numerous occasions. However, beneath this cast iron exterior beat a heart of gold. He was never afraid to tell you how he felt about something, and how he felt wasn't always 'politically correct.' Bob was a devoted patriot. He was proud of having served his country in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and was quick to point out that he was NOT an Ex-Marine or even a "former" Marine." "There is no such thing as an Ex-Marine," he said, "Once a Marine, always a Marine." This sentiment holds true. Once the title "U.S. Marine" has been earned, it is retained, even after death. It was fittingly appropriate and perhaps poetic justice that this true American hero passed away on Independence Day.



Inside Bob's office – Indialantic, FL circa 2002.



**Our World Underwater Convention
Rosemont, Illinois – 2013.
Photo Credit: Kenneth Gentile**

Bob Marx was indeed many things, he was my mentor and my encourager, but above all else he was my friend.

Fair winds and following seas Sir Robert.

Treasure of the Spanish Main

Ben Costello

Director – 1715 Fleet Society

Recently a rather important anniversary slipped by the 1715 Fleet community (including me) unnoticed. It was over 50 years ago on February 4, 1967 that the famous “Treasure of the Spanish Main” auction took place at the Parke-Bernet Galleries in New York. The sale consisted of 331 lots of major treasures recovered by the Real Eight Company from the wreck sites of the 1715 Fleet.

The first session of the auction started promptly at 10:30 am on Saturday, February 4th. There were 100 lots in this session all of which were artifacts including, but not limited to, ship’s equipment, navigational instruments, utensils, jewelry, ingots and porcelain. These items sold for a combined total of \$104,195.00 including the famous Dragon Whistle (Lot 21) which itself sold for an astonishing (at that time) sum of \$50,000.00.

The second session at 1:45 PM in the afternoon consisted of gold and silver coins (cobs) from the Spanish colonial mints of Mexico City, Lima, Santa Fe de Bogota and Potosi. Consisting of 221 lots the total sales from this session was \$123,375.00. When you consider that recent auctions of this nature gross millions of dollars it is remarkable indeed that the total amount realized from this historic auction was a mere \$227,570.00! With all of the iconic artifacts and coins sold at this auction one can only wonder how much these items would realize today.

Auction Catalog Description courtesy www.sunkentreasurebooks.com

Parke-Bernet Galleries

Treasure of the Spanish Main

Contents: Coins, Jewelry, Artifacts, Ceramics, Bullion

Shipwreck(s): 1715 Fleet

Comments: Auction held on February 4, 1967 in New York City

Size: 7” x 10.25”

