The Melbourne Beach Shipwreck
A Missing 1715 Fleet Vessel

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Executive Summary
This paper provides evidence that the Melbourne Beach shipwreck scatter is derived from one of the missing Spanish 1715 Plate Fleet shipwrecks, the Santisima Trinidad y Nuestra Señora de la Concepción.

Background
The 1715 Fleet Disaster
A hurricane or severe tropical storm struck the ill-fated 1715 Plate Fleet on the morning of Tuesday, July 30, 1715. The fleet had departed the port of Havana, Cuba on July 24, 1715 and sailed across the Straits of Florida and rendezvoused off of Sand Key in the lower Florida Keys. From the lower Florida Keys, the fleet then began the voyage up the Florida coast carried by the Gulf Stream current. Had the fleet not encountered the hurricane, they would have continued north to the North Carolina Capes. From the North Carolina Capes, the fleet would have turned east to catch the prevailing winds and completed the return voyage to Spain. The 1715 fleet consisted of twelve vessels transporting more than 14 million pesos of registered treasure. The fleet lost 11 vessels and approximately 1,000 lives in this catastrophic storm. Traveling ahead of the rest of the fleet, the French Grifon (also spelled Griffon) was the only vessel that departed Havana and survived the storm to complete the voyage.
Melbourne Beach
The seaside village of Melbourne Beach, Florida is located on the central coast of Florida in south Brevard County. The town lies at the juncture of what is popularly referred to as the Space Coast to the north and the Treasure Coast to the south. The descriptions of the two areas recognize historic activities and tragedies that have occurred within their boundaries. The Treasure Coast includes Indian River, St. Lucie and Martin Counties. All the known 1715 shipwreck sites lie along an approximate 35-mile stretch of the coast from Sebastian Inlet to Fort Pierce Inlet.

Discovery
Exploration of the Melbourne Site (Melbourne) — initially known as the Radar Wreck Site — began years ago but the first discovery of artifacts was recorded on August 5, 2004. (The history of the operational control of Melbourne may be found
This paper documents the efforts, research, and science that support the continuing efforts at Melbourne. In addition, this paper will be used to educate the shareholders of Seafarer Exploration Corp (OTCQB:SFRX) so they may better understand Seafarer Exploration’s efforts on behalf of Seafarer’s Quest, LLC, a partnership between Seafarer Exploration Corp and Marine Archaeology Partners, LLC. The evidence concludes that the two diagnostic artifacts: the Moneros Platter, and the Ramirez flintlock pistol, were cargo of the Santisima Trinidad y Nuestra Señora de la Concepción (Concepción) a vessel of the doomed 1715 Silver Plate Fleet.

Companies working Melbourne over the years have used different methods to survey, locate and characterize targets found at Melbourne. Those methods included the use of remote sensing equipment and the use of divers to verify important targets. This led to the first discovery in 2004 which was a 9-pounder iron cannon. The cannon was found lying in a hard and rocky marine environment that was interspersed with areas of shallow drifted sand and the cannon heavily encrusted with sea growth.

Immediately after the discovery of the cannon, the divers conducted a circle search around the cannon (Figures 1-4). A circle search is a visual survey method which is often difficult at Melbourne because the water is rarely clear. During this search, divers discovered a number of additional shipwreck artifacts buried in clay that are believed to be associated with the cannon. These artifacts included two silver platters also known as chargers (Figure 6), one flintlock pistol (Figure 8), a cannon ball, one sword strap, a boat-hook, a silver knife handle, and scattered terra cotta pottery shards. The most important artifacts for Melbourne are the silver platters and flintlock pistol. One of the silver platters was inscribed with the name of a
noblewoman, *Dona Juana Isabel de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros* (de Bry 2010). The flintlock pistol had the name of the maker, Ramirez, on the firing mechanism as well as the date, 1709 (Figure 9).

Between 2014 to present, Seafarer Exploration Corp continued investigations further into the area. Utilizing standard archaeological methods of underwater survey, Seafarer divers discovered additional important shipwreck material.

