

SHIPWRECK (AND HOARD) HISTORIES

Throughout this catalog we offer coins, ingots and artifacts from many dozens of different shipwrecks and hoards—"treasure" in the truest sense. So as not to break up the flow of the catalog in the listings, we offer the history behind each wreck here in chronological order. Some lots in the catalog do not have histories here either because we have no further information or what we do know is brief enough to include with the lots. Please feel free to contact us for more information about any of these wrecks or about shipwrecks or treasure in general. Also be sure to check out our Virtual Shipwreck and Hoard Map on the web at www.sedwickcoins.com/map/map.html.

"Tumbaga wreck," sunk ca. 1528 off Grand Bahama Island

Before there were coins and Spanish Treasure Fleets, Hernán Cortés and his men acquired treasure in the form of Native-American gold and silver artifacts that were melted down in Mexico for easier transportation. The variable-fineness ingots thus created were known to archeologists but were not thought to exist until the discovery of a wreck full of them off Grand Bahama Island in 1992. After the salvage of what ultimately was determined to be a ca.-1528 wreck, the ingots came to be known as "tumbaga" bars and were subsequently distributed to the collecting community by Frank and Daniel Sedwick. Like most official Spanish colonial bullion, each bar was marked with the fineness (the gold in parts per 24, the silver in parts per 2400) and assayer, and especially with tax stamps to show that the king got his cut. On these particular bars the tax stamps show a legend that reads CAROLVS QVINTVS IMPERATOR for Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire (who was also Charles I of Spain, son of Queen Joanna).

The "Tumbaga" Saga: Treasure of the Conquistadors, by Agustín García-Barneche (2010), gives the story behind these bars, particularly their history and manufacture, with complete data and analysis and photos of many of the ingots. Each bar is also described in detail in *Tumbaga Silver for Emperor Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire*, by Douglas Armstrong (1993), a professional conservator hired by the salvage company to clean and preserve all the silver "tumbaga" bars.

"Golden Fleece wreck," sunk ca. 1550 in the northern Caribbean

This wreck was nicknamed for a royal stamping ("Golden Fleece") on several of the gold "finger" bars (ingots) it yielded. Practically all the coins from this wreck were Mexican Charles-Joanna silver coins (all assayers prior to S), including several rarities, the most important being three specimens of the Rincón "Early Series" 8 reales of 1538, the very first 8 reales ever struck in the New World. To date the finders of the wreck have not identified the wreck or disclosed its exact location, but they affirm it was in international waters in the northern Caribbean. Though it was a relatively small find of a few thousand coins at most, it has been the primary source for Mexican Carlos-Juana coins on the market since the mid-1990s.

Perhaps more impressive than the coins from this wreck are the few dozen gold and silver ingots it has yielded, all of which have entered the market exclusively through Daniel Frank Sedwick. The varying purities of these bars are reminiscent of the "tumbaga" bars (see above), although the later gold ingots were cast in somewhat standard shapes ("fingers") and sizes. The silver ingots from this wreck, popularly known as "splashes," were simply poured onto the ground, leaving a round, flat mound of silver that was subsequently stamped with a tax stamp in the form of a crowned C for King Charles I and/or a fineness in the usual block Roman numerals in parts per 2400, much like the karat system we use today. The gold ingots also

show a fineness marking, but no tax stamps or other markings, in parts per 24, with a dot being a quarter karat. Many of the silver and gold ingots from this wreck were cut into two or more parts, presumably to divide into separate accounts.

Spanish 1554 Fleet sunk off Padre Island, Texas

The 1554 Fleet consisted of four caravels, the *San Andrés*, the *Santa María de Yciar*, the *San Esteban*, and the *Espíritu Santo*, all but the first of which foundered off what is now Padre Island in a violent storm. There were many survivors, but natives killed nearly all of them. Much of the treasure was salvaged soon afterward by the Spanish. In the 1960s two of the ships were rediscovered and salvaged by an out-of-state company, causing controversy by removing what Texans thought should belong to their state. (The third wreck-site was apparently obliterated by a dredging operation in the late 1940s on what is known as the Mansfield Cut, a manmade inlet.) Texas conducted its own excavations on the two sites in the 1970s. The 1554 Fleet wrecks have yielded almost exclusively Mexican coinage of Charles-Joanna (up to and including assayer S), some of which still washes up on the beaches of Padre Island. Even when found on the beach, these coins are illegal to own in Texas, which has declared them all to be the property of the State, but they do trade freely elsewhere. Uncleaned specimens (mostly beach finds) are distinctively rusty in color and therefore are usually distinguishable from coins from the "Golden Fleece wreck" above.

Santiago, sunk in 1585 on the Bassas da India atoll between Mozambique and Madagascar

This relatively obscure wreck sank on a reef at night due to pilot error, following which the captain and crew absconded with the one useable lifeboat, leaving some 400 or more passengers to perish on the wreck. The *Santiago* was found again and salvaged in the late 1970s by Ernest Erich Klaar and eventually yielded thousands of silver cobs (marketed in the 1980s) of both Spain and Spanish America (particularly the mints of Seville and Mexico). This shipwreck is also numismatically notable as one of only two wrecks (along with the *Atocha* of 1622) to have produced the extremely rare cobs of the Panama mint.

Unidentified (presumably Spanish) wreck sunk ca. 1590 off the Yucatán peninsula of Mexico

Salvaged surreptitiously by Florida divers, this wreck yielded Philip II cobs of Mexico, Lima and Potosí, some in remarkably good condition. Many of this wreck's coins are recognizable by their jagged, truncated edges (from corrosion) with pristine interior details. Without consideration of that characteristic pattern of corrosion, the coins from this wreck can pass for *Atocha* (1622) coins, which is how many of them were successfully sold with fraudulent *Atocha* certificates in the 1990s.

“Rill Cove wreck,” sunk ca. 1618 off Cornwall, England

The name and nationality of the ship are unknown and even the date of sinking is not certain. All we know is that records of its local salvage began in 1618. After rediscovery of the wreck by Ken Simpson and Mike Hall in 1975, eventually some 3,000 coins were recovered and sold, all silver cobs, mostly Mexican, but also from Potosí and Spain. Most of the coins are thin from corrosion but with dark toning on fields to enhance details. Because it is rather early, this wreck has yielded several important rarities like the F-0D dual-assayer issue from Mexico.



Atocha, sunk in 1622 west of Key West, Florida

Arguably the most famous of all Spanish galleons salvaged in our time, the *Atocha* was the *almiranta* of the 1622 Fleet, which left Havana several weeks late and ran afoul of a hurricane. Eight of the 28-ship fleet were lost, wrecked on the reefs between the Dry Tortugas and the Florida Keys or sunk in deeper water. Five people survived the sinking of the *Atocha* and were rescued by another vessel, but the wreck itself was scattered after another hurricane hit the site exactly one month later. The Spanish were never able to salvage what was one of the richest galleons ever to sail.

The cargo of the *Atocha* did not see light again until 1971, when the first coins were found by the now-famous salvager Mel Fisher and his divers, who recovered the bulk of the treasure in 1985 and thereby unleashed the largest supply of silver cobs and ingots the market has ever seen. Well over 100,000 shield-type cobs were found in all denominations above the half real, the great majority of them from Potosí, as were also the approximately 1,000 silver ingots (most the size of bread loaves). A handful of gold 1- and 2-escudos cobs were also recovered, mostly from mainland Spanish mints, but also a few from Colombia, officially the first gold coins ever struck in the New World. The *Atocha* was also the source for most or all of the first silver cobs struck in Colombia, as well as a few early coins from Mexico, Lima, Spain and even Panama. Even more significant were the many gold ingots, jewelry items, emeralds and other artifacts.

