

TREASURE AND TRAGEDY MARK TREASURE COAST

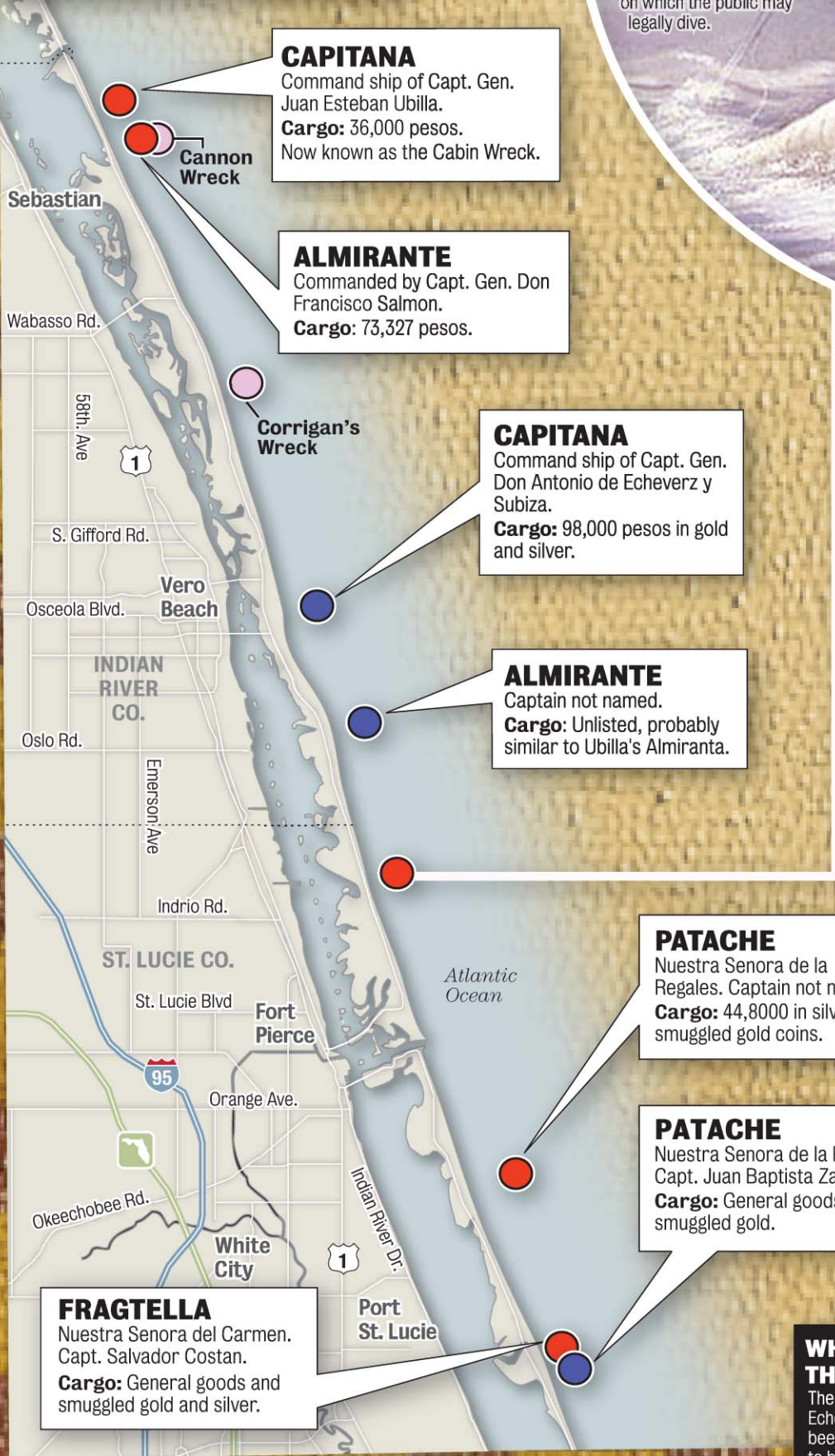
Eleven Spanish ships and one French vessel, the Grifon, gathered in the harbor at Havana, Cuba, in 1715, preparing for the voyage across the Atlantic to Cadiz. The ships were divided into the New Spain Fleet under Captain General Juan Esteban Ubilla, and the Squadron de Terre Firme under Captain General Don Antonio de Echeverz y Subiza. The fleets collected treasure from South and Central America, and met in Havana to sail home in convoy for protection against pirates, and English raiders. The fleet sailed July 24. The weather was good in Cuba, but a major hurricane struck the fleet off the Treasure Coast, claiming 1,500 lives, and much of the treasure. Only the Grifon escaped.