The additional material was widely scattered (Figure 10) material made of wood that was tentatively identified as ship timbers. (Figure 11, Figure 12, Figure 13, Figure 14, Figure 15) Among the scattered ship timbers, a portion of a ship rail (Figure 16) was recorded. The timbers were well-preserved which helps with identification and indicates that the wood had been buried in anaerobic (oxygen-free) sediment. This anaerobic environment is not conducive for shipworms, or teredos, the primary cause of wood deterioration at shipwreck sites.

After analyzing the discovered artifacts, it was conjectured the cultural material from Melbourne constituted that of a 1715 shipwreck site. The known 1715 Fleet shipwreck sites lay scattered along a stretch of coastline popularly called the Treasure Coast that is located approximately 14 miles to the south at Sebastian Inlet. Close examination of the silver platters and flintlock pistol suggest that these artifacts might well serve as diagnostic artifacts (*see Diagnostic Artifacts information below*). These two diagnostic artifacts may lead to the identification of the Melbourne shipwreck as one of the missing vessels of the 1715 Plate Fleet (Figure 7). If Melbourne could be proven to contain one of the missing 1715 Fleet shipwrecks, a new chapter could be added to the extensive history of the lost fleet. Melbourne could become an important contribution to understanding more about the
1715 Fleet and could become significant to maritime history and underwater archaeology.

**Diagnostic Artifacts in Shipwreck Research**

Identifying a shipwreck from artifact material is often difficult, but diagnostic artifacts are often the key to shipwreck identification. A diagnostic artifact is an artifact or assemblage (collection) of artifacts that can be definitively linked to a sunken vessel. In 1991, the remains of a wooden sailing vessel were discovered on Newground Reef near the Marquesas Keys, southwest of Key West, Florida. After examination of the site’s diagnostic artifacts, which included, leg irons and other artifact material, the determination could be made that the diagnostic artifacts were clearly associated with a colonial period slave vessel. Further discovery at the site recovered the ship’s bell that was marked with the name *Henrietta Marie* — the known name of a slave vessel (slaver) lost in 1700.

The ship’s manifest and its importance with the *Nuestra Senora de Atocha*, identification is another example of using diagnostic artifacts in vessel identification. The *Nuestra Senora de Atocha* was one of the vessels of the Spanish Plate Fleet that was lost in a hurricane in 1622. The silver bars on the *Atocha* each had a mintmark and were documented on the ship’s manifest. Dr. Eugene Lyon, a noted Spanish colonial period archivist was able to match mintmarks on the recovered bullion bars against the manifest of the *Atocha*, thus proving that a significant portion of this important shipwreck had been discovered (*Lyon, 1979*).
Melbourne Diagnostic Artifacts
The Platters

When the silver platters were discovered off Melbourne Beach they immediately went into artifact conservation. After conservation one platter provided important information that was verified in archives that included a 1715 Fleet ship manifest. This platter was inscribed with the name, Dona Juana Isabel de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros (Figure 7). This immediately became important and achieved the status of a potential diagnostic artifact. This simply meant that if the name could be linked through archival research to a particular shipwreck or archive then a historic connection could be made and perhaps result in the identification of an unidentified shipwreck. This silver platter is known as the Monteros Platter.
The Pistol

The conservation process on the flintlock pistol revealed a date on the firing mechanism of 1709, six years prior to the 1715 Fleet disaster (Figure 9). This flintlock pistol also became an important discovery. In addition to the apparent manufacturing date of 1709, a gunsmith’s name, Ramirez, was also found on the firing mechanism. Ramirez was an established and well-known gunsmith in Mexico City in the early eighteenth century. A similar flintlock pistol had been discovered by the Real Eight Corporation on another wreck of the 1715 Fleet, the Cabin Wreck, a site located two miles south of Sebastian Inlet and sixteen miles south of the Melbourne Beach site (de Bry, 2010). The flintlock pistol is another diagnostic artifact, linking the Melbourne Beach site to the other 1715 Fleet wrecks to the south. The linkage between the Monteros Platter and the 1709/Ramirez Pistol to the 1715 Fleet shipwrecks will be developed more extensively later in this paper.