Because of Mel Fisher's huge publicity and because much of the treasure was distributed to investors at high ratios compared to their investment amounts, the coins from the *Atocha* have always sold for much more—anywhere from 2 times to 10 times—than their non-salvage counterparts, even in the numismatic market. (The “glamour market” in tourist areas elevates these coins to as much as twenty times their base numismatic value!) Individually numbered certificates with photos of each coin are critical to the retention of an *Atocha* coin's enhanced value. Accompanying barcode tags with the coins also make it possible to replace lost certificates through

a database system at the Fisher operation in Key West. With some exceptions each certificate also specifies the coin's Grade, from 1 (highest) to 4 (lowest), a highly subjective evaluation of corrosive damage and overall quality. Most *Atocha* silver coins are also recognizable by their shiny brightness, the result of a somewhat controversial cleaning and polishing process catering more to non-collectors than to serious numismatists.

Santa Margarita, sunk in 1622 west of Key West, Florida

From the same hurricane-stricken 1622 Fleet as the *Atocha* (above), the *Santa Margarita* sank on a reef within sight of the *Atocha* and was found in 1626 by Spanish salvagers, who recovered only roughly half its treasure. The other half was found by Mel Fisher and company in 1980. *Margarita's* treasures were similar to those found on the *Atocha*, with fewer coins in comparatively worse condition overall (yet not as harshly cleaned afterward). As with *Atocha* coins, original Fisher certificates are critical to the premium value for these coins, which is on par with *Atocha* coins. In 2008 divers with the subcontractor company Blue Water Recovery found more gold on the *Santa Margarita* and also a lead box stuffed full of pearls.

“Dry Tortugas wreck,” sunk ca. 1622 off the Dry Tortugas, west of Key West, Florida

Presumably a sister-ship to the *Atocha* and *Santa Margarita* of the 1622 Fleet (above), the “Dry Tortugas wreck” was discovered in 1989 and reworked in 1991 by Seahawk Deep Ocean Technology. Among the finds were numerous gold bars (but no silver bars) and about 1,200 heavily eroded silver cobs similar in composition to the *Atocha* finds, all picked from the ocean floor by a robot. Cannons and other artifacts expected on a typical galleon were notably absent. The bulk of the treasure was eventually sold to a store/museum in Key West that later went bankrupt. Years later it all turned up at a bankruptcy auction, where the bulk of the treasure was repurchased by some of the former principals of Seahawk for a new museum.

São José, sunk in 1622 off Mozambique

The *São José* was the *almiranta* of a fleet carrying Francisco da Gama (grandson of the famous Vasco da Gama) from Lisbon, Portugal, to his new post as Viceroy in Goa, India, when the ships were attacked at night on July 22 by an Anglo-Dutch fleet off Mozambique. Suffering from disease, the captain and crew of the *São José* at first tried to ground her but ended up sinking in deeper water, taking many chests of Spanish silver with her. The English and Dutch made off with some of the cargo and 100 prisoners from the *São José*, with hundreds more people and the bulk of the treasure lost to the sea. In 2003 the salvage company *Arqueonautas* located the wreck and eventually recovered just over 20,000 silver cobs (all 8 and 4 reales) from Spain, Mexico, and South America.

“Lucayan Beach wreck,” sunk ca. 1628 off Grand Bahama Island

Since the accidental discovery in 1964 of around 10,000 silver cobs dating up to and including 1628 in 10 feet of water just 1,300 yards from the Lucayan Beach Hotel, the mystery of identifying the lost vessel has never been solved. Because of the date, popular opinion associates the wreck with the taking of the Spanish 1628 Fleet in Matanzas Bay, Cuba, by the Dutch pirate and national hero Piet Heyn, who reported losing two of the vessels on the way back to

Europe. Three names proposed for the ship(s) by various sellers over the years were the *Van Lynden*, the *Santa Gertrude* (or *Gertrudis*) and the *Romario*, with scant evidence to support any of the attributions. Spanish archival research suggested a new name, *Nuestra Señora de los Remedios*, which sank in that general area in 1624. Since dates on the recovered coins extend past 1624, this attribution must be incorrect. A more recent recovery in the 1990s off Lucayan Beach turned up similar material, but no further clues as to the ship's (or ships') identity. Practically all of the coins have been Mexican 8 and 4 reales of the assayer-D period, some in quite nice condition and a few with clear dates, which are rare. Expect to pay a modest premium for specimens in white clamshell boxes produced by Spink & Son (London) in the 1960s for a promotion that capped off years of disagreements between the salvagers, their backers and the Bahamian government.



Concepción, sunk in 1641 off the northeast coast of Hispaniola

The *Concepción* was one of the most significant Spanish wrecks of all time, serving the Spanish with a loss of *over 100 tons* of silver and gold treasure. The *almiranta* of a 21-ship fleet, the *Concepción* was already in poor repair when the Europe-bound fleet encountered a storm in September of 1641, leaving her disabled and navigating under makeshift sails amid disagreement among its pilots about their location. Weeks later, she grounded on a reef in an area now named the Silver Shoals, just east of another shoal known as the Abrojos, which the pilots were trying to avoid. After another storm hit the wrecked ship and the admiral and officers left in the ship's only longboat, the remaining crew resorted to building rafts from the ship's timbers. Survivors' accounts pointed to drowning, starvation and even sharks for the approximately 300 casualties. In the fallout that ensued, none of the survivors could report the wreck's location with accuracy, so it sat undisturbed until New England's William Phipps found it in 1687 and brought home tons of silver and some gold, to the delight of his English backers.

The *Concepción* was found again in 1978 by Burt Webber, Jr., whose divers recovered some 60,000 silver cobs, mostly Mexican 8 and 4 reales, and also some Potosí and rare Colombian cobs, including more from the Cartagena mint than had been found on any other shipwreck. Unlike the *Maravillas* 15 years later, the *Concepción* did not yield any gold cobs in our time, and any significant artifacts found were retained by the government of the Dominican Republic who oversaw the salvage. The bulk of the silver cobs found on the *Concepción* were heavily promoted, even in department stores. The site is still worked from time to time with limited success.

Capitana (Jesús María de la Limpia Concepción), sunk in 1654 off Chanduy, Ecuador

This wreck was the largest loss ever experienced by the Spanish South Seas (Pacific) Fleet, of which the *Jesús María de la Limpia Concepción* was the *capitana* ("captain's ship" or lead vessel) in 1654. Official records reported the loss of 3 million pesos of silver (2,212 ingots, 216 chests of coins, and 22 boxes of wrought silver), augmented to a total of as much as 10 million pesos when contraband and private consignments were taken into account. By comparison, the *entire* annual silver production in Peru at that time was only about 6-7 million pesos!

Obviously overloaded, the *Capitana* sank technically due to pilot error, which drove the ship onto the reefs south of the peninsula known as Punta Santa Elena, a geographic feature the pilot thought he had cleared. Twenty people died in the disaster. For eight years afterward, Spanish salvagers *officially* recovered over 3 million pesos of coins and bullion (with probably much more recovered off the record), leaving only an unreachable lower section for divers to find in our time. Ironically, the main salvager of the *Capitana* in the 1650s and early 1660s was none other than the ship's silvermaster, Bernardo de Campos, who was responsible for the ship's being overloaded with contraband in the first place.

