

The background of the cover is a historical map of the Pacific Ocean, showing the Americas, Europe, and Africa. The map is titled 'MAR DEL SUR' and 'MAR PACIFICO'. It features several sailing ships, including the 'San Antonio' and the 'San Pedro', and a large sun in the center. The map is drawn in a style typical of 16th-century cartography, with a grid of latitude and longitude lines.

# THE MANILA GALLEON TRADE 1565-1815 TRACES & TREASURES





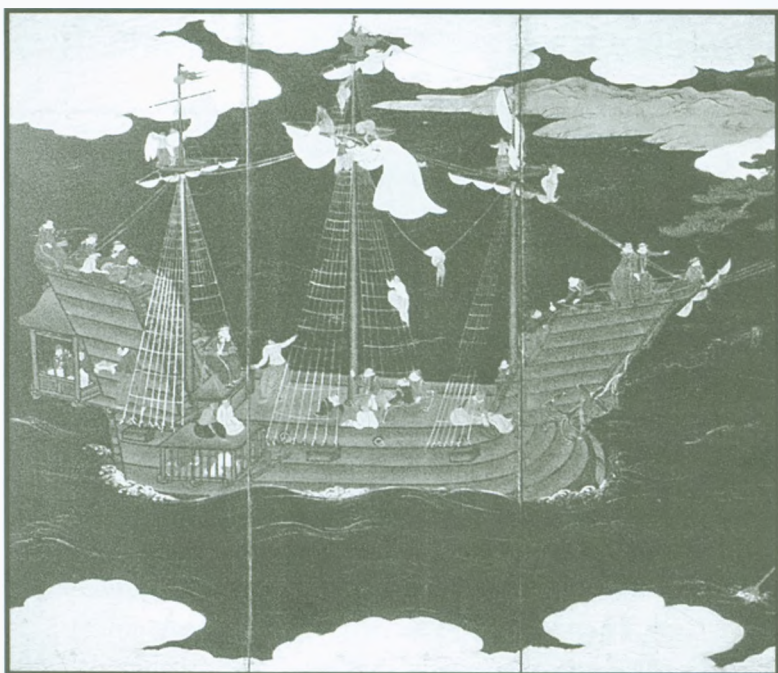
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# NOTICIAS del Puerto de Monterey

Monterey History and Art Association Quarterly

## *The Manila Galleon Trade 1565-1815 Traces & Treasures*



# Tesoros de los Galeones de Manila



February 5<sup>th</sup>  
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September 4, 2005



Maritime Museum  
Stanton Center



*Published in conjunction with the visiting exhibition*

## ***Treasures of the Manila Galleons***

Maritime Museum of Monterey, February 5 – September 4, 2005



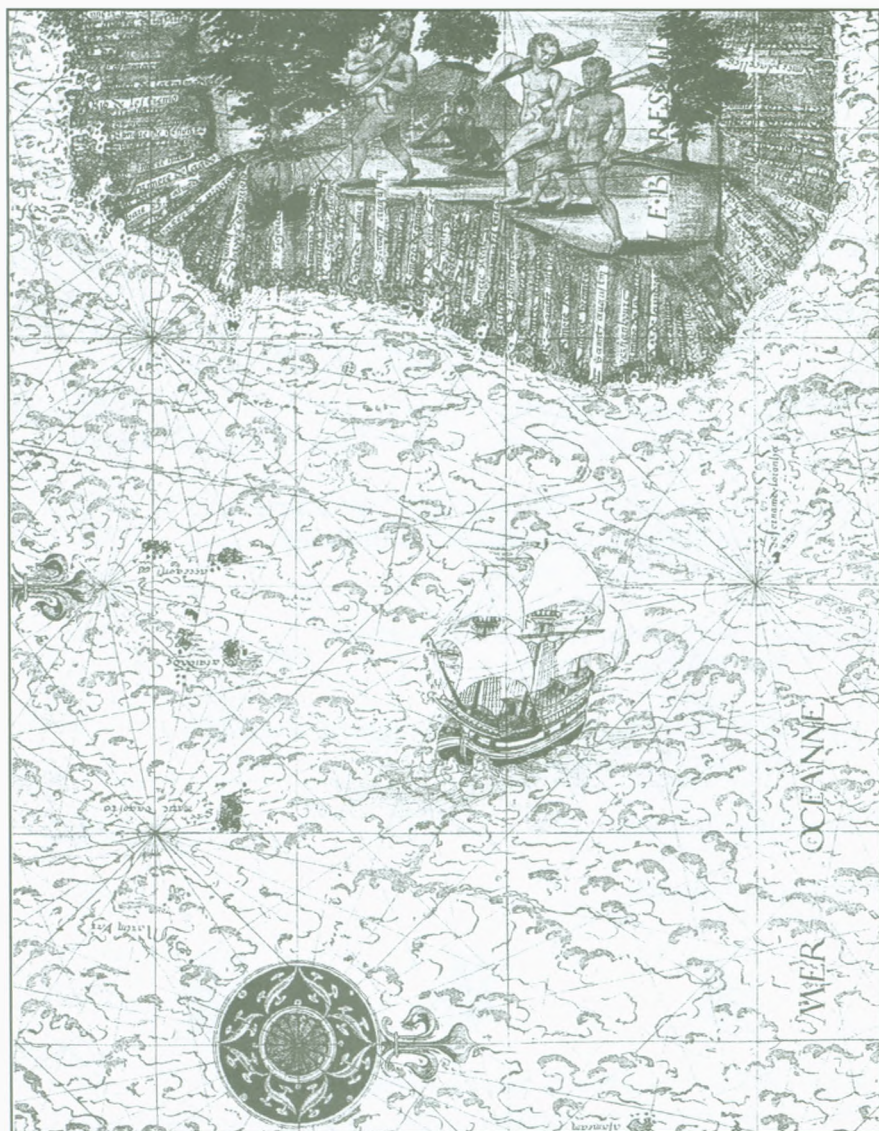
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*Detail from Guillaume de Testu's Cosmographie Universale, 1555.*