Coins on the Beach

Previously, coins discovered on the beach were vital to the later discovery of the 1715 Fleet shipwreck sites to the south. For decades, coins had been found on Treasure Coast beaches. With coins and other shoreline treasure finds, Kip Wagner
and his Real Eight Corporation associates, began to search in the near-shore surf zone, and one by one, the other 1715 shipwreck sites were eventually discovered and salvaged.

Through the development of local knowledge in the Melbourne Beach area it has been ascertained that local metal detectorists have routinely discovered Spanish colonial coins on the beach adjacent to the scattered offshore site. When cleaned the coins underwent numismatic examination and were found to be from the Mexico City Mint. The dates on the coins were as early as 1701, with eight and four real coins having later dates that included 1710 and 1711. No coins have been discovered in the immediate area dating later than 1714.

**The Spanish Treasure Fleets in Context**
In order to understand the full story of the Monteros Platter and the Ramirez Pistol and their significance in the 1715 Fleet history, it is salient to describe the organization of the Spanish colonial fleet system and how these particular artifacts are related to the Spanish treasure fleet.

Generally, each year, from the late 16th century to the mid-18th century, two fleets were dispatched from Spain to the New World. The *Terra Firme Fleet* sailed to South America and the *Nuevo España Fleet* sailed to Veracruz in present Mexico. A portion of the *Terra Firme Fleet* sailed to Cartagena on the Caribbean coast of present Colombia and other vessels sailed to Portobelo on the Caribbean coast of Panama.

On the outward voyage the fleets generally carried passengers destined for the Americas and transported raw materials and assorted luxury and trade goods that
were not available in the New World. One important piece of cargo was the mercury utilized in the metal-treasure refining process.

The *Terra Firme Fleet* to South America was the more difficult to organize and manage. The portion of the *Terra Firme Fleet* destined for Portobelo would unload cargo at that port, then the land-crossing of the Isthmus of Panama would be undertaken to the Pacific port of Panama City, where the goods were reloaded on vessels for another leg of the voyage — down the Pacific coast of South America to ports in present Ecuador and Peru.

Once the two fleets reached their prospective New World ports there was a time to perform maintenance on the vessels and prepare for the return voyage to Spain by way of Havana. The rendezvous of the *Terra Firme* and *Nuevo España Fleets* in Havana, before the return voyage to Spain, was important. First, the treasure cargo and manifests from both fleets were offloaded in Havana and the gold and silver coins and bullion were processed by the crown monetary agents of the *Casa de Contractación* or “House of Trade.” These agents counted and weighed the treasure, affixed stamps and seals and prepared official documents that included the cargo manifests. What was known as the “royal fifth” was the amount of treasure tax that accrued to the Spanish Crown and collected in Havana.

In the early 18th century the Spanish Crown was under constant pressure to acquire gold and silver resources to pay for costly wars on the European continent, especially the conflict known as the War of Spanish Succession that pitted Spain and France against the forces of the English and Dutch. Although the Spanish acquitted themselves well in continental battles, they fared poorly in naval engagements. In 1702 and 1708 the Spanish were respectively defeated in naval engagements at Vigo
Bay, Spain and Cartagena Bay on the Caribbean coast of South America. The Spanish Crown was in desperate need of the treasure being transported by the 1715 Fleet.

**The Silver Platter and Shipwreck Research**

The silver platter inscribed with the name *Dona Juana Isabel de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros* constitutes not only a diagnostic artifact, but also in archaeological terminology what is termed an ‘elite’ artifact. This simply means that the artifact was the property of, or consigned for the coming voyage from, a wealthy individual – an ‘elite’ passenger. These privileged passengers would have resided with their portable property and goods in the sterncastle or upper deck of the ship.