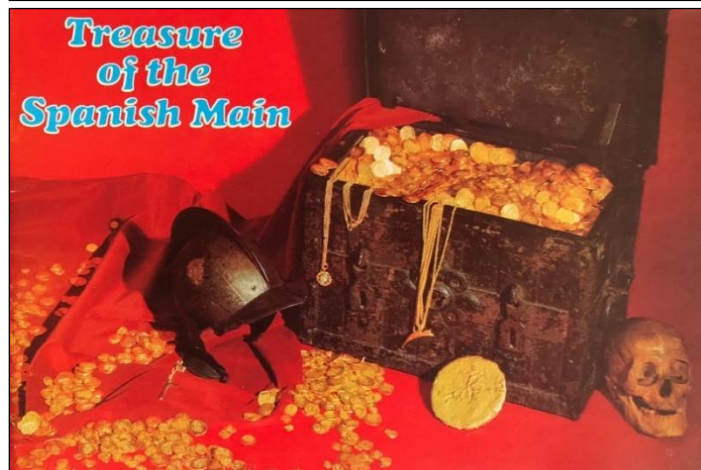
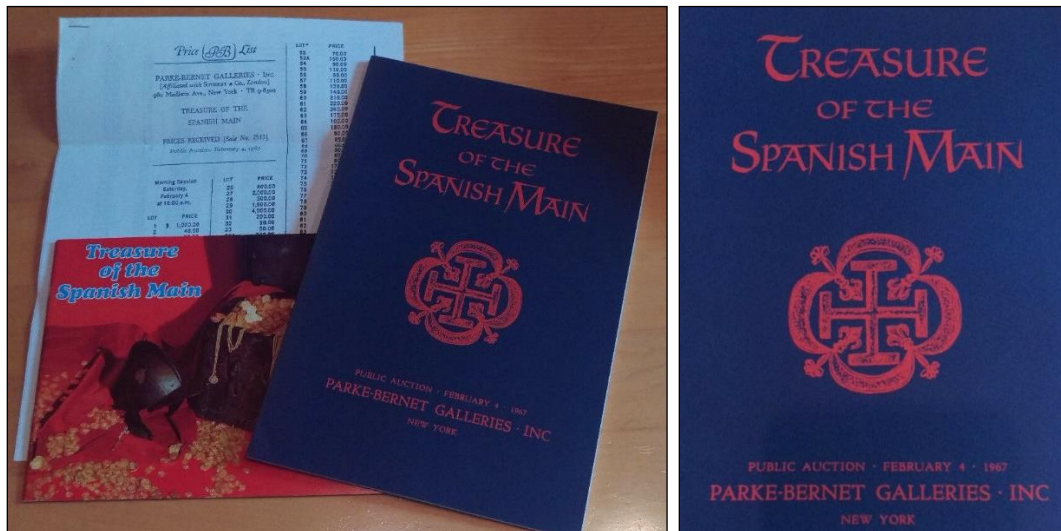
Pages: 97

Publisher: Published by Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., New York City (1967) in paperback.

Description: This auction catalog contains 241 lots of gold and silver cobs, 5 lots of gold and silver ingots, 10 lots of ceramics, 8 lots of jewelry (including the Captain-General’s Chain and Badge of Office from the 1715 Spanish Treasure Fleet – see #A-620), and 42 lots of artifacts that were recovered by the Real Eight Corporation from the 1715 Fleet off the east coast of Florida. This was one of the early 1715 Fleet auctions and includes photos of most of the items offered.

Editor’s Note: Galleon Research Group recently acquired a complete set of items associated with the ***Treasure of the Spanish Main*** auction of 1967 held by Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc. The rare set includes the following items...

1. MINT condition main auction catalog. About as mint as you can get from a 50+ year old auction. Never opened! Original owner purchased 6 that sat for years on a bookshelf. Pristine inside. Front and back as blue as the day they were printed.
2. UNUSED, Pre-sale color pamphlet. Once again, pristine on the inside. Near mint on the outside.
3. A copy of realized Price List from this important auction.



Anyone interested in purchasing this rare piece of treasure history from the 1715 Fleet archives please contact Galleon Research Group at www.galleonresearchgroup.com

A REAL-LIFE TREASURE STORY

Marco Orozco

We had no idea what we would stumble upon when we headed out to Jerusalem, Arkansas for an Estate Auction appointment. What we found was nothing short of incredible.

Who doesn't love a good "Treasure Story"? I'm sure we've all, at some point, dreamed of striking gold, or have at least been struck with curiosity over a story of buried treasure or sunken treasure ships! Something about it strikes our interest and imagination. We have recently been hired by the Estate of Bruce Ward, who was one of a small group of individuals who actually got the privilege of living out one of these incredible "Treasure Stories"! We are excited to help tell his story and hope that you will enjoy it too!

Bruce Ward of Jerusalem, Arkansas passed away on December 15, 2018. Though he spent the later years of his life in the remote hills of the Ozarks, his earlier days were spent living in Vero Beach, Florida. The story, however, begins much further back, in the early years of the 1700s.

Back in the years of European colonization of the "New World," rulers would frequently send their royal fleets across the oceans to their American colonies and settlements, in order to bring the new-found riches back to the motherland. In July of 1715, the Spanish Plate Fleet, loaded with untold sums of treasure from Spanish-American colonies, perished in a hurricane in the Florida Straits before they could deliver their bounty back to the crown in Spain. Eleven of the twelve ships in the fleet were lost. This was one of the worst sea disasters of all time.

