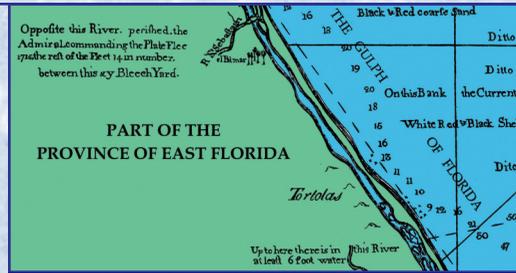
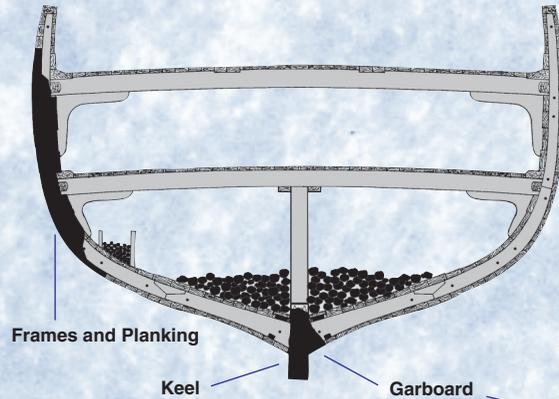


"Part of the Province of East Florida." Bernard Romans, 1774. At the River St. Sebastian Roman notes "Opposite this River perished the Admiral commanding the Plate Fleet 1715, the rest of the Fleet 14 in number, between this and Bleech Yard."



Cross section of hull
The darkened areas are present on *Urca de Lima* today



Possible cross section of hull remains shortly after *Urca de Lima* broke up



Cross section of *Urca de Lima*'s remains today

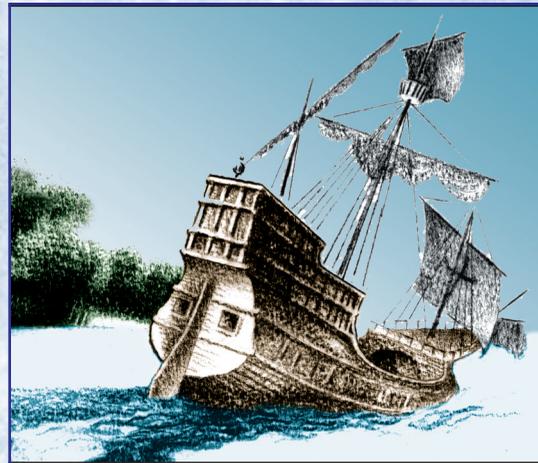
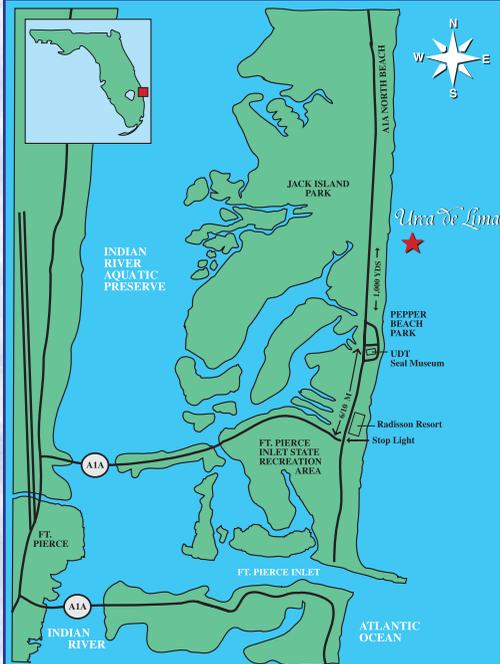


HOW TO FIND *Urca De Lima*

Follow Highway A1A north from the Ft. Pierce Inlet to Pepper Park. Walk northward along the beach approximately 1,000 yards from the park boundary. The wreck site lies on the first offshore reef in 10-15 feet of water, approximately 200 yards from shore at latitude 27° 30.317' N, and longitude 80° 17.950' W. To avoid anchor damage to the shipwreck, please use mooring buoys. Remember to display a "divers down" flag when diving or snorkeling. A laminated underwater guide is available from local dive shops to orient divers on a self-guided tour of the preserve.

As with all other historical and archaeological sites on public uplands and submerged bottomlands, *Urca de Lima* is protected by Florida laws prohibiting unauthorized disturbance, excavation, or removal of artifacts. Please help keep the site intact for others.

"Take only photos and leave only bubbles."