As stated, one of the three platters recovered on the Melbourne Beach site was classified as a silver charger – a large shallow platter with a name inscribed on the rim of the platter. The inscription reads, *Dona Juana Isabel de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros*. Pursuant to the discovery of the Melbourne Beach site, research in the Archives of the Indies (Archivo General de Indias, AGI) in Seville, Spain, revealed
an entry, that when translated, documented that a Spanish grandee named Don Joseph de Espinosa de los Monteros had consigned a shipment of 257 cow hides and a crate of presents (regalos) aboard a vessel named the Santisima Trinidad y Nuestra Señora de la Concepción. With the outbound fleet from Spain to the Americas, the Concepción arrived in the New Spain (now Mexico) port of Veracruz on December 3, 1714; the consignment of cargo was made two months later on February 4, 1715 by Don Joseph de Espinosa de los Monteros (de Bry, AGI Consulados 855).

Is anything known about this vessel, the Concepción, before the consignment of animal hides and presents in the Mexican port of Veracruz on February 4, 1715? A popular press book, Florida’s Golden Galleons (Burgess and Clausen, 1982) documents the 1715 Fleet shipwreck disaster and later salvage history along the Treasure Coast of Florida. Carl Clausen was the first State of Florida underwater archaeologist and carried out an extensive investigation of the 1715 shipwreck sites. In Appendix B of Galleons, a list of the outgoing Spanish fleet to the Americas is cited. The fleet-list numbers some nine vessels that departed Spain on September 16, 1712. One of these vessels is named the Santisima Trinidad y Nuestra Señora de la Concepción. Clausen writes that outward bound from Spain the Concepción paused for water at Puerto Rico, but then sailed on to the Port of Veracruz without making any other stops in the West Indies. Galleons documents the ship’s captain as Juan Antonio LaBiosa and the Admiral of the outgoing fleet to the Americas as Captain General Juan de Ubilla; Ubilla is the same Spaniard who led the ill-fated 1715 fleet on the return voyage to Spain three years later and was lost in that catastrophe.

After de los Monteros made the consignment of hides and presents aboard the Concepción in Veracruz, the return voyage to Spain via Havana was delayed by a series hurricanes and storms that struck Veracruz and postponed the loading and
departure of the New Spain vessels. Only on May 4, 1715, did the fleet set sail from Veracruz to Havana and according to Burgess and Clausen arrived about a month later, possibly around June 4, 1715. The total amount of time that the Concepción had been in Veracruz was some seven months, a long time for vessels to sit in salt water being buffeted by storms and attacked by shipworms that could quickly decimate a wooden hull. Undoubtedly there had been maintenance on the fleet, but often ships began the return voyage to Spain in poor condition necessitating time-consuming repairs in-route. The Galleons volume also sheds additional information on los Monteros and his wealth and status as a Spanish Grandee. A vessel listed as ‘Third Merchant’ in the 1712 outward bound fleet lists a vessel named the Nuestra Señora del Rosario, San Francisco Xavier y las Animas. The owner is listed as Don Joseph de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros. If los Monteros had made the voyage out in the las Animas in 1712 why did he not consign his cargo to this vessel and return on this vessel to Havana in 1715 and on the homeward voyage to Spain? There are possible answers taking into consideration the shipwreck list provided by Eugene Lyon and included in the appendices at the end of this paper. Either the vessel was damaged in a hurricane at Veracruz and was deemed unseaworthy, possibly destroyed in that storm, or the name of the vessel was changed. Carla Rahn Phillips in her Three Galleons for the King of Spain allocates one paragraph to Spanish vessel names. Phillips states that vessels were often named for the port or shipyard where the vessel was constructed, named after a Saint that was important to the owner, or simply changed when a vessel changed ownership (Phillips 59).

The Monteros Platter Departs Veracruz

The Monteros Platter, consigned and loaded onto the Concepción on February 4, 1715, by de los Monteros, unequivocally sailed with the New Spain Fleet in route to Havana on May 4, 1715, and arrived about a month later. It is unknown whether de
los Monteros sailed with the fleet from Veracruz to Havana; however, it is likely that he did. Generally, an elite Spaniard would travel to the Americas, do business, and then after several years, return home to Spain. It is unknown how long de los Monteros spent in the Americas. Generally, because of the long distance traveled, Spaniards that journeyed to the Pacific coast of South American stayed longer than visitors to Veracruz, Mexico. Veracruz was hot, run down, and yellow fever was endemic. The primary attraction of Spaniards to Mexico, Central, and South America were the gold and silver mines that had produced precious metals for the Pre-Columbian natives of the Americas, the Aztec, Maya and Inca, that respectively inhabited the Americas.