The wreck was rediscovered in the mid-1990s and salvaged (completely, according to some) in 1997. After a 50-50 split with the Ecuadorian government in 1998, investors sold most of their half of the more than 5,000 coins recovered at auction in 1999. Almost exclusively Potosí 8 and 4 reales, the coins were a healthy mix of countermarked issues of 1649-1652, transitional issues of 1652, and post-transitional pillars-and-waves cobs of 1653-1654, many in excellent condition and expertly conserved.

As an interesting footnote, the very coins salvaged from the *Capitana* by the Spanish in 1654 were lost again on the *Maravillas* wreck of 1656 (see next), and some of those coins salvaged from the *Maravillas* were lost again in the wreck of the salvage vessel *Madama do Brasil* off Gorda Cay (Bahamas) in 1657. Furthering Spain's woes was the destruction of another treasure fleet in 1657 by English marauders fresh from a victory in the Bay of Cádiz off Santa Cruz on the island of Tenerife in the Canary Islands.

Maravillas, sunk in 1656 off Grand Bahama Island

As the *almiranta* of the homebound Spanish fleet in January of 1656, the *Nuestra Señora de las Maravillas* was officially filled with over five million pesos of treasure (and probably much more in contraband, as was usually the case). That treasure included much of the silver salvaged from the South Seas Fleet's *Capitana* of 1654 that wrecked on Chanduy Reef off Ecuador (see above). The ill-fated treasure sank once again when the *Maravillas* unexpectedly ran into shallow water and was subsequently rammed by one of the other ships of its fleet, forcing the captain to try to ground the *Maravillas* on a nearby reef on Little Bahama Bank off Grand Bahama Island. In the ensuing chaos, exacerbated by strong winds, most of the 650 people on board died in the night, and the wreckage scattered. Spanish salvagers soon recovered almost half a million pesos of treasure, followed by more recoveries over the next several decades, yet with over half of the official cargo still unfound.

The first rediscovery of the *Maravillas* in the twentieth century was by Robert Marx and his company, Seafinders, in 1972, whose finds were featured in an auction by Schulman in New York in 1974. Included among the coins in this sale were some previously unknown Cartagena silver cobs of 1655 and countermarked Potosí

coinage of 1649-1651 and 1652 transitionals, in addition to many Mexican silver cobs and a few Bogotá cob 2 escudos. The second big salvage effort on the *Maravillas* was achieved by Herbert Humphreys and his company, Marex, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, resulting in two big sales by Christie's (London) in 1992 and 1993, which featured many Bogotá cob 2 escudos, more Mexico and Potosí silver cobs, and several important artifacts. The most recent big sale of *Maravillas* finds, presumably from one of the many salvage efforts from the 1970s and 1980s, took place in California in 2005, again with a good quantity of Bogotá cob 2 escudos. The wreck area is still being searched today, but officially the Bahamian government has not granted any leases on the site since the early 1990s. It is possible the bulk of the treasure is still to be found.

San Miguel el Arcángel (“Jupiter wreck”), sunk in 1659 off Jupiter Inlet, east coast of Florida

As well known as this wreck has become among the Florida treasure community and shipwreck collectors around the world, surprisingly little has been written about it, and not one major auction has been dedicated to its finds.

The *San Miguel* was not a big treasure galleon in a huge convoy; rather, she was a lone *aviso*, a smaller ship for carrying letters and other communications quickly back to Spain. But unlike most *avisos*, the *San Miguel* was carrying some important treasure, as it was in the right time and place to take on samples of the unauthorized “Star of Lima” coinage of 1659 for the King to see. In October the *San Miguel* encountered a hurricane off the southeast coast of Florida, grounded on a sandbar, and broke apart rapidly, leaving only 34 survivors among the 121 people on board. Those survivors were all quickly captured by natives (Ais) and therefore had no opportunity to salvage the scattered wreck.

Today only parts of the wreck of the *San Miguel* have been found, discovered by lifeguard Peter Leo in 1987, in about 10 to 20 feet of water and under as much as 20 feet of sand. Salvage is ongoing. Besides a couple of gold ingots and one large silver ingot, the yield to date has been modest, mostly low-end silver cobs of Mexico and Potosí, a good amount of the rare 1659 “Star of Lima” silver coinage, a couple Bogotá gold cobs, and some rare Cartagena silver cobs. All were sold through various dealers and private transactions. If the hull of the ship is ever found, as the salvagers think it will be, the market may finally see some of the **gold** cobs of the “Star of Lima” issue of 1659.

Consolación (“Isla de Muerto shipwreck”), sunk in 1681 off Santa Clara Island, Ecuador



When salvage first began on this wreck in 1997, it was initially believed to be the *Santa Cruz* and later called *El Salvador y San José*, sunk in August of 1680; however, research by Robert Marx after the main find in subsequent

years confirmed its proper name and illuminated its fascinating history.

Intended to be part of the Spanish “South Seas Fleet” of 1681, which left Lima’s port of Callao in April, the *Consolación* apparently was delayed and ended up traveling alone. At the Gulf of Guayaquil, off modern-day Ecuador, the *Consolación* encountered English pirates, led by Bartholomew Sharpe, who forced the Spanish galleon to sink on a reef off Santa Clara Island (later nicknamed “Isla de Muerto,” or Dead Man’s Island). Before the pirates could get to the ship, the crew set fire to her and tried to escape to the nearby island without success. Angered by their inability to seize the valuable cargo of the *Consolación*, Sharpe’s men killed the Spaniards and tried in vain to recover the treasure through the efforts of local fishermen. Spanish attempts after that were also fruitless, so the treasure of the *Consolación* sat undisturbed until our time.

When vast amounts of silver coins were found in the area starting in the 1990s, by local entrepreneurs Roberto Aguirre and Carlos Saavedra (“ROBCAR”) and the government of Ecuador in 1997 under mutual agreement, the exact name and history of the wreck were unknown, and about 8,000 of the coins (all Potosí silver cobs) were subsequently sold at auction by Spink New York in December 2001 as simply “Treasures from the ‘Isla de Muerto.’” Most of the coins offered were of low quality and poorly preserved but came with individually numbered photo-certificates. Later, after the provenance had been properly researched and better conservation methods were used, a Florida syndicate arranged to have ongoing finds from this wreck permanently encapsulated in hard-plastic holders by the authentication and grading firm ANACS, with the wreck provenance clearly stated inside the “slab”; more recent offerings have bypassed this encapsulation. Ongoing salvage efforts have good reason to be hopeful, as the manifest of the *Consolación* stated the value of her registered cargo as 146,000 pesos in silver coins in addition to silver and gold ingots, plus an even higher sum in contraband, according to custom.



1681 Fleet (“Portobelo wreck”), sunk in 1681 off Portobelo, Panama

The 1681 “Tierra Firme” Fleet, commanded by Juan Antonio Vicentelo de Leca y Herrera, better known as the Marqués de Brenes, left Cádiz, Spain, on January 28, 1681, and reached Cartagena, Colombia, on April 2. From there a small armada of 12 ships was sent out to assess the danger of pirates in the area, as this was the age of Henry Morgan and other privateers on the Spanish Main. Bad weather also intervened, and it was not till November that the 1681 Fleet finally left Cartagena bound for Portobelo, Panama.