The Spanish made a massive recovery effort in the coming years. The Spaniards are able to salvage some, but not all, of the vast treasure. Eventually the salvage efforts are abandoned by Spain, locations of the wrecks are lost, and the rest of the treasure lay in waiting for nearly 250 years.

Fast forward to the 1950s & 1960s... This stretch of Florida coastline has always been notorious for washing items up on their beaches, especially after heavy storms. Items such as silver & gold coins, pottery, and fragments of wooden ships would not be uncommon to find.

Bruce Ward was drawn to this stretch of beach in the mid-1950s and landed in Vero Beach, Florida. He started his search with the simplest of diving equipment: a mask, fins, and an inner-tube fashioned with a peach-basket inside to hold artifacts that he brought up. Upon following clues from coins he'd found that had washed up onto the beach, he eventually determined that he had finally located one of the ships from the 1715 Spanish Fleet. Ward later partnered with a large company to recover artifacts from this particular wreck. All total, approximately \$1.6 million (according to 1960s figures) was recovered.



Ward's share of the treasure included 80 gold coins, hundreds of silver coins, and artifacts including a mortar, cannonballs, bar shot and two flintlock pistols.

In Bruce's personal collection of artifacts recovered, he had several cannon balls, pieces of the ship, and even a pair of flintlock pistol fragments that tell a story all their own, of the effects of a 250-year stay at the bottom of the ocean. But the most interesting and captivating of the 1715 Fleet items has got to be the coins! SILVER COINS by the dozens! I imagine Bruce's excitement when he uncovered his first shiny gold object. Of the thousands of coins ever recovered from these wrecks, only about 2% had visible dates on the faces. Bruce had several coins containing dates from 1712 to 1714. These artifacts laid at the bottom of the ocean, just off the coast of Florida, for some 250 years until they were discovered by Ward. He cherished his historical finds, and they made their way with him to Jerusalem, Arkansas where Bruce spent his later years.

Now, in the coming weeks, we will be preparing to offer these items to the public at auction. It is my sincerest hope that we can get these incredible artifacts into the right hands so that they can be appreciated and preserved as part of a rich history, forever! I, for one, am very honored to be a part of such an interesting story!



THE WARD, NEIMAN, ALLEN – REAL EIGHT COMPANY TREASURE CONNECTION

Rob Westrick

In August 1963, Kip Wagner received a visit from three individuals, Bruce Ward, Don Neiman and Frank Allen. The trio claimed to have discovered a shipwreck. They showed him some artifacts and the veteran treasure hunter was seemingly impressed by their finds. They offered to reveal the location of the wreck if the Real Eight Company would contract with them.

Bruce Ward, a resident of Vero Beach, had moved to Florida from Illinois in 1955. He took a job as a night watchman at McKee's Jungle Gardens. The job allowed him to pursue his real passion during the daytime, beachcombing the shores along Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin Counties searching for shipwreck evidence. Like Wagner, he had become intrigued by stories of gold and silver coins occasionally being found along the beach after storms in an area approximately six miles south of Fort Pierce.

During one of Ward's beachcombing excursions earlier that summer he had met Don Neiman. Neiman was a local from Fort Pierce whose passion was hunting Indian artifacts and prehistoric fossils. The two men struck up a friendship and sharing a common interest decided to work together.