The fact that de los Monteros consigned the hides and presents at Veracruz indicates that he possibly had finished doing business in the Americas and was returning to Spain. It is unknown if de los Monteros also had a consignment of treasure — coins and bullion — aboard the Concepción. It is possible that he carried an amount of unregistered contraband treasure in the form of coins and gold chains on his body during the voyage from the Americas to Spain. It has been theorized, based on salvaged treasure cargos listed on official manifests and treasure recoveries from shipwreck sites, that perhaps a third or more of the gold and silver coins and bullion that made the return voyage to Spain was contraband or unregistered treasure.

The Last Voyage of the Concepción

It is reasonable to assume that the Monteros Platter was indeed a present or gift and was consigned aboard the Concepción as such. The history of de los Monteros in the Americas, as documented in the Archives, is limited to half a dozen entries and is at best incomplete. It is more than likely that Dona Juana Isabel de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros had not accompanied her husband to Veracruz; thus far in this
investigation there is no evidence either way — that she did or did not visit or spend any appreciable time in the Americas.

The New Spain Fleet arrived in Havana from Veracruz on June 5. This allowed time for the Casa de Contractación to do their administrative business before the combined fleet departed Havana on July 24, 1715, for the return voyage to Spain. The 1715 fleet departed during the hurricane season. This was a calculated risk; the fleet had overstayed their voyage to the Americas and there was a need for the gold and silver coins and bullion in the Royal Treasury in Spain, thus the ill-advised decision was made to set sail.

This paper has utilized a number of sources to document the vessels that comprised the 1715 Fleet, both on their outward voyage from Spain in September 1712 and on their disastrous return voyage in July 1715. Along with the Appendix B vessel list in Golden Galleons, other sources address vessels of the return fleet to Spain as well as modern attempts to identify shipwreck sites after the fleet loss in July 1715.

John Potter’s The Treasure Divers Guide (1972) is a standard avocational source of information in lieu of any academic-archaeology reference sources that document the lost vessels of the 1715 Fleet. Potter lists nine shipwrecks lying between Sebastian Inlet and Fort Pierce Inlet; some of the sites are listed by location like the Rio Mar Wreck and Sandy Point Wreck; others are referenced by notable cargo like the Wedge Wreck and the Gold/Colored Beach Wreck. Burgess and Clausen in Galleons list ten wrecks; like Potter they use location and cargo as identifiers, and also list two sites as ‘unnamed wreck’. Potter does not reference a vessel named the Concepción.
Another source, *Spanish Colonial Silver Coins in the Florida Collection* (Dr. Alan Craig, 2000), a respected numismatic analysis of treasure coins in the State of Florida collection, includes a chart with seven named sites. The chart shows the sites arrayed along the Treasure Coast and gives without any reference, seven shipwreck sites, some with the names of 1715 Fleet vessels. The Green Cabin site is listed as the *San Martin*; Corrigan’s site as the *San Roman*; the Wedge Wreck as the *Urca de Lima*, etc. The Craig shipwreck list does not list the *Concepción*, and there are no references in the book that explain how it was ascertained that the sites bear correct names of particular vessels.

Another serious reference source is ‘*Spanish Treasure Bars from New World Shipwrecks* (Dr. Alan Craig and Ernest J. Richards). Alan Craig is an academic, and recognized expert on Spanish Colonial numismatics, as is Ernie Richards. In Chapter 9, *Treasure Bars from the 1715 Plate Fleet*, a retrospective of silver bullion bars are pictured and described. The bullion bars are photographed and well described with attributions to the ‘Rio Mar site’ and ‘Douglas Beach site’ but no cargo manifest information linking the vernacular name of a site to a specific bullion bar – thus no diagnostic artifact that can link treasure to a particular named ship.