As the Fleet approached Portobelo, strong winds and hard rain prevented the pilots from recognizing the land until nighttime, by which time they had passed their destination and found themselves near dangerous reefs off the Islas Naranjos. The Capitana (lead vessel), *Santo Cristo de San Agustín y Nuestra Señora del Rosario*, immediately anchored and signaled the rest of the fleet to anchor as well. It was too late for the merchant nao *Boticaria*, which struck a reef there at midnight on November 29, but gently enough that almost everyone on board was saved.

Rescue boats soon arrived. As the *Boticaria* stayed on the reef for three days before sinking, salvagers were able to save almost everything. Meanwhile, news came in that another ship in the fleet, the galleon *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad*, had wrecked on another reef near even farther along, off a point near a western entrance to the Chagres River known as Punta de Brujas (not to be confused with Brujas on the Pacific coast). Unlike the *Boticaria*, however, the 22-gun *Soledad* hit the reef with such force that 50 people died, including its owner, Captain Antonio de Lima.

The rest of the 1681 Fleet finally reached Portobelo on December 3, still under adverse weather conditions. More casualties arose when the ship *Chaperón* found herself stranded at the mouth of the Chagres River and in danger of sinking due to lack of anchoring equipment and personnel. In the process of delivering assistance, a small ship known as a *tartana* was lost, and by the time the other rescue ships made it to the *Chaperón* they found that its crew had all escaped and only three boatloads of goods could be saved before the ship sank.

After taking care of business in Portobelo, the ill-fated fleet returned to Cartagena on March 27, 1682, and on May 8 set sail for Havana, Cuba. That night yet another merchant ship, the *Santa Teresa*, captained by Don Manuel de Galarza, was lost, and several other vessels had to return to Cartagena. Then, while en route to Havana, the galleon *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción y San Ignacio de Loyola* hit a reef just past Cape San Antonio, Cuba, and was set afire after its cargo was salvaged. Reaching Havana on June 1, the ragtag 1681 Fleet finally made it back to Spain on September 2.

The various lost ships of the 1681 Fleet have been salvaged off and on in modern times. While it would seem that the location of each wreck would indicate its identity, the fact is that most sources have not been well documented, and the wrecks of pirate ships with loot from the same fleet are possible as well.

Joanna, sunk in 1682 off South Africa

An English East Indiaman on her way to Surat on the west coast of India, the *Joanna* separated from her convoy and sank in rough seas on a reef off the southernmost tip of South Africa on June 8, 1682, sending 10 people to their death. Eventually 104 survivors reached the Dutch colony of Cape Town, from which a salvage party was soon dispatched. The *Joanna's* cargo consisted of 70 chests of silver coins, of which the salvage party reported having

recovered only about 28,000 guilders' worth. In 1982 the wreck was rediscovered by a group of South African divers led by Gavin Clackworthy, who brought up silver ingots (discs) and more than 23,000 silver cobs, most of them Mexican 4 and 8 reales of Charles II in generally low grade, but a few showing bold, formerly very rare dates 1679-1681. Over the past two decades, these cobs have entered the market from both private dealers and auctions, but always in relatively small quantities at a time. Almost all the coins are in very worn condition, usually thin and nearly featureless, but without the heavy encrustation and pitting that characterize Caribbean finds.

“Taj Mahal treasure,” sunk ca. 1702 off Sri Lanka

The story of the so-called “Taj Mahal treasure” is more about modern romance than historical events, for it was famously salvaged by the author Arthur C. Clarke in 1961-3, while he was living in Sri Lanka and scouting for film sites. Childhood polio had left Clarke wheelchair-bound, but he could dive, and that is just what he did when some boys told him and his associate Mike Wilson about the find on the Great Basses Reef. The adventure that ensued is well documented in Clarke's 1964-5 books *The Treasure of the Great Reef* and *Indian Ocean Treasure*.

Ten coin-clumps were recovered from this unidentified wreck, each coin a silver rupee dated AH1113 (1702 AD) from the time of Shah Aurangzeb Alamgir, the sixth and last great mogul emperor of India, and the son of Shah Jahan, who had built the Taj Mahal in mid-1600s. Two of the coin-clumps are permanently ensconced in museums—one in the Smithsonian and one in the Arthur C. Clarke archives (“Clarkives”) in Taunton, England. A third clump was recently featured on the TV show *Pawn Stars*. All the rest of the clumps were broken up and the coins have been marketed since 1992, when they were acquired by famous treasure hunter Carl Fisser, who then teamed up with video producer Robert Lewis Knecht to travel to Sri Lanka and record the story again from Clarke himself. Arthur C. Clarke died in 2008, but not before diving one more time with Fisser and Knecht.

Merestein, sunk in 1702 off South Africa

This Dutch East Indiaman was outbound when she tried to put into Saldanha Bay to alleviate rampant scurvy on board the ship. On April 3, 1702, she hit reefs on the southwest point of Jutten Island and within hours was smashed to pieces. Only 99 of the 200 people aboard the *Merestein* survived.

On board the *Merestein* were several chests of silver coins for trade in the East Indies and for which immediate salvage plans were undertaken. But Jutten Island is no easy dive, and all attempts were abandoned until modern times.

The wreck was rediscovered and salvaged in the early 1970s, yielding almost exclusively Dutch silver ducatoons from the 1600s. The number of coins found in the 1970s was around 15,000 and is believed to be nowhere near all of the treasure that was lost. Thousands more coins and artifacts were recovered by the salvage company Sealit in the 1990s.

Association, sunk in 1707 off the Scilly Isles, southwest of England

The sinking of this ship and four others in a fleet of 21 returning from the Mediterranean was one of the worst British naval disasters of all time. The *Association* sank on October 22 under stormy conditions after what can only be described as guesswork navigation that led the ships straight onto the rocks of the Scilly Isles, where as

many as 2,000 sailors lost their lives as a result. The admiral of the fleet, Sir Cloudisley Shovell, whose ten chests of personal wealth (in addition to several others) were rumored to be aboard the *Association*, was one of the casualties of the sinking, although legend has it he reached shore alive, only to be murdered there by a local woman for a ring on his finger.

The wrecksite was located in 1967 by British Navy divers, touching off a frenzy of activity on the site for years to come. Cannons and a few coins were raised in the 1960s, but it was not till 1973 that a significant amount of coins were found (8,000 in that year alone). These coins, mostly British silver and gold but also many Spanish and Spanish-American silver cobs, were sold at auction beginning in 1969 and into the early 1970s. The cobs presented an eclectic mix, mostly 8 reales from the 1650s forward (even a “Royal” presentation issue from 1676), but from nearly all mints (especially Lima and Potosí), some even left in as-found conglomerate form combined with British coins. It is interesting to note that parts of this wreck, like others in the area, were flattened hard to the muddy sea floor by huge boulders that still roll around with the currents, making for dangerous and difficult salvage.

Feversham, sunk in 1711 off Nova Scotia, Canada

The *Feversham* was on its way north with three other ships from New York to Quebec with provisions and cash to assist a British campaign against the French when all four ships sank on and around Scatarie Island off Cape Breton in a storm on October 7, 1711. About 100 people died in the disaster, while the remaining 49 survivors were able to bribe a passing French fisherman to take them to New York for 200 pounds. Apparently no one—British or French—was able to salvage anything from the wreck in its time.