*"Through her galleons Spain fulfilled the dream of Marco Polo and Columbus: to reach, tap, and exploit the riches of Asia."  
Eugene Lyon, National Geographic, September 1990*





## About the Manila Galleons

*Putting a fascinating set of finds into historical context, **Treasures of the Manila Galleons** invites visitors of all ages to “step into the shoes” of the enterprising merchants and daring mariners who pioneered trans-Pacific commerce nearly five hundred years ago. The exhibition also offers a window onto the world of archaeologists and other specialists whose painstaking analyses make these reconstructions possible.*

Edward Van der Porten, Exhibition Curator, 2005

*The voyage from the Philippine Islands to America may be called the longest and most dreadful of any in the world, because of the vast ocean to be crossed, the wind always ahead, the terrible tempests, the desperate diseases, enough to destroy a man of steel... Notwithstanding the dreadful suffering, the desire to get rich pushes many to attempt it four, six, and ten times.*

Francesco Giovanni Gemelli Careri, *Giro del mondo*, 1719

*At its peak, the Manila-Acapulco galleon was one of the great commercial and logistical achievements in world history. It was also the theater for a great deal of heroism as well as hardship and oppression.*

William J. McCarthy, “The Manila Galleon,” *Mains’l Haul*, 2002

*To the peoples of Spanish America, they were the “China ships” that brought cargoes of silks and spices and other precious merchandise of the East. To peoples of the Orient, they were silver argosies, laden with Mexican and Peruvian pesos that were to become the standard of value along its coasts. To California, they furnished the first occasion and motive for the exploration of its coast. To Spain, their comings and goings gave some substance of reality to the Spanish dream of empire over the Pacific. No other line of ships has ever endured so long. No other regular navigation has been so trying and dangerous. During the 250 years of the Manila galleon trade, the Pacific Ocean claimed dozens of ships, thousands of men, and many millions in treasure.*

Adapted from William Lyle Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, 1939

# East Meets West

El este se encuentra con el oeste en Manila





# The Galleons

Los Galeones



# The Riches of the Americas

## Las riquezas de las Americas



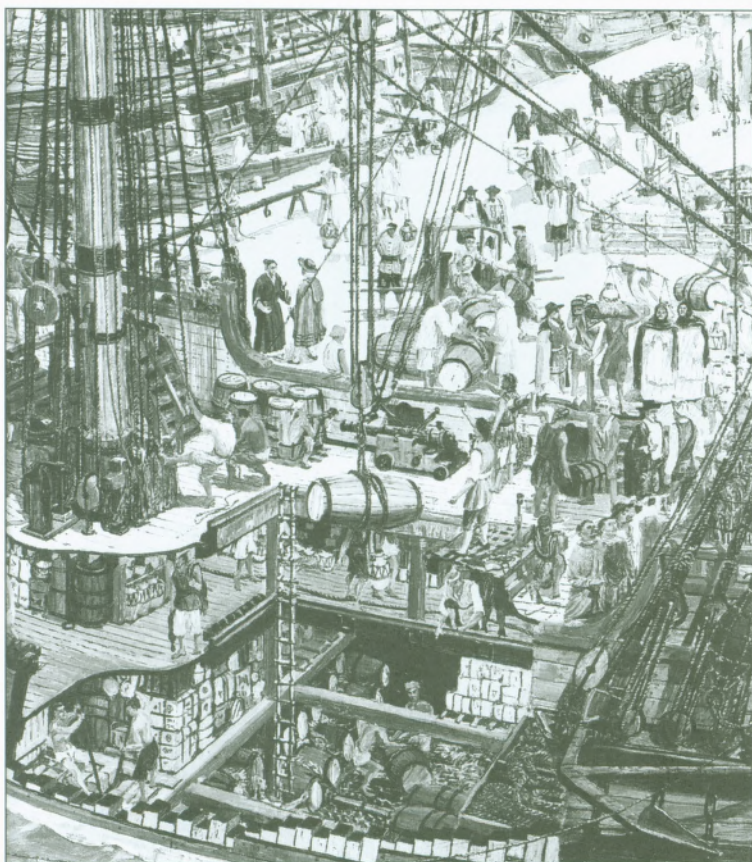
"The Cargo of this Ship amounts to a prodigious Value, this one Ship has my entire riches in it than many whole Fleets."