Another source, AGI Consulados 855, provided by Eugene Lyon provides a list of ten vessels lost and a partial list of those that perished in the fleet disaster. A list of these vessels is provided in the appendices at the end of this paper. A vessel named the *Concepción* is included in this list and the notation that 130 persons were lost in the course of this shipwreck.
Wrecking Theory – The Melbourne Beach Scatter

In underwater archaeology, the term ‘wrecking theory’ denotes an archaeologist’s ability to survey a shipwreck site, particularly a scattered site, and then explain how a particular vessel came to its end. Wrecking theory may be utilized in the analysis of iron hull vessel wreckage from the ‘age of steam’ or wooden hull vessel wreckage from the ‘age of sail.’ By examining the remains of a vessel lying on the bottom largely intact, or the strewn and scattered remains of a vessel once the archaeologist documents a ships scatter pattern, then the wrecking theory or model of how a vessel came to be lost may be analyzed and documented.

The archaeologist credited with developing wrecking theory was the Scottish archaeologist, Keith Muckelroy. In the Muckelroy model, information about the wrecking incident, from survivor accounts and wreckage mapped on the bottom, is collected and then evaluated on an extended site plan. For example, Carl Clausen developed a plan for the Douglas Beach shipwreck that he published in *Galleons* and provides a valuable model to aid in site interpretation. This site plan shows two exposed limestone ledges with a sandy area lying in between these raised ledges. The site covers approximately a thousand feet east to west – offshore to nearshore – and within this area of approximately 1,000 feet, a ballast pile is shown lying exposed and strewn over the sandy area and the nearshore limestone ledge. All across this site plan, Clausen has mapped hundreds of artifactual finds, a large iron cannon and small ship artifacts that include cannon balls, ships rigging, pottery, silver platters and silver coins.

The Muckelroy wrecking theory model examines the ship from the beginning of the wrecking incident to the end of the wrecking incident when the wreckage achieves some semblance of stability. Muckelroy refers to two primary processes that occur...
over the course of a shipwreck, these processes are named the ‘extraction process’ and the ‘scrambling process.’ For example, a 1715 vessel caught offshore in a hurricane might jettison heavy objects like anchors or cannons, an example of the extraction process. The vessel might start to break-up from the force of wind and waves; perhaps the stern-castle is detached and is carried away from the structure of the vessel or perhaps the gun deck becomes separated from the hull — more extraction. The force of wind would carry away ships rigging, sails and even ships masts; some material would sink forming a scatter pattern and some would float away. There are any number of conceivable scenarios.

In the Carl Clausen-Douglas Beach scatter-model, we know that the 1715 vessels were caught off-shore in the storm. As they were driven ashore the ship’s crew did all they could to navigate out into deeper water to no avail. Analysis of the Douglas Beach site plan by Clausen shows that the concentration of shipwreck material begins offshore, no doubt where the ship’s hull struck bottom, and artifact material started to propagate on the bottom. This ‘extraction process’ continues from the offshore limestone ledge across an open area of sand to another limestone ridge in relatively shallow water. Here the ballast pile was found, largely intact and beneath this ballast pile the lower hull of the vessel would have been found. From this point, lighter parts of the ship would have been extracted and washed ashore or even washed across the barrier island to the lagoon separating the barrier island from the mainland.

It is known from witness information gleaned from the archives that after the storm individual vessels were visible — lying in various stages of destruction in the near-shore area; in water that was shallow enough for salvage to begin almost immediately. Over time these wooden shipwreck sites were reduced to ballast piles
through the combined action of wind and waves, and the scrambling process became accelerated. The ‘scrambling process’ in the Muckelroy wrecking model means that the artifacts have been extracted from the shipwreck and are lying on the sea-floor or have floated away – extending the site. Over time these artifacts, some heavy, some relatively light, will become buried or lie on the bottom exposed. If the artifacts are iron they will begin to deteriorate. A gold bar or gold coins, if buffered in a protected position, would be recovered in the same condition as when they were lost. Silver coins or metal alloy would develop a dark oxidized color and have to undergo conservation to regain their original luster. Some silver coins in shallow water that have been braised by current and wave action, especially in a semi-confined area like a crevice in a limestone reef, could be ground down to what are referred to as a mere ‘sliver’ of their original condition. Fragile items like porcelain tableware packed carefully in clay in boxes can often be recovered nearly intact, however, terra cotta pottery and olive jars are usually reduced to shards.