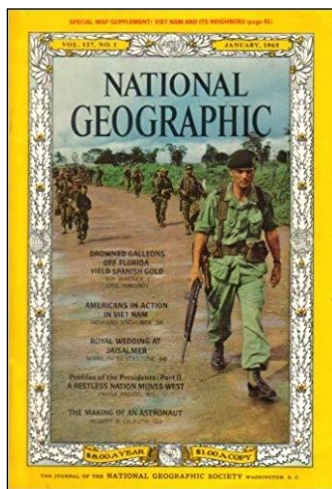
Ward and Neiman detected the beach using metal detectors and found a variety of material consistent with items being found on other known 1715 Fleet wreck sites. Most of their finds originated within a 2,000-yard stretch of beach located about four miles south of the Fort Pierce Inlet. Their finds included gold, silver and copper coins, a gold ring, a bronze cross, lead sheathing, broken terra cotta pottery and fragments of Chinese ceramics. Neiman's most valuable find was a beautiful 8-escudo gold coin minted in Mexico City fully dated 1714!

Excited by their recent finds, the two men joined forces and soon brought in a third partner, Frank Allen, an avid coin collector from Orlando. They rented a boat and while exploring the shallow waters off Fort Pierce, the men discovered a few scattered ballast stones covered with marine growth, lying half-buried in the sand. Ward's hunch was right, they had found another galleon. The trio had one major problem: they believed that the Real Eight Company had exclusive rights on the wreck. The three partners approached Real Eight offering to reveal the location of the wreck if the company would secure a State lease for them. The two sides eventually reached an agreement: Real Eight and Mel Fisher's group, Universal Salvage would work the wreck with the *DeeGee* and receive 60 percent with Ward, Neiman and Allen receiving 40% after the State of Florida claimed their share.

The professional salvors conducted a magnetometer survey of the area off and on throughout the winter of 1963. Fisher's group claimed they found nothing but miscellaneous World War II debris. (The U.S. Navy frogmen trained for amphibious assaults and underwater demolition at Fort Pierce.) The Real Eight Company refused to continue the search unless a new agreement was signed.

Ward and Neiman realized most of the treasure would be buried under five or six feet of sand and they felt they had little choice but to renegotiate. Ward later admitted, “They had us over a barrel and they knew it.” The terms of the new agreement gave Ward, Neiman and Allen a combined 10% share. Shortly thereafter they found the shipwreck; it was located a mere half a mile north of where Ward and Neiman had indicated. The wreck later became known as the “Gold Wreck.”

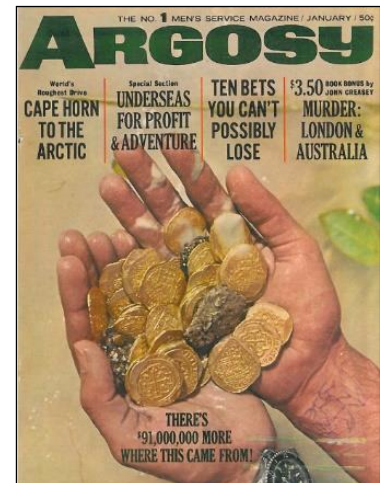
On May 24, 1964, Fisher and his crew found 1,033 gold coins and the rest, as they say, is treasure history! Eventually they recovered more than 3,000 gold coins, a number of gold and silver bars and jewelry. They also retrieved a enormous amount of silver pieces-of-eight, the source, a seemingly inexhaustible abundance. The coins were so numerous that they were not even counted individually, but rather just weighed.



Kip Wagner wrote about the amazing discovery and his story appeared in *National Geographic* magazine in January 1965 (Volume 127, Number 1). The article entitled “Drowned Galleons Yield Spanish Gold” wreck inspired a generation of future treasure divers.

However, another article written by Tom Longhurst entitled “The Great Florida Gold Find” was published at the same time. It appeared in the January 1965 issue of *Argosy*. Unfortunately, that magazine had

nowhere near the circulation or readership of *National Geographic* and thus generated much less publicity.



The *Argosy* article told the story from Bruce Ward and Don Neiman’s perspective. Ward and others believed the wreck to be the remains of the *La Holandesa*. They reportedly found ballast stones and rotting timbers strewn over a half mile of ocean floor. The wreckage was approximately 1,000 feet off the public beach.