John Rolfe, leaving the Jamestown with Commodore Jonck, 1743

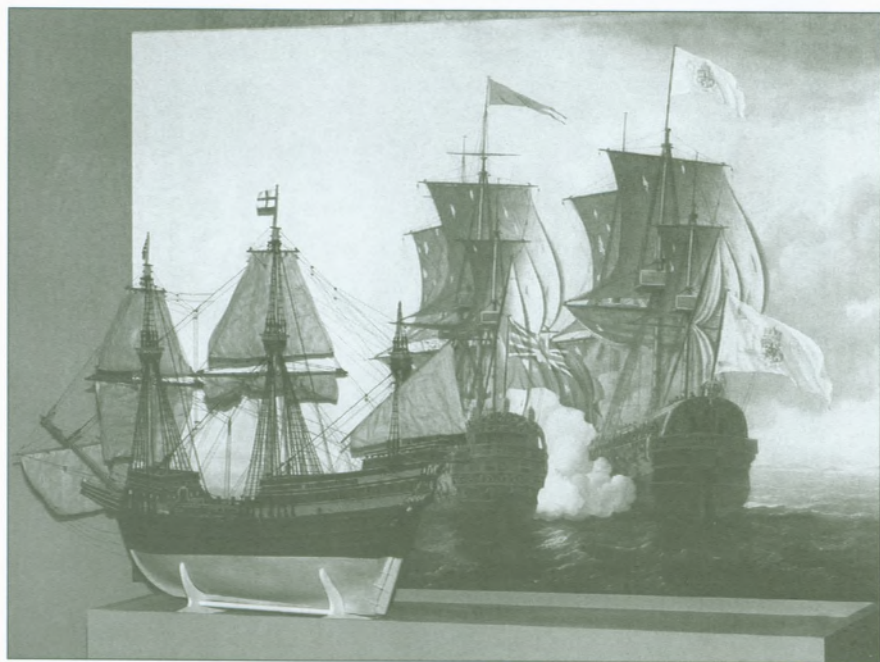


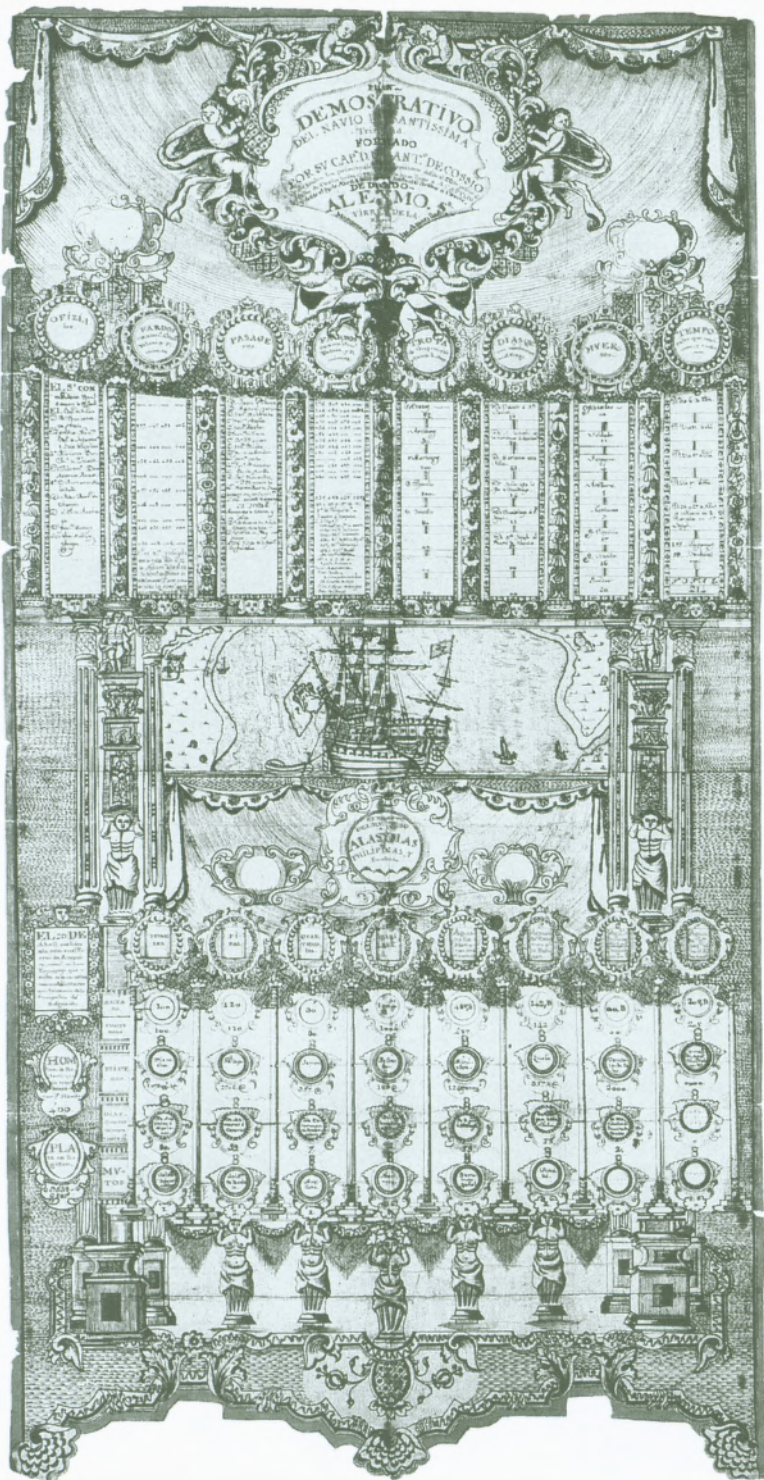
















# Archaeology Arqueología



## *About the Curator:*

*Author-educator Edward Von der Porten specializes in the archaeology of the Point Reyes National Seashore and the analysis of 16<sup>th</sup> century porcelain cargoes. A retired marine museum director and founder of the field archaeology program at Santa Rosa Junior College, he is a consultant on nautical archaeology for National Geographic Magazine.*



## Finding a Manila Galleon

*Edward Von der Porten, Exhibition Curator*

Our expeditions to Baja California in search of the remains of an early eastbound Manila galleon produced no stacks of doubloons or pieces of eight heaped in treasure chests; no skeletons, leg irons, or rusty swords; not even a bit of wood from the hull. Yet we had found treasure—a treasure far more meaningful than precious metal.

We located the wreck site and, working on it, became involved with the stories of people more than four hundred years dead—officers and crewmen, merchants and officials, soldiers and servants, passengers and slaves—if only we could tease them out of the fragments we were finding. In addition to those on board the ship, many others were connected to her; livelihoods and fortunes in Manila, Mexico and distant Spain depended on her safe arrival. In an ever-enlarging circle, people still alive today, and others who lived during the intervening centuries between the wreck and its recovery, have affected the lost galleon and been affected by her.

Based on our research to date, we believe we know the galleon's name, the *San Felipe*, and the year she was lost, 1576. We have not discovered the names of any of the hundreds of Spaniards, Filipinos, Chinese and Mexicans who were connected to her, and we are only beginning to piece together their fates. After a voyage of six months or more, and only a few weeks away from safety in Acapulco, passengers and crew were dead or dying. Ravaged by scurvy and malnutrition, they were no longer able to control their hundred-foot-long vessel, which sailed ever closer to the coast, then finally grounded, still well offshore, on the gently shelving sands. Sun and thirst killed any crewmen or passengers who may have succeeded in reaching the desert shore.