What is important is that the extraction process removes the artifacts from a foundering vessel and then exposes the loose artifact material to the scrambling process — the action of current, tide, and shallow water wave action on often loose and fragile artifacts. Further, the scrambling process may be extended by the process of artifacts extracted and then floating ashore on wooden debris or on deceased shipwreck victims. Coins found on the beaches generally arrive on the beach and dune areas on wreckage or bodies and may be recovered or lost during that process. Remember the coins on the beach near the Melbourne Beach site and the coins that eventually led to the discovery of the 1715 shipwreck sites along the Treasure Coast? As Clausen demonstrated with his model of the Douglas Beach site, the Muckelroy Model is a valuable tool in shipwreck research and site plan interpretation. Coins on the beach may indicate that a shipwreck is nearby.
The Muckelroy Model and the Melbourne Beach Site

The question now needs to be asked – how does the Melbourne Beach site conform to the 1715 shipwreck model? The Melbourne Beach site is a strewn area of both large and small shipwreck artifacts, anchors, cannon, wood material and coins scattered over limestone hard bottom and open areas of sand from varying points offshore to the present unstable and eroding shoreline.

At this point in the investigation, the area that lies approximately 1,200 feet offshore of Melbourne beach demonstrates an ‘artifact strewn field’ similar to a 1715 shipwreck site. The largest artifact located to date in this area is the nine-pounder iron cannon. In the Muckelroy Model the cannon arrived on site either within the extraction process by being jettisoned or arrived via being transported on a portion of the wrecked vessel, i.e., on the gun deck that sank to the bottom. When the wooden shipwreck material sank and deteriorated, the cannon remained in situ (in its original place). As stated earlier, it appears that some hull material is present on site as is possibly some of the ship’s rail material (figure 15). The Monteros Platter and the Ramirez Pistol were likely being transported in the sterncastle or cabin of one of the elite passengers (de los Monteros). The fact that the valuable platters and the pistol were recovered at the site indicates strongly that more valuable artifacts will eventually be located and excavated at Melbourne Beach.

Summary

This paper has presented evidence that the Melbourne Beach shipwreck scatter is indeed derived from one of the missing 1715 shipwrecks. To sum up, it is necessary to enumerate the evidence and the conclusion is self-evident.
1. The silver platter with the inscription reading, *Dona Juana Isabel de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros* was discovered in shallow water in an area of strewn material popularly known as the Melbourne Beach Shipwreck site. Taking into consideration the various artifact material discovered, the area meets the standards of a strewn shipwreck site.

2. Located in close association to the *Monteros Platter*, a flintlock pistol was discovered. The pistol bears the date 1709 on the firing mechanism along with a maker’s name *Ramirez*. It is known from archival sources that a Mexico City gunsmith with that name was making firearms in his Mexico City workshop at that time. A similar ‘Ramirez’ type pistol was found on the 1715 *Capitana* site approximately 14 miles to the south of the Melbourne site.

3. From Archival sources cited by Burgess and Clausen, it is known that a vessel named the *Santisima Trinidad y Nuestra Señora de la Concepción* set sail with the New Spain fleet from Cadez, Spain for Veracruz, Mexico, on September 16, 1712.

4. It is known that the *Concepción* reached Veracruz on December 3, 1714.

5. It is known that on February 4, 1715, that Don Joseph de Espinosa de los Monteros consigned a cargo of 257 cow hides and a box of *regalos* (presents) aboard the *Concepción*. It is believed that the Monteros Platter found in the shallows off Melbourne Beach was consigned in this cargo.

6. It is known that the *Concepción* sailed for Havana from Veracruz on May 4, 1715; it would have taken about a month for the New Spain vessels to reach Havana; that
would have been about June 4, 1715. The voyage in fact took 52 days (*personal communication with Dr. Eugene Lyon*).