Kip Wagner referred to the site in his book *Pieces of Eight* as the “Gold Wreck.” To the local salvage community however, the wreck site became known as Colored Beach. The book *Florida’s Golden Galleons* by Robert Burgess and Carl Clausen states that it was called “Colored Beach” because of all the brightly colored seashells found there, but the real reason is much more controversial. Historically, one has to remember, that that south was still very much segregated in the 1960s. The beach adjacent the wreck site, was set aside for African Americans and was referred to as “Colored Beach.” The *Argosy* article used the even more derogatory name “Negro Beach.” Today, the public beach is named Frederick Douglass Memorial Park after the noted social reformer, abolitionist and statesman. Florida’s Bureau of Archaeological Research refers to the shipwreck as the “Douglass Beach Wreck.”

The main ballast pile is located directly east from Frederick Douglass Memorial Beach. The main ballast pile is approximately 300 feet off the beach in about fifteen feet of water. The actual site extends some 500 to 1,500 feet offshore in water varying from 8 to 20 feet in depth. The majority of the treasure and artifacts found in the 1960s were found in an area just under 78,000 square feet, but like other 1715 Fleet shipwrecks, the actual debris trails are widely scattered and extend much further.

Many of the old-timers still call it the Colored Beach Wreck. I spent much time there working with Mo Molinar aboard the *Virginlona*. Molinar was a living legend and he always called it Colored Beach, and if it was a good enough name for him, it is a good enough name for me. There are others in today's PC crowd that insist on calling it Douglass Beach, and if they want to call it that, that is certainly their prerogative, I just need to remind many, if you are going to call it that, at least get the name right. It was named after Frederick Douglass. I can't tell you how many times I see people spell it with only one "s" instead of two.

There remains much speculation as to what vessel the shipwreck actually even is. Carl Clausen's "A 1715 Spanish Treasure Ship" (1965) confessed the identity of the wreck, designated as SL-17 in the statewide archaeological numbering system was unknown, but deduced that it could tentatively be assumed to have been one of the five vessels comprising the *flota* commanded by Esteban de Ubilla which was loaded at Vera Cruz, based on the large quantity of cobs minted in Mexico City. Today, the wreck site is generally considered by many to be the remains of the *Nuestra Señora de la Nieves y las Animas* (*Our Lady of the Snows*). The 192½-ton vessel was armed with twelve iron cannons. Francisco de Soto Sanchez was the Captain and owner. The *Nuestra Señora de la Nieves* was a *patache*, a small advice boat attached to Ubilla's *flota*. According to the fleets' manifest, this vessel was carrying 44,000 in registered treasure but no gold coins were registered. Yet more gold coins have been recovered from the Douglass Beach Wreck than all the other 1715 wreck sites combined.

The finds are interesting because according to the records there were virtually no gold coins carried on any of the ships, which means those being recovered by modern salvors may have been contraband. However, since the numbers of gold coins found are so numerous and many are freshly minted 1714 and 1715 specimens it is also possible that the manifests for these coins have yet to be discovered in the archival documentation. In addition, the members of Real Eight Company also recovered several gold discs that were not properly marked as having paid the King's Royal Fifth tax.¹

However, recent, on-going archival research by Jorge Proctor suggests that the wreck south of Fort Pierce mistakenly identified as the *Nuestra Señora de las Nieves* is actually the remains of Ubilla's fragatilla, also known as *la Marigaleta*. He purchased and renamed the vessel (formerly called the *Santa Rita y las Animas*) from Felix de Acosta Hurtado in Havana on July 15, 1715.

¹ Gold, in terms of weight worth sixteen times the value of silver, was the most common item smuggled back to Spain, and since there were virtually no gold coins registered aboard the ships in the manifests, it is likely that a substantial amount was being smuggled in this convoy.