For more than a year, the ghost ship lay firmly gripped by the sands, while the onshore breezes blew through the decaying rigging, and shipworms bored into her timbers. Then a massive storm smashed the weakened hull, driving her broken timbers and shattered cargo onto the beach. When the storm abated and the waves retreated, the winds soon covered the *San Felipe's* wreckage with powdery sand. Ship and crew, hopes and dreams, disappeared without a trace.





In Mexico and the Philippines, expectation turned to anxiety and eventually to despair. Families had lost loved ones and breadwinners. Merchants could not pay off loans on the lost cargo. Investors, including religious orders, lost their anticipated earnings. Governor, viceroy and king collected no tax revenues.

On the shores of Baja California, when the winds opened temporary hollows in the dunes, Native Americans rummaged amid the momentarily exposed wreckage. A lone scraper and an arrowhead made from a sherd of blue-on-white Ming porcelain testify to their ability to adapt an exotic material, from a land they could not dream of, to their own humble needs.

Centuries later, a traveler, shown bits of porcelain, commented on the tragedy of a shipwreck that he recognized as having happened long before his time, but did not choose to change his route to visit the shipwreck site. Over many years, others who saw traces of the ship reacted according to their particular inclinations. One seasoned beachcomber took a few porcelain sherds back home to Arizona as curios. Eventually, friends of his grandson, avid desert adventurers, relocated the site and returned home with sherd collections of their own. Far more important, they began to record the locations of their finds, ask questions about them and, very cautiously, show them to specialists.

Their growing realization of the age and significance of the sherds led them to permit the inclusion of a few photographs in a book about Chinese porcelains in Mexico. The photographs appeared without attribution, since their possessors were becoming aware that their collections were illegal in both Mexico and the United States. As the years passed, they became increasingly aware of being in possession of fragments of a history that belongs to us all. Recognizing that boxes of broken pottery tucked away in closets and under beds have little meaning, they began to investigate ways of transferring their finds to an appropriate institution—without risking jail time.

They had no way of knowing that, prior to their earliest foray, two American women living in Mexico had gone beachcombing in the same region, searching for ships hatch covers that one of their husbands, a commercial pilot, had spotted from above. To their surprise, they discovered a dense scatter of broken porcelains in a wash lined with wood fragments and marked by a large, round timber rising vertically

from the sand. Searching in vain for an intact plate or bowl, they carried three sherds home with them as souvenirs, then ignored their discovery for twenty-two years.

An archaeologist working at the campsites of semi-nomadic Native Americans came upon fragments of porcelains, one of which had been chipped into a scraper. Unable to identify the types, he began to search for someone who could.

My wife Saryl, perusing a newly-published book about Chinese porcelain finds in the New World, spotted photographs of sherds with the enigmatic attribution "from an unpublished site off the California coast." Because I had worked on early porcelains from Drakes Bay, north of San Francisco, she knew I would be intrigued. That vague clue led to a long, round-about series of negotiations with the possessors of the sherds—mostly carried on by my colleague Jack Hunter, a maritime archaeologist, who used the book's author as go-between.

While these slow dealings were underway, but completely independent of them, the archaeologist who had uncovered sherds at the Native American site contacted me in his quest to identify his finds. As soon as he sent me samples, I immediately recognized them as the same types included in the book. But that connection gave us only a general location for the wreck, because the sherds could have been transported a considerable distance by the natives. Fortunately, the archaeologist also shared a photograph of another sherd, sent to him by one of the women beachcombers, along with her contact information. At my request, she promptly mailed me a genuine shipwreck map, complete with the route to the site and a star to mark the spot.

Very quickly, everyone involved decided to work together. The beachcombers turned in their finds to INAH, the Mexican National Institute of Archaeology and History, the agency that safeguards Mexico's national heritage. Then a bi-national team was assembled to investigate one of the most important shipwrecks on our west coast.

Organizing a search is a complex operation, requiring contacts and permits from officials and institutions in both California and Mexico. Arrangements for food, lodging and camping had to be made. In addition to obtaining vehicles and boats, several types of remote-sensing equipment, communications gear, global-positioning receivers, cameras and film, tools and markers had to be assembled. Specialists needed to be identified and enlisted, schedules and checklists coordinated, and funding obtained to cover unanticipated expenses.

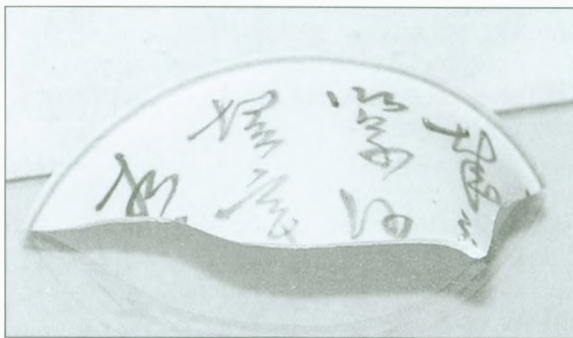
Broad sponsorship was essential. On the U.S. side, Santa Clara University, the National Geographic Society, and the Maritime Museum of San Diego enrolled in the cause. On the Mexican side, various branches of INAH became deeply involved. Team members agreed to pay their own personal expenses and to bring along whatever equipment they had at their disposal.

Months of planning led to three expeditions to the site over a five-year period, each about two weeks long. Every week in the field requires months of follow-up. Each expedition's field report, indicating how the work was accomplished and assessing preliminary results, was prepared in English and then translated into Spanish.