Interpretive displays of materials from the 1715 treasure fleet can be seen at the following locations:

Museum of Florida History

R.A. Gray Building,
500 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee 32399
850.245.6400

St. Lucie County Regional History Center

Under the east end of Peter P. Cobb Bridge,
414 Seaway Drive, Ft. Pierce 34949
772.462.1795

McLarty Treasure Museum

Sebastian Inlet State Park,
13180 North A1A, Vero Beach 32963
772.589.2147

For more information call
850.245.6444

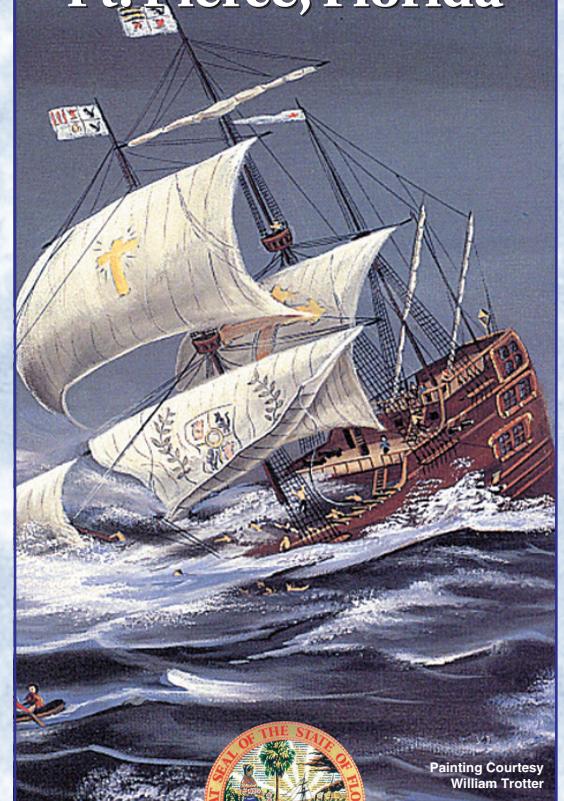
Or visit
museumsinthesea.com



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Division of Historical Resources
Bureau of Archaeological Research
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Urca De Lima

UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE Ft. Pierce, Florida



Painting Courtesy
William Trotter

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Division of Historical Resources
Bureau of Archaeological Research

St. Lucie County

Urca De Lima

She was built strong, heavily planked to ride through ocean swells. *Urca de Lima* (named after her owner Miguel de Lima y Melo), was part of a Spanish merchant convoy commanded by *Capitán General* Don Juan de Ubilla. She was also known as the *Naode Refuerzo*, perhaps because she had been reinforced for the Atlantic trade routes. *Urcas* were flat-bottomed, round-bellied storeships originally designed to ply the shallow waters off the Flemish coast. Due to their cargo carrying capacity, they soon were adopted for the Spanish-American trade between Europe and the New World.

Loaded with the products of Mexico and Manila, Ubilla's *flota* of ships rendezvoused in the summer of 1715 with the South American squadron of Antonio de Echeverz at Havana to begin the long voyage back to Spain. The combined fleet of eleven vessels set sail from Cuba on the 24th of July, assisted in their northerly course through the *Canal de Bahama* by the Gulf Stream. But they were never to reach the open ocean.

Only a few days out, the *flota* was struck by a fierce hurricane off the coast of Florida. Miguel de Lima later described what happened:

The sun disappeared and the wind increased in velocity coming from the east and east northeast. The seas became very giant in size, the wind continued blowing us toward shore, pushing us into shallow water. It soon happened that we were unable to use any sail at all, making bare our yards, mostly due to the wind carrying away our sails and rigging, and we were at the mercy of the wind and water, always driven closer to shore. Having then lost all of our masts, all of the ships were wrecked on the shore, and with the exception of mine, broke to pieces. We lost only thirty seamen and marines, who were carried away by waves while in the waist of the ship. My ship is at Palmar de Ays in 27 degrees and 15 minutes at the mouth of a river.

Grounded by the storm, but left relatively intact, *Urca de Lima* provided survivors from the other wrecked ships with victuals from her stores until supplies finally arrived from Havana thirty-one days later. In the meantime, the castaways began to bury their dead and collect what valuables they could from debris washed ashore.



On these deserted beaches, which were very barren and dry, God permitted us to find sweet water, enough to drink, by making wells the height of a man, which were called "casimbas." However, all of the survivors were not able to survive the temperament of those shores, the heat of the sun was insufferable, and the number of mosquitoes were probably greater than the plague. Thanks to God all of the silver on my ship has escaped [has been recovered].

The *Urca* had been heavily laden with general cargo, which included hundreds of uncured cowhides, packets of chocolate, vanilla, sassafras, incense, and other exotic products which brought high prices in Europe. Unlike other ships in the stricken *flota*, she carried no royal treasure, only private silver in sacks and chests. It was probably her stout hull that had saved much of her contents from being dashed away in the storm. She was the first of the fleet wrecks to be salvaged by Spanish crews from Havana, but was then burned to the waterline to conceal her position from English freebooters, who also began to arrive at the scene. Although many precious goods were recovered from the wrecksites shortly after the disaster, salvage attempts soon ended as turbid sand engulfed the remnants of the lost ships and their cargos.