1715 Fleet Treasure Found in the Ozarks

DATELINE
Searcy, Arkansas
September 23, 2019



I only recently learned about the passing of Bruce Ward from the 1715 Fleet Society's website. This came a quite a surprise as I had just assumed Mr. Ward had passed away years ago. I was well aware of his early involvement with the 1715 Fleet. Ward, Don Neiman and Frank Allen had played a pivotal role in the discovery of the Colored Beach Wreck. In *Finding the Fleet* (2015) and later Don Neiman's biography, *A Tale of Two Forts*, (2018), I stated that Neiman was the last surviving member of the trio. Although erroneous at the time, that is now a true statement.

I knew that Frank Allen was deceased, but Bruce Ward just sort of dropped off the radar. In this business, where everybody seems to know everybody else, not many things go unnoticed. Indeed, it is a small close-knit bunch and when a treasure hunter, particularly a successful one crosses the bar, the news quickly makes the discussion circuit through social media. Members of the treasure diving fraternity are almost instantly aware of the passing of legends like Mel Fisher, Bob Weller, Mo Molinar, Art Hartman, Roy Volker, Bob Marx and others.

Most of those pioneer treasure divers had lived and died in Florida. Bruce Ward had withdrawn from the "treasure hunting community" and settled Jerusalem, Arkansas, a small unincorporated community in Conway County situated near the Ozark hills in central Arkansas. Jerusalem's population...a mere 379 people. To say the area is remote would be an understatement, it really is in the middle of nowhere.

I contacted Cargile Auctions and soon began corresponding with Marco Orozco. Ben Costello had already referred them to a well-known 1715 Fleet coin dealer, who had spent a weekend examining and appraising the coins. Marco then proceeded to inform me about the contents of the collection, "We have approximately 500 silver coins. Our presumption is that any gold was sold off over the years to provide for living costs. We have 8-Reales down to ½ Reales. The coins are in various conditions, some cleaned, some partially cleaned, some uncleaned, and several clumps that hold multiple coins. In addition to coins, we have the two pistol remnants that were pictured in the *Argosy* magazine article, some pottery shards, a piece of brass trim from a ship, a few cannon balls, and four intact bar-shots."

Marco was thrilled upon learning I served as the archaeologist for 1715 Fleet – Queens Jewels and had written several books on the fleet. He was interested in having another expert (me) give an opinion on the coinage. He also had several artifacts in deteriorating condition that he wanted to discuss and seek an opinion on regarding long-term conservation, namely several examples of iron bar shot and the pistol remnants that had been pictured in an *Argosy* magazine article. There were also other items in the collection had not yet been identified and he wanted my insight and opinion as a professional marine archaeologist.

Marco suggested, “Since you’re located in Louisiana, and if you find it convenient to come up to Arkansas, we’d be happy to schedule a time for you to preview the collection in person.”

No second invitation was necessary. I had already surmised the importance of the collection, it was noteworthy strictly based on its intrinsic value alone, but its historical significance was truly priceless. To be offered the chance to personally assess the collection prior to the auction while it remained intact, was a once-in-a-lifetime and unique opportunity.

The drive to Arkansas was relaxing and uneventful. I stayed the night outside of Little Rock and continued the drive the next morning certainly eager with anticipation. Marco had already disclosed that they were equally anxious to hear my expert opinion regarding the coinage and they also had some conservation questions related to the other shipwreck artifacts.

I arrived at the auction house where I was to meet Marco. I also met his partners Rodger Cargile and Robert Cargile. Although I had already seen several photographs of some individual coins and small clumps and had been impressed, nothing prepared me for what I was about to see. To add to the level of excitement, there were even MORE silver coins! Just a few days earlier, the family had come in with a metal box. While going through one of the outlying buildings on Bruce’s 60-acre property, they found an old desk. They noticed that one of the drawers was not as deep as the others. Upon further investigation they discovered that the drawer had a false back that concealed a hidden compartment. Inside this secret hiding spot was a metal lock box with a three-digit combination code, the very box I was now holding! Inside the box were another 150 uncleaned 8-reales cob coins (shown on Front Cover). These newly discovered coins had not been examined by the expert.