Each report involves scholars skilled in highly specialized research. All artifacts must be photographed in both color and black-and-white. Dozens of porcelain drawings must be prepared to illustrate shapes and designs. Aerial photography contributes to mapping and site-formation analysis. In addition to cataloguing and analyzing the finds, specialized studies address such subjects as using the porcelains to date the wreck, identifying the ship through documents in the archives, translating relevant documents, reconstructing coastal changes, and even estimating the weight of the porcelain cargoes.

What have we achieved so far? We have recovered one thousand pieces of the cargo, most of it fragments of blue-on-white porcelains from the Ming Dynasty Wan-li reign. We have also recovered fragments of large storage jars, wax blocks for candle-making, lead sheathing with iron nails from the *San Felipe*'s hull, and a fragment of a cloisonné plate with enamel still in place.

The porcelains not only date the cargo to circa 1574-1576 but give us a detailed view of Chinese-Spanish commercial relations in the earliest years of the Manila galleon trade. We understand how Chinese merchants, rescued from a sinking junk by Spanish sailors in 1571, recognized the opportunities presented by the Spanish presence in Manila, for the Spaniards had silver from the great mines of Peru and Mexico, a commodity essential for the expanding Chinese economy. At this early stage in the galleon trade, the merchants could not know what their new customers would value. Would the Spaniards pay high prices for polychrome overglaze plates and bowls? Did they appreciate exquisitely drawn rural landscapes? Could they understand the story illustrated by two lively monkeys? What would they make of bowls decorated with calligraphy? Would simple bowls with floral decoration be most appealing, and most appropriate to their budgets?





The sherds show us how the merchants experimented by bringing a wide variety of porcelains to Manila for export, ranging from wares suitable for wealthy Japanese and cultured overseas Chinese, to those normally destined for the tribal peoples of southeast Asia. Comparing this cargo to somewhat later ones, our scholars continue to describe the find and tease out the stories in an ongoing effort to discover what the objects can tell us about their makers and their owners, about trade systems and social values, about economics and aesthetics.

Our goal is to provide Mexicans, Spaniards, Filipinos, Chinese and Americans with as complete a story as possible about the people aboard the *San Felipe*: men and women who took part in the great adventure of those first trans-Pacific trading voyages, risking—and in this case, losing—their lives in the process.

More than fifty people have participated in and contributed to our galleon project to date, many in multiple capacities. Currently, we are planning the best way to organize and conduct the fourth expedition, in order to provide as many answers as possible to the myriad questions posed by our findings to date. We must also dedicate valuable time to raising the funds we need to supplement our team members' personal contributions.

In addition to expanding our shared store of historical knowledge, our expeditions and follow-up analyses demonstrate the value of cooperation between amateurs and professionals from a wide range of backgrounds and interests. This high level of cooperation has enhanced the project and will hopefully serve as a model for other endeavors.

The results of our combined efforts have been made available for the general public to learn from and enjoy. Premiered at the San Diego Maritime Museum in 2002, this evolving exhibition will travel to other museums in the western United States as well as Mexico in years to come, bringing the story of the *San Felipe* and the Manila galleon trade to hundreds of thousands of people. To participants and collaborators we say, "Thank you and well done!"





## The Tragic History of the San Felipe

*Edward Von der Porten*

Built at Acapulco in 1573, the new galleon *San Felipe* filled a desperate need. Governor Miguel López de Legazpi had seized Manila in 1571, making it the capital of the Spanish Philippines. Chinese traders had arrived in 1572 to begin the commerce of New World silver in exchange for long-sought luxury goods from the Orient, but the new colony suffered from an acute shortage of ships. In a letter to King Philip II, Don Martín Enríquez, Viceroy of New Spain—a territory that included the Philippines—characterized most of the ships that tenuously linked Mexico and the Philippines during those years as “miserable little vessels,” pressed into service from the trading ships that sailed up and down the Pacific coast of Central and South America.

The *San Felipe* was a large ship for her time, probably in the 400-ton range. In 1573, Viceroy Enríquez made a recommendation favoring ships of 500 tons; this suggests that existing ships tended to be significantly smaller. By his order, the *San Felipe* was armed with cannon taken from other ships, giving her a limited capacity for self-defense, and also sheathed with lead below the waterline as protection against *teredos navalis* (shipworms).

Although Viceroy Enríquez planned to send the *San Felipe* to Manila in 1574, she did not sail from Acapulco until June 7, 1575, when she served as the vice-admiral’s ship, escorting the admiral’s ship *San Juan* that was transporting the new Governor, Doctor Francisco de Sande, to Manila.

Reaching Manila Bay on August 25th, the *San Felipe* was found to be so decayed that the shipwrights proposed burning her for her iron, but Governor Sande insisted on having her repaired. From Christmas 1575 to July 1576, the *San Felipe* was rebuilt. According to the Governor’s own account, her rotten keel and stern post were replaced, along with “half the hull of the ship.” She was reshaped by cutting off one fathom (six feet, or two meters) near the bow, then lengthening her by more than two fathoms (twelve feet, or four meters).

After her arrival, substantial amounts of her lead sheathing were removed in order to be cast into small-arms and small-cannon shot, sorely needed to replenish the local arsenal. In late 1574, Spaniards and Filipinos had narrowly repulsed the assault of the Chinese pirate

Limahon, who had seventy-two ships and 4,000 men at his command. Sande mentions the removal of “somewhat less than 70 *arrobas*” (nearly a ton) of lead from the sides of the *San Felipe* and her consort, the *San Juan*, and another document by Governor Enríquez refers to the demand of the islands for artillery. How much sheathing remained or was re-installed after the rebuilding is unknown. Whether the cannon that the *San Felipe* carried upon arrival were returned to her or retained for the defense of the Philippines is also unknown.

After rebuilding, the *San Felipe* was capable of carrying two hundred soldiers, a large capacity for her time. Ship, crew and passengers sailed from Manila without escort in July of 1576—thirty-four years after Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo’s voyage along the coast of Alta California, and twenty-six years before Sebastián Vizcaino named Monterey Bay and spent two weeks on its shores with the crew of his three vessels. After departing Manila, neither the *San Felipe* nor the people aboard were ever seen again.