In 1968 the wrecksite of the *Feversham* was rediscovered by a group of divers led by famous Canadian salvager, Alex Storm, whose recoveries were sold privately to a “highly-reputable Canadian institution” in 1972. In the mid-1980s the *Feversham* was salvaged again by a new group of divers. The *Feversham’s* numismatic yield was small in comparison with Spanish galleon treasures, but quite important as a cross-section of coinage in circulation in New York at the time. Mostly it was Spanish American silver cobs and Massachusetts Bay Colony shillings, many of the former with rare, weight-adjustment plugs to bring them up to standard. A small group of gold cobs—almost entirely Bogotá 2 escudos, virtually identical to those from the Spanish 1715 Fleet—was found in later salvage efforts. An abundance of auctions offered these coins from 1989 through 1999.

1715 Fleet, east coast of Florida

The Spanish 1715-Fleet disaster was probably the greatest to befall any of the Spanish treasure fleets in terms of casualties and money, with reports of a loss of 14 million pesos (plus an equal or greater amount in contraband) and as many as 1,000 or more lives. It was a typical case of overloaded Spanish galleons foundering in a hurricane after delayed departure. In effect the 1715 Fleet was a combination of two fleets: the *Nueva España* (New Spain, i.e., Mexico) Fleet from Mexico and the *Tierra Firme* (Mainland) Fleet from South America, some 12 or 13 ships in all. Encountering a hurricane on July 30, all the ships were driven shoreward and destroyed except for a lone vessel, the tag-along French ship *Grifón*, which sailed onward without incident. Hundreds of the crew and passengers lost their lives while other hundreds of survivors improvised a camp on shore to await aid from the Spanish fort at St. Augustine, to which a party was sent.

Salvage commenced soon afterward and lasted for several years. Nearly half of the vast treasure (at least the registered part) was recovered and kept in a nearby storehouse. In 1716, a flotilla of British freebooters under Henry Jennings raided the storehouse and carried off some 350,000 pesos of the treasure to Jamaica. The Spaniards, however, resumed operations until they could salvage no more and quit in 1719. The rest of the treasure remained on the ocean floor until our time.

Modern salvage on the 1715 Fleet began in the late 1950s, when local resident Kip Wagner found a piece of eight on the beach after a hurricane and decided to pursue the source. With the help of a 1774 chart and an army-surplus metal detector, he located the original Spanish salvage camp and unearthed coins and artifacts. Then, using a rented airplane to spot the underwater wrecksite from the air and check the location again by boat, Kip found the source of the coins and soon formed a team of divers and associates backed by a salvage permit from the State of Florida. All of this took place over a period of years before it evolved into the Real Eight Company, whose ranks later included such luminaries as Robert Marx and the flamboyant Mel Fisher. The Fisher family still sub-leases the sites to hopeful salvagers today.

The vast treasures yielded by the 1715 Fleet in our time fall into nearly every category, from coins to jewelry, precious stones to cannons, religious artifacts to Chinese porcelains. The 1715 Fleet remains the world’s largest source for New World gold cobs, while the silver cobs recovered number in the hundreds of thousands. Promotions of the coins by Real Eight and others have spanned the decades, in addition to significant auctions by Henry Christensen (1964); Parke-Bernet Galleries (1967) and Sotheby Parke Bernet (1973); the Schulman Coin and Mint (1972 and 1974); Bowers and Ruddy Galleries (1977); and even the U.S. Customs Service (2003).

Despite a wealth of publications pertaining to the 1715 Fleet with names of the ships and the known locations of some of the wrecks, there is no universal agreement as to the identity of the vessel at each wrecksite. In many cases, in fact, it is possible that separate wrecksites represent different parts of the same ship. As a result, salvagers over the decades have resorted to nicknames for the sites based on landmarks, local individuals, and even features from the wrecks themselves, such as (from north to south): “Pines” (Sebastian), “Cabin” (Wabasso), “Cannon” (Wabasso), “Corrigans” (Vero Beach), “Rio Mar” (Vero Beach), “Sandy Point” (Vero Beach), “Wedge” (Fort Pierce), and “Colored Beach” (Fort Pierce). Regardless of the exact site of origin, a great majority of the coins and artifacts are sold simply as “1715 Fleet.”

Whydah, sunk in 1717 off Cape Cod, Massachusetts

Flagship of the notorious pirate Sam Bellamy, the *Whydah* sank in a storm on April 26 with the loss of all hands (including Bellamy himself) except for two. Found in 1984 and subsequently salvaged by Barry Clifford, the *Whydah* is widely recognized as the first identifiable pirate ship ever to be salvaged. There is now a museum dedicated to the ship on Cape Cod that houses all the salvaged finds from the *Whydah*, but before that opened, various cobs (silver and gold) and other coins from the *Whydah* would enter the market via local dealers, who presumably got them from lucky beachcombers and from the families of people who obtained the coins long ago. Today it is nearly impossible to acquire a coin from the *Whydah*.

“Ca Mau wreck,” sunk ca. 1723-35 off Ca Mau Island, Vietnam

This unidentified Chinese wreck in the South China Sea yielded thousands of Ch'ing Dynasty export porcelain manufactured under the Emperor K'ang Hsi. The finds were first offered at auction by Christie's in 1998, but anonymously; more recently the government of Vietnam has auctioned off a major portion of the porcelains. These porcelains are quite popular among collectors of Spanish Fleet items because they are identical to the K'ang Hsi material from the Florida wrecks of 1715 and 1733.

Slot ter Hooge, sunk in 1724 off Porto Santo, Madeira Islands

This East Indiaman, whose Dutch name means “Castle of Hooge” (a place in modern-day Belgium), was outbound to Batavia (Jakarta) with a load of three tons of silver ingots (15 chests) plus four chests of silver coins, three of which contained nothing but Mexican cobs. Blown off course by a storm, the *Slot ter Hooge* wrecked on November 19 off Porto Santo Island in the Madeira Islands (northwest of Africa), to the demise of some 221 people on board (only 33 survived). More than half the treasure was salvaged over the next ten years by the famous English inventor John Lethbridge, but the rest was forgotten until our time. In 1974 the wreck was rediscovered by the well-known salvager Robert Sténuit, who recovered many silver ingots and coins, mostly Dutch ducatoons but also some Mexican 8-reales cobs.

Le Chameau, sunk in 1725 off Nova Scotia, Canada

This French man-of-war was attempting to reach Louisburg harbor with a consignment of troops and coins for the French colony when a storm sent her onto the rocks of Cape Breton instead, killing all on board. The main wrecksite was never found until 1961, when Alex Storm spotted cannons on the seabed and led a successful salvage expedition on the site in 1965, yielding many French silver ecus and gold Louis d'ors. The *Chameau* has been salvaged more recently as well.

1733 Fleet, Florida Keys

Much like the 1715-Fleet disaster, the 1733 Fleet was an entire Spanish convoy lost in a hurricane off Florida. However, due to the lesser severity of the 1733 hurricane, which struck the fleet on July 15, and the shallowness of the wrecksites in the Keys, there were many survivors, and four ships remained in good enough condition to be refloated and sent back to Havana. A highly successful salvage effort by the Spanish yielded even more than the 12 million pesos of precious cargo listed on the Fleet's manifest (thanks to the usual contraband).