Just a few weeks earlier, I had been in Sebastian, Florida and had the chance to examine first-hand the silver coins Bill Black’s group had found on the Cabin Wreck on July 18, 2019. Captain Kym Ferrell, Mike Penninger, Jeff Harness, Richard Rabon and Andrew Tidball had recovered the coins after blowing a hole about 1,000 feet offshore. Their find was quite impressive and couldn’t have happened to more deserving group.

The find included 32 individual coins and five clumps containing 13 more. A total of 45 coins plus at least one (and possibly two more) embedded in a large piece of coquina rock. At the time, it was the most uncleaned coins I had ever seen in one place. Still, uncleaned Spanish silver coins are not an entirely uncommon sight along Florida's Treasure Coast."

Here I was a few weeks later, much closer to the Ozark Mountains than I was to any ocean. There sitting on the table in front of me was more than 500 uncleaned silver cobs. It was truly a thrill and I am forever grateful for the incredible experience.



The Cargile auction will showcase approximately 740 silver coins, and miscellaneous shipwreck artifacts. These coins are cob-type specimens from 8-reales down to ½ real denominations from the 1715 Fleet. The auction will also feature eight copper maravidis and a two "portrait dollar" type coins that probably originated from "Archie's Wreck."

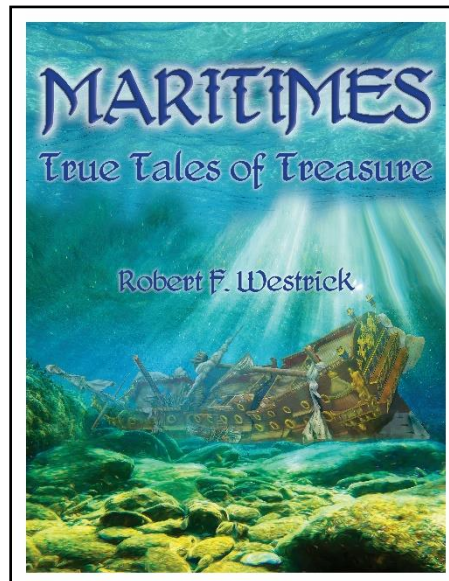
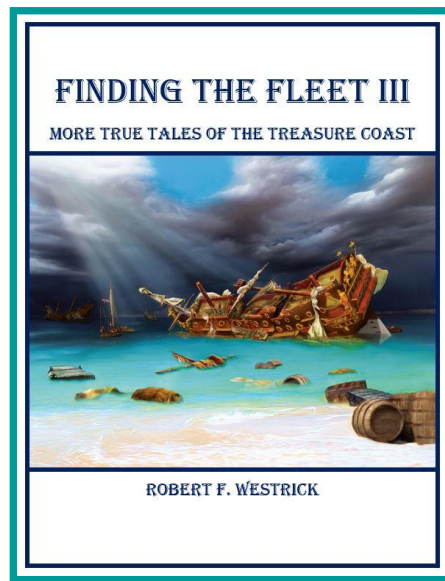
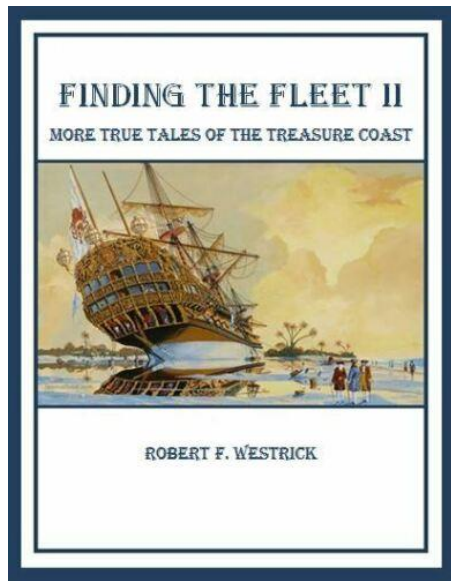
In addition, the Bruce Ward collection included several bundles of his personal correspondence dating to the 1960s. I had the opportunity to examine these letters and that too was fascinating. Ward had attained somewhat of a local celebrity status after the *Argosy* article and many of these letters are what I would call "fan mail." Others are important documentation related to his dealings with Kip Wagner and Mel Fisher. I was very pleased to learn that the family plans to donate the correspondence to the 1715 Fleet Society, an organization dedicated to researching the history of the 1715 Fleet, its loss, rediscovery and recovery.