Toward the end of 1576, or early in 1577, the weather-battered *San Felipe*—her topside paint faded to pastels, her hull planks bleached to a silvery gray, her sails patched and stained—was sailing along the coast of Baja California, pointed southward to her home port of Acapulco and safety. But she was out of control, ghosting along far eastward and in shore of the normal galleon track. Her being so far off course implies that any crewmen remaining alive were no longer able to control her. The exhausting task of continuously heaving the lead to determine the depth of water would have been beyond the capacity of the men—and futile if attempted.

Any crewmen still alive after sickness, scurvy, and starvation had claimed their comrades may have been aware of headlands and mountains dimly visible above the sea haze, but they could not have seen the low beaches clearly, nor sensed the gently shelving sands not far beneath the ship’s keel. No islands or offshore rocks warned of danger.

From the shore, a few nomadic native people—searching the beaches for still-fresh carcasses of whale or dolphin, collecting crabs or shellfish—may have seen her gray bulk looming out of the mists.

Then she struck and, shuddering, slid to a stop as her keel thrust into a sandy shoal half a mile (nearly one kilometer) offshore. (She would have had a draft of about sixteen feet, or five meters, and this estimated distance from shore is based on the five-meter depth line.) The *San Felipe* was trapped.

If any surviving crewmen were healthy enough to reach the shore, the waterless desert would have killed them. Hoisting the heavy ship’s boat into the water with tackles from the masts and yards would have been very difficult, but if any of the crew succeeded in doing so and sailing her southward toward mainland Mexico, they died en route, for no one arrived at a Spanish settlement to report the *San Felipe*’s fate.





*One of twenty blocks of wax recovered from the San Felipe's cargo, riddled with holes bored by shipworms after the galleon ran aground.*

With no one to man the pumps, the ship's hull flooded. Teredos began to bore their way into her timbers and cargo. The sea breezes blew through her rigging and her sails flapped futilely. Now and again, a halyard weathered away and a yard with its sail and tangle of rigging crashed to the deck from high on a mast. The low swells lapped against the hull.

For more than a year, the ghost ship sat offshore. This duration has been calculated from the size of the teredo tunnels in the twenty blocks of wax recovered on our 2003 expedition, some of which measure more than 1¼ inches (3 centimeters) in diameter. Teredos live only in free-flowing salt water. While a ship is under sail, they can only attack the outer planking. For them to have reached the cargo hold, the ship would have had to have run aground. Professor of Marine Biology Thomas Niesen of San Francisco State University has estimated that a least a year would have been required to produce holes of this size.

Eventually, a rare storm from the west drove massive waves against the weakened hull, battering in her sides and ripping loose her planks and cargo, which rode the storm surge far inland over the maelstrom of water sweeping across the low beach. When the storm receded, it left shattered porcelains, fragments of storage jars, blocks of candle wax, and a row of ship's planking still sheathed in twisted lead spread along the sea-edge desert.

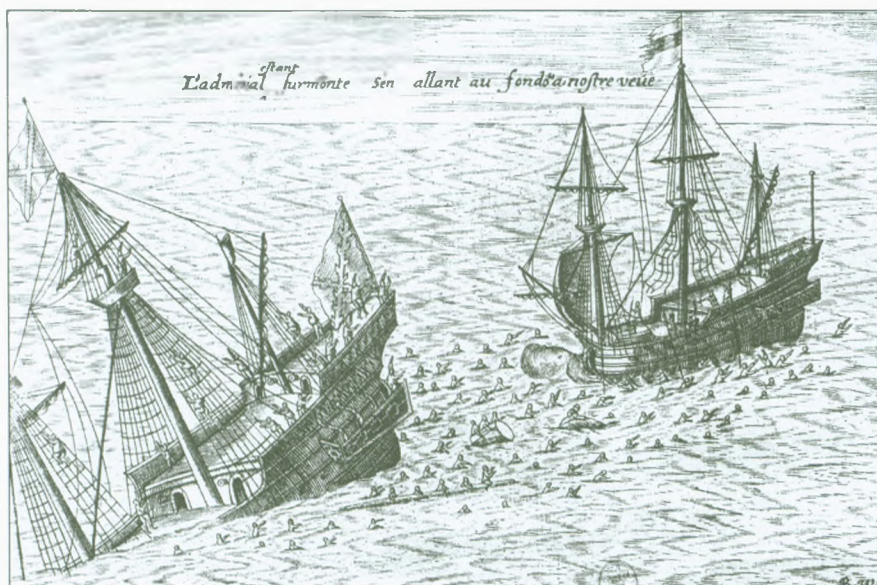
Through the centuries, the sand built seaward and dunes blew in to cover the *San Felipe's* scattered remains. Sometimes the wind pushed the dunes aside and cleared a swath of the old beach, briefly revealing exotic Chinese wares. Then the marching dunes covered them again, meanwhile opening another tiny window on the long-lost galleon's story just a short stroll away.

During the following four and a quarter centuries, Native Americans sporadically visited the site. They were eventually followed by the occasional beachcomber. Some visitors picked up fragments of the ship and cargo while others, seeing nothing of interest in the shattered bits of blue-painted porcelains and salt-encrusted wax, simply let them lie. The *Treasures of the Manila Galleons* exhibition provides historical context for these finds, inviting visitors of all ages to “put themselves in the shoes” of the enterprising merchants, daring mariners, and hard-working crew who pioneered trans-Pacific commerce nearly 500 years ago.