Known locations of the 1715 Fleet

Here are the reported locations of the Spanish Treasure Fleet vessels, their commanders, and cargoes, as compiled from numerous sources. Names of ships or in **BOLD>.**



- **New Spain Fleet:** Sailed from Mexico
- **Squadron de Terre Firme:** Sailed from South America and the islands
- **Portions of ships unidentified**



Silver and Gold

Spanish Doubloon



The Spanish Doubloon was a gold coin with a value of about four English Pounds, which converts to about \$946 in current U.S. dollars. The silver coins are known as "Real's" or the legendary "Pieces of Eight" of pirate lore, with a value of one U.S. Dollar of the time or \$17 in modern currency. The silver coins were called "pieces of eight" because they were often literally cut into eight parts. Remember the oldcheer: "Two bits, Four Bits, Six bits, a Dollar, everyone stand up and holler!"

Piece of Eight



WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

The remainder of ships in Echeverz' fleet have never been located. One is believed to be offshore from Fernandina, and another off Fort Lauderdale. Many of the vessels shattered into several pieces, so, while there were only 11 ships, there are some 21 treasure sites listed along the Treasure Coast.



Timeline of events of 1715 Fleet

July 24, 1715
Eleven Spanish and one French ship sail from Havana, Cuba, carrying the first gold to be shipped to Spain in 12 years.

July 30, 1715
Hurricane strikes fleet in the Florida Channel between the mainland and the Bahamas Islands. Only the French ship escapes and reaches Europe.

July 31, 1715
Admiral Don Francisco Salmon, the only surviving ranking officer of the fleet, collects the survivors and what supplies he can, creates a salvage camp on the barrier island between Sebastian and Vero Beach and begin salvage operations.

August 5, 1715
Miguel de Lima, owner of the Urca, reports his ship has been salvaged and the goods used to help the salvage operations for the rest of the fleet.

August 6, 1715
Admiral Salmon sends to Havana and St. Augustine

for help.

September 1715
Spanish recover more than half the treasure on their manifests.

September 20, 1715
Admiral Salmon reports salvage progress to the King of Spain through Havana.

January 1716
English ships raid the Treasure Camp.

1718
Spanish abandon salvage operations.

1949
Kip Wagner and Capt. Steadman Parker of Wabasso, make an unsuccessful effort to salvage treasure.

1959

1963
Mel Fisher as head of Treasure Salvors, subcontracts with Wagner to search for the fleet.

1964
Fisher and Wagner find 1,033 gold coins on the ocean floor off Fort Pierce.

1990
Fisher opens a treasure museum near Sebastian.

Present:
The search for treasure continues for the Spanish gold, worth seven million pesos in 1715, still in the ocean offshore.



SOURCES: Archival Information on the 1715 Fleet, 24 July 1715, by Jack Hawkins and Bob Marx; *Florida's Golden Galleons: The Search for the 1715 Spanish Treasure Fleet* by Robert F. Burgess and Carl J. Clausen; <http://www.treasureexpeditions.com/MyStoryShip.htm>; Pieces of Eight by Kip Wagner; As Told To L.B. Taylor, Jr.; Lowenstein Reference and Genealogical Section of the Vero Beach Public Library; *The 1715 Fleet Disaster*, by John DeBry, former President of HRD, Inc., Compiled from HRDnews letters: Vol. 1, No. 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, Vol. 2, No. 2, 3, and 4

PHOTOS: Images of Doubloon, Piece of Eight courtesy of blindkat.hegewisch.net; image of compass courtesy of www.maritimeantiques-uk.com; painting of Spanish treasure fleet and painting of Urca de Lima by William L. Trotter courtesy of www.sfdj.com; image of Mel Fisher courtesy of www.melfisher.com

RESEARCH: JOE CRANKSHAW
Joe.Crankshaw@scripps.com

GRAPHIC: KWENCY NORMAN
KwencyNorman@scripps.com