The wrecks themselves are spread across 80 miles, from north of Key Largo down to south of Duck Key, and include the following galleons (note there is not universal agreement as to which wrecksite pertains to each galleon, and each name is a contemporaneous abbreviation or nickname): *El Pópulo*, *El Infante*, *San José*, *El Rubí* (the *capitana*), *Chávez*, *Herrera*, *Tres Puentes*, *San Pedro*, *El Terri* (also spelled *Terri* or *Herri*), *San Francisco*, *El Gallo Indiano* (the *almiranta*), *Las Angustias*, *El Sueco de Arizón*, *San Fernando*, and *San Ignacio*. This last ship, *San Ignacio*, is believed to be the source of many silver coins (and even some gold coins) found in a reef area off Deer Key known as “Coffins Patch,” the south-westernmost of all the 1733-Fleet wrecksites. In addition, many other related sites are known, mostly the wrecks of tag-along ships that accompanied the fleet proper.

The first and arguably most famous of the wrecks of the 1733 Fleet to be located in modern times was the *capitana El Rubí*, which was discovered in 1948 and salvaged principally in the 1950s by Art McKee, whose Sunken Treasure Museum on Plantation Key housed his finds for all to see. Unfortunately throughout the next several decades the wrecksites in the Keys became a virtual free-for-all, with many disputes and confrontations, until the government created the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary in 1990. The removal of artifacts from any of the sites is prohibited today.

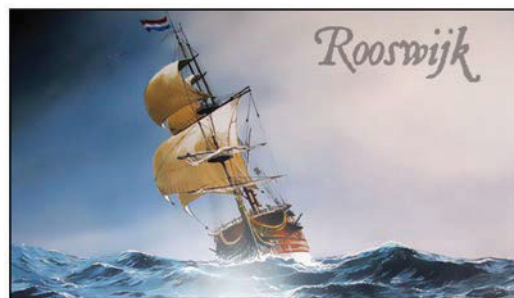
In contrast to the 1715 Fleet, and because of the extensive Spanish salvage in the 1730s, the finds by modern divers have been modest, especially in gold coins, of which there are far more fakes on the market than genuine specimens. Nevertheless, the 1733 Fleet has been a significant source for some of the rare Mexican milled “pillar dollars” of 1732-1733 as well as the transitional “klippe”-type coins of 1733.

Vliegenthart, sunk in 1735 off Zeeland, the Netherlands

The East Indiaman *Vliegenthart* (“Flying Hart” in Dutch) had just departed Rammekens for the East Indies when the deadly combination of a northeast gale, a spring tide and pilot error sent her into a sand bank behind her sister-ship *Anna Catharina*. The latter ship broke apart in the storm while the *Vliegenthart*, damaged and firing her cannons in distress, slipped off the bank and sank in 10 fathoms of water. All hands on both ships were lost.

Contemporaneous salvage under contract with the Dutch East India Company was unsuccessful, but it provided a piece of evidence, a secret map, that emerged from obscurity in 1977. Stemming from that, divers employed by the former London attorney Rex Cowan discovered the wreck in 1981, and in 1983 they found their first coins, one of three chests of Mexican silver and Dutch gold coins (totaling 67,000 guilders or dollar-sized units) for the East India trade aboard the *Vliegenthart*. The second chest was smashed on the seabed and its contents partially salvaged, while the third chest, intact like the first, came up in 1992. The divers also recovered several smaller boxes of large Dutch silver coins known as “ducatoons,” illegally exported and therefore contraband. Among the silver coins found were thousands of Mexican cobs, predominantly 8 reales, many with clear dates in the early 1730s and in excellent condition.

Rooswijk, sunk in 1739 off southeast England



Off the southeastern tip of England, just north of the Straits of Dover, the sea hides a most unusual feature known as the Goodwin Sands, where sand banks appear and disappear unpredictably and move with the tides. Many ships over the centuries have sunk here and silted over, and occasionally one of the wrecks will surface and be discovered. Such is the case with the *Rooswijk*, a Dutch East Indiaman that foundered on the Goodwin Sands in a storm on December 19, 1739 (by the calendar in use by the British at the time), with all hands and 30 chests of treasure, virtually gone without a trace.

By chance in December 2004, the sands that had swallowed the wreck of the *Rooswijk* parted and allowed diver Ken Welling to retrieve two complete chests and hundreds of silver bars. Operating in secrecy, salvage continued in 2005 under the direction of Rex Cowan (in agreement with the Dutch and British governments) and is ongoing today. So far, several hundred Mexican silver cobs of the 1720s and early 1730s and transitional “klippes” of 1733-1734, as well as many more hundreds of “pillar dollars” and a smattering of cobs from other mints, have hit the market from this wreck, mostly through auction.

Hollandia, sunk in 1743 off the Scilly Isles, southwest of England

Blown off course on her way to the East Indies, the *Hollandia* struck Gunner Rock and sank in about 110 feet of water about 1½ miles east of it on July 13, 1743. There were no survivors.

The first sign of the wreck came in 1971, when divers under Rex Cowan located the wrecksite and within a couple years salvaged more than 35,000 silver coins among the nearly 130,000 guilders (dollar-sized units) recorded to be on board the *Hollandia*. A great majority of the coins were Mexican “pillar dollars,” but there were also some silver cobs, including the scarce Mexican transitional “klippes” of 1733-1734 and a few Guatemala cobs, in mixed condition.

Princess Louisa, sunk in 1743 off the Cape Verde Islands, west of Africa

Laden with 20 chests (69,760 ounces) of Spanish silver, the East Indiaman *Princess Louisa* fell victim to surprise currents and inaccurate charts and struck a reef and sank off Isla de Maio in the early morning hours of April 18. Forty-two of the 116 people aboard floated to safety on the nearby island, but nothing on the ship could be saved. Contemporaneous salvage never came to fruition.

In 1998 and 1999 the wrecksite was located and salvaged by the Arqueonautas firm, whose finds from this wreck have been largely marketed by a Houston coin and jewelry dealer ever since, although some coins were also sold at auction in 2000-2001. Most of the coins were New World silver cobs from all the mints that were operating in the early 1700s (including rare Bogotá cobs), predominantly minors (smaller than 8 reales), in average condition, with quite a few preserved in as-found multiple-coin clusters.

Reijgersdaal, sunk in 1747 off South Africa

More popularly known in the U.S. as *Reygersdahl*, this typical East Indiaman was carrying eight chests of silver coins (nearly 30,000 coins) when she sank on October 25, 1747, between Robben and Dassen Islands. After four-and-a-half months at sea, the crew had anchored there to fetch rock rabbits (“*dassies*,” for which Dassen Island was named) and other fresh food to relieve massive illness on board the ship, on which some 125 had died and 83 were incapacitated out of 297 people; but in the face of a gale, the anchor-line snapped and the ship foundered on the rocks. Only 20 survived the sinking, and only one incomplete chest of coins was recovered. The area was deemed too dangerous to attempt further salvage.

Beginning in 1979, modern salvage on the wreck by the salvage company Sealit yielded thousands of coins (as many as 15,000 by the early 1980s, when protective legislation was enacted in South Africa), mostly in near pristine condition, which have been sold in

various auctions and private offerings ever since. A great majority of the coins from this wreck are Mexican pillar dollars in excellent condition, but there were also a few hundred New World silver cobs, including Guatemala cobs, which are rarely seen from shipwrecks.