7. It is believed that the Monteros Platter, part of the consignment made by Don Joseph de Espinosa de los Monteros arrived in Havana aboard the *Concepción*. Two facts are important here; the platter inscribed with the name *Dona Juana Isabel de Chaves Espinosa de los Monteros* was likely the wife of Don Joseph de Espinosa de los Monteros. The Monteros Platter was recovered along with other shipwreck artifacts off of Melbourne Beach, Florida. Also, it is unknown if Dona Juana traveled to the Americas with her husband, or remained in Spain.

8. It is unknown if *Don Joseph de los Monteros* made the return voyage to Spain from Havana. We do know that the *Monteros Platter* discovered at the Melbourne Beach site was on the return voyage to Spain that was aborted by the storm.

9. Archival material, AGI Consulados 855 (see appendices) list the ships that made the ill-fated return voyage to Spain on July 24, 1715, and were lost off the south-east coast of Florida on July 31, 1715. The *Concepción* was a vessel in that fleet.

10. It should be remembered that Admiral Ubilla, the commander of the 1712 outward bound fleet from Spain to the Americas, sailed on a vessel named the *Nuestra Señora de la Regia*. The *Regia* then sailed to Veracruz and returned to Cuba three years later with Ubilla aboard. Ubilla then commanded the 1715 fleet on the ill-fated return voyage to Spain and died in the voyage.
Conclusion
From the evidence, it is concluded that the diagnostic artifacts – the Moneros Platter and the Ramirez Flintlock Pistol recovered at the Melbourne Beach site approximately 14 miles north of the 1715 shipwreck sites is undoubtedly cargo from a missing 1715 shipwreck. It is believed that the vessel scatter at the site is that of the Santisima Trinidad y Nuestra Señora de la Concepcion, the vessel that transported the consigned box of presents including the Moneros Platter from Veracruz to Havana and from Havana to the Florida Treasure Coast where it was recovered almost 300 years later.

References


Archives of the Indies, Seville, Spain – per Dr. John de Bry

Archives of the Indies, Seville, Spain – per Dr. Eugene Lyon

Personal and Written Communication

Dr. John de Bry – Archival Contributions
Deborah & George Gruber – Seafarer Exploration Corp.
Mr. Kyle Kennedy – Seafarer Exploration Corp.
Dr. Eugene Lyon – Archival Contributions
Mr. Steve Reddy – President MAP
Mr. Brandon Reddy - diver

Appendix

Operational History

On March 4, 2014, Marine Archaeology Partners, LLC (MAP) entered into an operating agreement with Seafarer Exploration Corp. for the purpose of creating Seafarer’s Quest, LLC. Seafarer’s Quest then received a 1A-31 Exploration Permit with a Dig and Identify modification from the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research. On August 5, 2004, a predecessor company that eventually became MAP discovered scattered colonial period shipwreck artifacts approximately 1,200 feet off-shore of the beachside community of Melbourne Beach in Brevard County, Florida.


1715 Shipwreck List
AGI Consulados 855
Provided by Dr. Eugene Lyon
Ubilla Vessels

1. Capitana
2. Fleet Almiranta
3. Soto Sanchez
4. Urca de Lima
5. La Marigalera

Echeverez Vessels

1. Capitana
2. Almiranta
3. Concepción
4. Olandesita
5. San Miguel
6. French Prize

Eleven vessels in all – matches number of known lost vessels. Professor Lyon lists one of the vessels as a prize, a French vessel (the *Grifon*).
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Figure 17 Dead Eye ...................................................................................... 40

Figure 2 Cannon 1 of 4
Figure 3 Cannon 2 of 4
Figure 4 Cannon 3 of 4
Figure 6 Silver Platters 1 of 2
Figure 7 Silver Platter 2 of 2
Figure 8 Pistol
Figure 9 Pistol Date and Maker
Figure 10 Chart of scatter
Figure 11 Wooden Features 1 of 5

Figure 12 Wooden Feature 2 of 5
Figure 13 Wooden Feature 3 of 5
Figure 14 Wooden Feature 4 of 5
Figure 15 Wooden Feature 5 of 5
Figure 16 Ship's Rail (Suspected)
Figure 17 Eye Bolt on Ship’s Rail
Dead Eye

Figure 18 Dead Eye