It is my sincere hope that through the auction and their history preserving efforts, that Bruce Ward's accomplishments and legacy will endure!

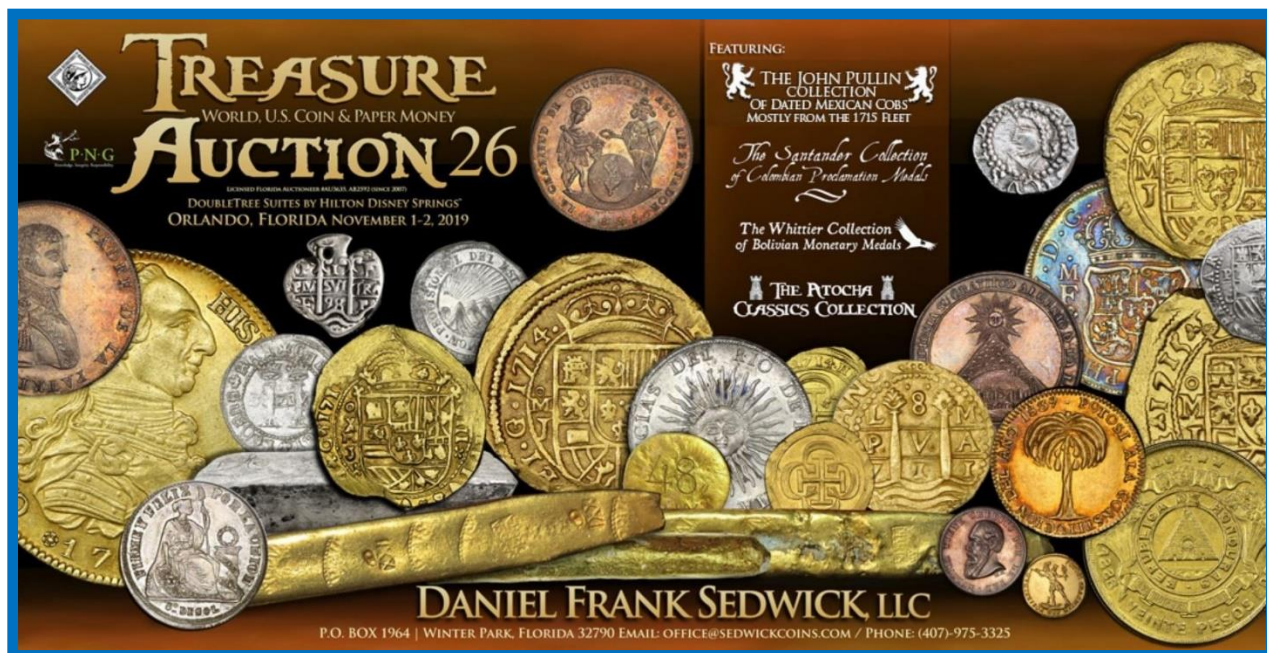
² Treasure salvor and explorer Harold Holden discovered the wreck while searching for one of the missing Spanish galleons from the 1715 Fleet. The "Harold Holden Wreck" is also known as "Archie's Wreck" due to its close proximity to Archie's Seabreeze, a popular Fort Pierce beachside bar and restaurant located on South Hutchinson Island. Holden worked the site with his salvage vessel *Royal Eight* in the late 1980s and recovered approximately 800 Spanish bust dollars. Since none were dated later than 1810, researchers believe the site wreckage from an unidentified vessel that wrecked in the same vicinity as the 1715 Fleet Douglass Beach wreck during a hurricane in October 1810.

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- More shipwreck news and stories.

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