Nuestra Señora de la Luz, sunk in 1752 off Montevideo, Uruguay

Actually a Portuguese vessel leased by the Spanish, the *Luz* left Buenos Aires in the summer of 1752 with a load of money bound for Spain and had just stopped in Montevideo for provisioning when a strong storm swept her into the coastline, spreading wreckage over a wide area and killing all on board. While over 90% of the treasure was recovered soon afterward, the powder-hold was never found, and as it turns out, that is where some 200,000 pesos (according to later reports) of contraband had been stored.

In April 1992, divers working under Rubén Collado began to recover gold coins on a wrecksite in the Río de la Plata, and soon it became clear the wreck in question had to be from 1751 or 1752, as none of the coins was dated later than 1751. The finds, which were split with the Uruguayan government and then sold at auction in New York and Montevideo, consisted of mostly milled (bust-type) 8 escudos from the new mint at Santiago, Chile. Also in these auctions were 95 gold cobs and 353 silver cobs, the former mostly Lima 8 and 4 escudos (but also some Bogotá 2 escudos), and the latter mostly 8 and 4 reales from Potosí (with several more gold and silver cob sold privately). The gold is pristine, but the silver coins all show at least moderate corrosion.

Geldermalsen (“Nanking Cargo”), sunk in 1752 in the South China Sea

The *Geldermalsen* was a Dutch East India Company ship returning to Amsterdam with a cargo of over 160,000 porcelains and 145 gold ingots (in addition to tea and textiles) when she hit a reef and sank on January 3, 1752. In 1985 the wreck was found by Michael Hatcher, and the salvaged material was sold at auction by Christie’s Amsterdam in 1986 as the famous “Nanking Cargo.”

Bredenhof, sunk in 1753 off Mozambique

The *Bredenhof* was a Dutch East Indiaman headed to India with 14 barrels of copper “duits” (penny-like coins), 29 chests of silver bars, and one chest of gold ducats. On June 6, 1753, about 13 miles from the eastern coast of Africa and 120 miles south of the Portuguese settlement of Mozambique, the *Bredenhof* found herself in difficult currents and struck a reef. Amazingly, among the first items jettisoned to try to raise the ship off the reef were some of the chests of silver bars! The gold was taken by the ship’s officers, some of whom survived the trip to Mozambique, but the silver bars and copper coins were lost until modern times, despite salvage attempts in the 1750s.

In 1986 divers with the salvage company Sealit found the wreck and recovered hundreds of silver ingots and hundreds of thousands of copper coins, all sold at auction by Christie’s Amsterdam that same year.

Tilbury, sunk in 1757 off Nova Scotia, Canada

In an expedition against the French fortress at Louisbourg, the *Tilbury* was one of four ships (in a fleet of twenty) that were carrying a total of 34 chests of silver coins when the fleet encountered a hurricane off the southeast coast of Cape Breton. The *Tilbury* and

one of the non-coin-bearing ships, the smaller sloop *Ferret*, sank in the middle of the night on September 25, 1757. Two hundred eighty of the 400 men on board the *Tilbury* survived to become French prisoners; the other ship and its crew were lost without a trace.

Famous diver and author Alex Storm (with Adrian Richards) located the bow section of the *Tilbury* in 1969 on a stretch of coastline known, appropriately enough, as "Tilbury Rocks," where until the 1980s there was even a cannon from the wreck lying on shore for all to see. In 1986 divers Pierre LeClerc and Gilles Brisebois found what is believed to be the midsection of the ship farther offshore, and these divers recovered several hundred coins, many of which were auctioned in 1989. Most of the coins were silver pillar dollars, but there were also several silver cobs and even at least one gold cob among the finds. The missing stern section of the ship, where the bulk of the treasure was stored, is still to be found.

Auguste, sunk in 1761 off Nova Scotia, Canada

After the end of the Seven Years' War between England and France in 1759, French officers and aristocrats in Canada were sent from Quebec back to France in ships such as the *Auguste*. In stormy conditions and damaged by fire, the *Auguste* struck a sand bar on November 15 and subsequently sank in Aspy Bay off Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia. Only seven of the 121 on board survived, and the wealth of the passengers was lost until our time. To date, well over a thousand coins of various nationalities have been found, along with many important artifacts.

Nicobar, sunk in 1783 off South Africa

One of very few famous shipwrecks of the Danish East India Company, the *Nicobar* was outbound to India with a load of copper plates from Sweden that were actually a form of coins, inasmuch as each one bore a date, denomination and mintmark, along with the monogram of the king or queen. Demonetized in 1771, the copper "plate money" became more like ingots, with trade value at the current rate for pure copper. But the *Nicobar* never reached its destination: After stopping at False Bay to replenish supplies and offload sick crew, the ship left again on July 10, 1783, and ran aground in a storm that night. The wreck was rediscovered in 1987 by local fishermen, who salvaged some 3,000 copper plates, the bulk of which were sold by Ponterio & Associates in California.

Cazador, sunk in 1784 off New Orleans, Louisiana

The *Cazador* was a Spanish brig of war headed from Vera Cruz, Mexico, to New Orleans under the direction of Captain Gabriel de Campos y Piñeda. Her cargo of some 450,000 pesos of newly minted silver coins was meant to stabilize the fragile economy in the Spanish possession of Louisiana, which had suffered from the use of French paper currency. The fact that the coins never arrived probably hastened the decision to cede the colony to Napoleon in 1800, soon after which Louisiana was sold to the fledgling United States of America for \$15 million.

Nobody knows how the *Cazador* was lost, and no evidence of the ship was found until 1993, when a fishing crew led by Captain Jerry Murphy snagged their net on something about 50 miles south of New Orleans in the Gulf of Mexico. When the net was brought up, it spilled out hundreds of silver coins onto the deck of Jerry's boat, aptly named *Mistake*. Shortly thereafter, the fishermen obtained the rights to the find and began recoveries under the name of Grumpy Inc.

Halsewell, sunk in 1786 off Dorset, England

A British East Indiaman outbound to India, the *Halsewell* hit bad weather in the English Channel and was blown onto the cliffs on the Dorset coast. She was battered to pieces as minority survivors scrambled into caves and up the cliffs.

Local dive teams have salvaged coins and small artifacts from the *Halsewell* in recent years, but not in any significant quantities.

Hartwell, sunk in 1787 off the Cape Verde Islands, west of Africa

On her maiden voyage to China, the British East Indiaman *Hartwell* was heavily laden with silver when the crew mutinied. After quelling the fight, the captain headed to the Cape Verde Islands to offload the mutineers. Exhausted from the mutiny, the weary sailors ran the ship into a reef off the Island of Boavista, losing the ship entirely. Fortunately all hands were saved.

Salvage by the British East India Company 1788-1791 yielded nearly half of the approximately 200,000 ounces of silver cargo on board the *Hartwell*. Pirates at the time recovered another 40,000 coins.

The wrecksite was found again and salvaged by Afrimar in 1994-1996 and by Arqueonautas in 1996-1999, providing the market with Spanish colonial bust-type 8 reales in generally poor condition.

Piedmont ("Lyme Bay wreck"), sunk in 1795 in Lyme Bay, south of England

One of a huge fleet of 300 ships on their way to the West Indies to suppress a French uprising, the *Piedmont* was forced into Lyme Bay during a hurricane on November 18, 1795, that scattered and sank the ships of the fleet all along the Dorset coast. The *Piedmont* and five other ships (*Aeolus*, *Catherine*, *Golden Grove*, *Thomas* and *Venus*) broke apart on Chesil Beach and came to be known collectively as the "Lyme Bay wrecks." An estimated 1,000 men lost their lives in the disaster, including well over a hundred from the *Piedmont* alone.