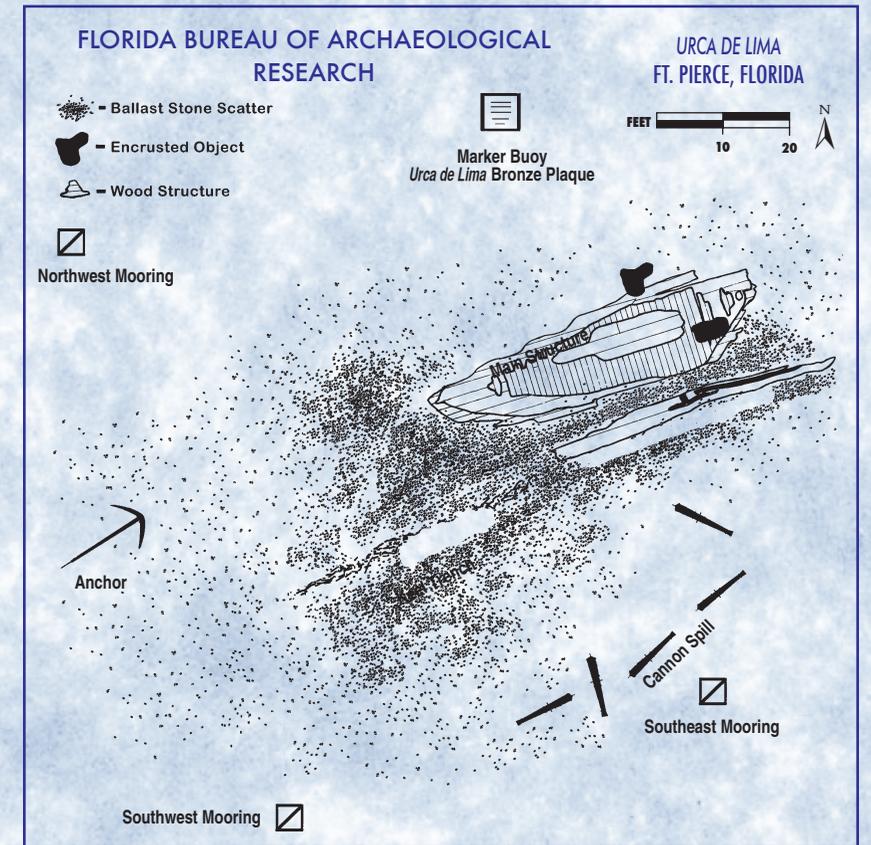
Some fifty years later marine surveyor Bernard Romans was sent to Florida to map the little-known coastline for the British Crown. When he reached the beaches of "Palmar de Ais," his survey crew found the remains of an old shipwreck inshore of the shifting sand bars at the mouth of an inlet. It was *Urca de Lima*. The men collected Spanish coins on the beach and lived

on turtle eggs and bear meat as they completed mapping the region.

Reports from the coast between Sebastian and Ft. Pierce inlets in the early 1800s indicate that the ships of the 1715 fleet were known to have been lost in that area. However, in 1837 John L. Williams published the *Territory of Florida*, a book that gained widespread popularity but mistakenly placed the location of the 1715 wrecks in the Florida Keys—an error that would continue on "treasure" maps published as late as the 1960s. By 1892 the original inlet at Ft. Pierce had filled with sediment and had become part of the present beach. The wreck of *Urca de Lima* once again was forgotten.

Then, in 1928 an adventurer named William J. Beach arrived in Ft. Pierce with tales of man-eating sharks and Spanish gold. Equipped with hard-hat diving gear and a metal detecting device, he led city officials to the ballast pile of *Urca de Lima*, the first of the fabled 1715 fleet shipwrecks to be rediscovered. As many as sixteen cannons and four anchors were raised from the wreck site, some of which can still be seen today in front of the Ft. Pierce City Hall. Word of the wreckage spread, and in 1932 the first salvage permit was issued to search for and to recover Spanish treasure.

Urca de Lima was heavily salvaged but, since most of her cargo had been recovered by the Spaniards, modern salvage efforts were only marginally successful, producing only one silver bar, two silver wedges, and five iron cannons. The silver wedges gave rise to the site's modern nickname, the Wedge Wreck. In 1983 and 1984 the last salvage permits were granted on *Urca de Lima*. In 1985 *Urca de Lima's* surviving hull structure



was carefully mapped and recorded by archaeologists at the request of city officials who wanted an underwater park. *Urca de Lima* was designated Florida's first Underwater Archaeological Preserve in 1987; popularity of the preserve paved the way for subsequent preserves around the state. *Urca de Lima* was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.