### Acknowledgments

The foregoing reconstruction, which updates an earlier version that appeared in *Mains'l Haul* 2002, is indebted to Rodrigue Lévesque, compiler and editor of the twenty-volume *History of Micronesia*, with its translations of many useful documents. I am grateful to Mr. E.W. Giesecke for introducing me to Mr. Lévesque's work and giving me his contact information. Mr. Lévesque answered my initial inquiry by immediately identifying the *San Felipe* as the only east-bound ship lost between 1574 and 1576, the period our team had identified by porcelain analysis, and pointing me toward the relevant documents. Mr. William Koiiman of the J. Porter Shaw Library at the National Maritime Museum of San Francisco provided access to a copy of *History of Micronesia*. Our team extends special thanks to the Consejo of INAH, including Pilar Luna Erreguerena of Mexico City and Julia Bendimez-Patterson of the Mexicali office, and to John W. Foster, Senior Archaeologist, California Parks and Recreation.

“For Further Reading” on page 47 lists sources for all five essays included here.









## From “Southern Sea” to “Spanish Lake” and After: The Context of Pacific Exploration and Exchange

*Julianne Burton-Carvajal*

Predicated on Portuguese advances in navigation made along the coast of Africa throughout the 1400s, European exploration of the Pacific spanned the following three centuries. When Christopher Columbus—born in Genoa, trained in Portugal, financed by Spain—set sail in 1492, he was unaware that his intended path to the Indies would be blocked by a continent and an ocean of equally unsuspected vastness. To his dying day in 1506, three voyages and fourteen years later, Columbus remained innocent of the world-altering implications of his discoveries. It took navigators of various European nationalities from the 1500s through the 1700s to fill in all the still-uncharted “corners” of the terrestrial globe—most of which lurked in and around the Mar del Sur (“Southern Sea”) glimpsed by Spanish conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa from the Panama isthmus in 1513.

During the 1500s, Spanish dominance of the Pacific was assumed to be so iron-clad that potential rivals referred to that vast body of water as a “Spanish lake.” In 1578, less than a decade after the initiation of the Manila galleon trade, the brilliant English navigator and privateer Frances Drake successfully breached the forbidding Straits of Magellan to reach the Pacific. Up the western coast he sailed on the newly rechristened *Golden Hind*, blithely seizing Spanish ships, supplies and treasure from the sea lanes and ports of Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Central America and Mexico.

Drake’s most treasured prizes—above even the cargoes of silver and precious stones—were experienced pilots and their top-secret navigational charts. These were key to his



exploration of latitudes unknown to his countrymen and essential to achieving his goal of circumnavigating the globe under commission of Queen Elizabeth. Drake was the first expedition commander to enjoy the acclaim of this accomplishment. Ferdinand Magellan been killed by natives fifty years earlier, leaving a remnant crew to complete the global circuit. With grudging admiration, subjects of the Spanish crown referred to “Franciso Draque, master thief of the unknown world” and, after his devastating foray along their “inaccessible coast,” perceived the necessity of arming their galleons. The era of Pacific privateering was in full swing.

Freeing themselves from Spanish rule in 1648 after eighty years of struggle, the Dutch became the world’s foremost cartographers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, dominating both exploration and trade in the Pacific and elsewhere. The 18<sup>th</sup> century witnessed British dominance, especially in the South Pacific but also in the Pacific Northwest, thanks in considerable part to the explorations and surveys of the great English sea captain James Cook—like Francis Drake, a “commoner” of uncommon talent and drive—and one of his former crewmen, George Vancouver.

During this entire period, Spanish possessions rimmed the eastern and western shores of the Pacific—the largest geographical feature on the planet, fully two hundred times the size of the cozy Mediterranean. Despite fierce competition from the Portuguese, Dutch and English, Spain sustained its galleon-based commerce between Mexico, seat of the vice-royalty of New Spain, and the port of Manila, center of inter-Asian trade, for 250 years—longer than the United States has been an independent nation.

Between launching the trade in 1565 and unloading the last galleon in 1815, the Renaissance gave way to the Enlightenment and the subsequent Age of Revolution, industrial as well as political. The Manila galleon trade began when Shakespeare and Galileo were in their infancy; Dickens and Darwin were toddlers when it ended. In addition to unceasing wars and persecutions prompted by both religious and secular motives, the following historical highlights suggest the extent of the changes experienced in Europe and North America during this timespan:

*Catholic nations adopt the Gregorian calendar (1582)*

*England defeats the Spanish Armada in the Atlantic (1588)*

*A Dutch eyeglass maker develops the microscope (1590)*

*King James authorizes his English-language Bible (1611)*

*Miguel de Cervantes publishes the first modern novel and its sequel,*

*Don Quijote de la Mancha (1605, 1615)*

*The first African slaves arrive at the Virginia colony (1619)*

*A small group of Puritans reaches Cape Cod (1620)*

*William Harvey demonstrates the circulation of the blood (1628)*

*England seizes New Amsterdam and renames it New York (1664)*



*Sir Isaac Newton discovers the laws of gravitation (1665)*  
*Rembrandt van Rijn dies in poverty (1669)*  
*England and Scotland unite under the name of Great Britain (1707)*  
*Britain gains the contract to supply slaves to Spanish America (1713)*  
*The first British Prime Minister takes office (1721-1742)*  
*An Englishman invents a mechanized "spinning jenny" (1764)*  
*American colonists begin their War of Independence (1775)*  
*The French Revolution breaks out (1789)*  
*Italian physicist Alessandro Volta invents the electric battery (1800)*  
*Napoleon Bonaparte crowns himself Emperor (1804)*  
*Britain abolishes the slave trade (1807)*  
*Napoleon finally meets his Waterloo (1815)*

In his engaging and richly illustrated *Discovery: Exploration Through the Centuries*, Eric Flaum observes that the age of discovery "gave way to a more scientific brand of exploration" in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century as nations began to occupy themselves with "cataloging all that they had claimed:"

*The days of blundering along foreign shores were numbered. Now that the rough outlines had been established, exploration would take on a more refined touch. Military and naval men and scientists began to figure more prominently ... as exploration became less profitable [and its arts were increasingly] left to governments, hobbyists, and adventurers. As the concept of colonization became more popular—or more necessary as the number of oppressed and dispossessed grew—the wealth of land came under renewed and intensive scrutiny. Settlers, not discoverers, were crossing familiar routes to other worlds.*