In the early 1980s, the wrecks were salvaged by divers Selwyn Williams and Les and Julia C. Kent, who discovered many silver cobs of the late 1600s on the wrecksite of the *Piedmont*. It is presumed that the coins had been captured or recovered from a seventeenth-century wreck and stored in the vaults of the Bank of England for about a century before being transported and subsequently lost again. These coins are usually recognizable by their uniformly dark-gray color, a bit sea-worn but not overly corroded. A significant group of extremely rare Colombian silver cobs from the *Piedmont* (but not identified as such) was offered at auction in 1995.

Lady Burgess, sunk in 1806 off the Cape Verde Islands, west of Africa

An outbound British East Indiaman with a cargo of general merchandise, the *Lady Burgess* found herself separated from her fleet and hit a reef in the Cape Verde Islands on April 20, 1806. In the ensuing chaos, 52 of the 180 people on board the ship perished. Inasmuch as she was not a treasure ship, the *Lady Burgess* was not salvaged in her own time and was therefore untouched when the salvage company Arqueonautas located her remains in 1999 and recovered a modicum of Spanish silver bust-type 8 reales and British gold guineas that had been among private specie on board the ship.

HMS Athenienne, sunk in 1806 off Sicily

The British Naval ship *Athenienne* was traveling from Gibraltar to Malta when she suddenly struck the fabled “Esquerques” reef some 80 miles from Sicily (Italy) and sank on October 20, 1806. Over a hundred survivors made it to Sicily in longboats, but many more hundreds perished in the wreck. Modern salvage of the *Athenienne* in the 1970s produced about 4,000 Spanish colonial silver bust-type 8 reales (about 10 per cent of the total believed to be on board), of which only about 500 were more than just featureless slivers.

Admiral Gardner, sunk in 1809 off the southeast coast of England

Along with her sister-ship *Britannia*, the English East Indiaman *Admiral Gardner* was outbound with an immense cargo (48 tons!) of copper coins for circulation in India when both ships sank in a storm on the Goodwin Sands on January 24, 1809. Ten lives were lost, as was all the cargo. The coins were recovered in modern times, literally a million of them packed in wax inside wooden barrels.

S.S. New York, sunk in 1846 off New Orleans

The *S.S. New York* was a side-wheel steamer on a weekly shuttle from Galveston, Texas, to New Orleans, Louisiana, when on September 7, 1846, she found herself in the midst of a hurricane and was unable to stay afloat and sank with 17 souls, the remaining 36 on board being rescued by the *S.S. Galveston*. According to reports, some \$30,000-\$40,000 worth of US gold and silver coins and banknotes were lost in the wreck, many of the US coins being early products of the southern branch mints of Charlotte (NC), Dahlonega (GA) and New Orleans (LA). At the time, however, reports of the war against Mexico over Texas statehood took precedence, and the wreck of the *New York* was all but forgotten.

In the 1990s, however, an astute oil field worker was able to find the shipwreck based on fishermen's reports of a known “snag” in a certain area of the Gulf of Mexico. In 2007 the wreck was salvaged in a full-scale operation that yielded thousands of gold and silver coins in excellent condition. Many of the finds were first offered at auction by Stack's in 2008.

S.S. Central America, sunk in 1857 in deep water off North Carolina

Sunk in a hurricane on September 12, 1857, the mail steamer *Central America* took with her more than 400 lives and over three tons of gold. The wreck lay undisturbed until 1986, when Tommy Thompson and his Columbus-America Discovery Group located the ship in 8500 feet of water. After 10 years of legal struggles, the salvagers were awarded about 92 percent of the treasure, with most of the rest going to insurance companies who had paid the claim when the ship sank. Widely touted as the greatest treasure ever found, the gold from the *Central America* has been very heavily promoted and cleverly marketed.

S.S. Brother Jonathan, sunk in 1865 off Crescent City, California

The *S.S. Brother Jonathan* was a sidewheeler ship that plied the waters of the West Coast, ranging from Central America to Oregon. On July 30, 1865, the ship struck a rock just outside of Crescent City, California, and sank in 45 minutes. Of the 244 passengers and crew aboard, only 19 people survived. Those lost included the newly appointed superintendent of a proposed U.S. Mint in Dalles, Oregon;

a notable San Francisco journalist; the commanding general of the Department of the Pacific; and a brothel owner with seven young ladies. Its cargo during that voyage included many newly minted San Francisco double eagles. Another safe aboard contained jewelry, gold coins and gold bars. Despite numerous salvage efforts, its cargo was lost until the 1990s when Deep Sea Research brought up 1,200 gold coins, with more still yet to be found.

S.S. Republic, sunk in 1865 in deep water off Savannah, Georgia

Originally christened the *Tennessee* (which is how she was identified in our time), the sidewheel steamer *Republic* was carrying some \$400,000 in specie from New York to New Orleans when she sank in a hurricane about 100 miles offshore on October 25, 1865. One of many deep targets located by the salvage company Odyssey, the site of the *Republic* was salvaged by submersible craft beginning in 2003. In addition to gold and silver coins of the Civil War-era United States, Odyssey found the ship's bell with part of the name *Tennessee*, confirming the ship's identity and launching a massive, ongoing promotional campaign for coins and artifacts from the wreck.

Douro, sunk in 1882 off Cape Finisterre, Spain

The British Royal Mail Steamer *Douro* was en route to England from Portugal when she collided with the Spanish steamship *Yrurac Bat* and sank in the early morning hours of April 2, 1882, in deep water off the northwest coast of Spain. All but six people on board survived, but the ship and its cargo of tens of thousands of gold coins were a total loss. The wreck was found and salvaged in 1995 by Sverker Hallstrom and Nigel Pickford using a remote-operated vehicle (ROV) at a depth of 1,500 feet. The cargo of gold coins, mostly British sovereigns was sold at auction by Spink (London) in 1996.

S.S. Camberwell, sunk in 1917 off the Isle of Wight, England

The *Camberwell* was one of many cargo ships to ply the England-to-India route during World War I and end up on the bottom of the ocean. The vessel sank on May 18, 1917 off the Isle of Wight after striking a German mine, with a loss of seven sailors. The ship's India-bound cargo consisted of wine, champagne, perfume, pre-paid postcards and unsigned 10-rupees banknotes. Surprisingly, the paper postcards and banknotes survived water immersion and were recovered by salvage diver Martin Woodward.

Andrea Doria, sunk in 1956 off Massachusetts

On the night of July 25, 1956, the New York-bound Italian luxury liner *Andrea Doria* collided with the *Stockholm*, a Swedish American Line passenger liner, while travelling through heavy fog. The *Stockholm's* bow penetrated the *Andrea Doria's* starboard side, leaving a gaping hole in the *Andrea Doria* yet allowing the *Stockholm* to remain afloat. Safety measures kept the *Andrea Doria* from sinking for eleven hours, long enough for the survivors to evacuate. Altogether 46 people aboard the *Andrea Doria* and six crewmembers aboard the *Stockholm* were killed.

The wreck was well documented with divers visiting it only a day after sinking. In 1981, a salvage group led by department store heir Peter Gimbel recovered the first-class bank safe and opened it in 1984. American silver certificates and Italian lira were found inside, then conserved and encapsulated by PCGS Currency. Numerous artifacts including china and silverware have also been recovered and appear on the market frequently.