The long "age of Pacific exploration" continues to fascinate. Men of many continents—Europeans, Asians, and Novohispanos—contended with daunting distances, horrendous hazards, and unimagined challenges in response to the lure of life-transforming rewards. All too often, they did not live to savor the fruits of their daring. Portuguese-born seamen Ferdinand Magellan and Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, English navigators Francis Drake and James Cook, Spanish-Peruvian Alvaro de Medaña, Dutchman Willem Barents, and French nobleman Jean François de la Pérouse were among the maritime explorers who lost their lives mid-voyage, either to disease or to recalcitrant locals. Commanders who concluded their voyages often found their anticipated acclaim tainted by suspicion and opprobrium. Drake and Cook, Spanish born merchant-explorer Sebastián Vizcaíno, and Italian-born commander Alejandro Malaspina were among the many Pacific explorers whose achievements were investigated and energetically suppressed by their wary sovereigns.

Shortly before his unbecoming demise in 1779, Captain James Cook left this heart-weary observation regarding the European facility for tainting the new lands they had "discovered:"

## *East-West Time Line*

### **11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries**

**1096** Knights of Christian Europe begin the Crusades to liberate the Holy Land from the Saracens (Muslims)

**1190** Mongolian chief Temujin sets out to extend Mongol rule over northern China, Siberia and Persia, consolidating the most extensive empire ever known before or since and facilitating the first great era of modern exploration

**1192** Minamoto Yorimoto becomes shogun of Japan

### **13<sup>th</sup> century**

**1206** Temujin is proclaimed Genghis Khan, "emperor within the seas"

**1210** Genghis Khan leads Mongol invasion of China

**1227** Death of Genghis Khan; his empire is divided among his sons

**1245** Pope Innocent IV dispatches Franciscan friar Giovanni di Piano Carpini to promote Christianity at the court of the great Khan

**1260** Mongol leader Kublai elected Khan in China, establishing the Yuan dynasty (until 1368)

**1271-1295** Guided by his father and uncle, merchants on their second expedition to the East, young Venetian Marco Polo journeys overland to China; later becomes a traveling envoy for Kublai Khan; eventually publishes his travel memoirs, sparking widespread interest in the East

**1289** Frail John of Montecorvino becomes first archbishop of Peking

**1291** End of the Crusades

**1294** Death of Chinese Mongol emperor Kublai Khan

### **14<sup>th</sup> century**

**1333** Hojo clan succeeds Minamoto rule in Japan

**1363** Tatar warrior Tamarlane begins his conquest of Central Asia, eventually including India and Egypt

**1368** Ming dynasty in China replaces Yuan dynasty (until 1644)

### **15<sup>th</sup> century**

**1405** Death of warrior-ruler Tamarlane

**1421-1423** Chinese flotilla of 800 ships charts much of Asia and reaches east Africa

**1439** Portuguese Prince Henry the Navigator promotes maritime exploration through the founding of a naval institute

**1453** Ottoman Turks capture Constantinople

**1467** Civil war begins in Japan, lasting more than a century

**1469** Marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon to Isabel of Castille unites Spain (Isabel succeeds to the throne of Castille in 1474, Ferdinand to that of Aragon in 1479)

*Such are the consequences of a commerce with Europeans and, what is more to our shame, civilized Christians. We debauch their morals...and we introduce among them wants and perhaps diseases which they never before knew and which serve only to disturb what happy tranquility they and their forefathers had enjoyed.*

In recent decades, the world has experienced a renewed explosion of trans-Pacific commerce that many have viewed as a new page in history. The story of the Manila galleon trade—retold through the recently rescued remains of an ill-starred ship that never made its home port—demonstrates the economic and cultural ties forged 450 years ago between the venerable civilizations of Asia and the privileged sectors of the Spanish empire. Even the relatively modest families dwelling in the remote reaches of Alta California could count themselves among these privileged beneficiaries, because their best tableware, the finery they wore for special occasions, the camphor chests that kept that finery from harm (doing double-duty as benches in their sparsely furnished adobe homes) were all cherished products of the China trade.

The following time line, spanning 800 years, condenses the historical context that made the galleon trade possible and eventually brought it to an end. The advent of the Crusades, which exposed large numbers of western Europeans to the civilizations to the east of their own, serves here as the starting point.







*This Dutch drawing of Manila Bay in 1647 depicts a thriving port surrounded by ethnic settlements: Spaniards inside the fortified area in center background; Chinese across the Pasig River; a Filipino neighborhood on the right, above the shipyards and small fort at Cavite. Inhabitants who adhere to a pre-European lifestyle*  
*Courtesy of Österreich Nationalbibliothek.*





*This Dutch drawing of Manila Bay in 1647 depicts a thriving port surrounded by ethnic settlements: Spaniards inside the fortified area in center background; Chinese suburbs on the left, stretching across the Pasig River; a Filipino neighborhood on the right, above the shipyards and small fort at Cavite. Inhabitants who adhere to a pre-European lifestyle are depicted in left foreground.*  
Courtesy of Österreich Nationalbibliothek.





th American mainland on his third  
asco da Gama circumnavigates Africa

### 15<sup>th</sup> century

sails along the eastern coast of the  
ntina, eventually leaving his name on

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ity to the Guinea coast of West Africa;  
Magellan explores the Moluccas (Spice)  
iming them for Portugal  
anama from the settlement at Darien, the  
ba discovers the Mar del Sur; his plans to  
when his head is severed by his successor  
Portuguese navigators reach Canton,  
n of Africa

eds as Holy Roman Emperor and  
l 1556), initiating the Hapsburg dynasty  
arlos I of Spain, Portuguese navigator  
lead three Spanish ships through the  
his name, discovering a route from the  
ea, which he optimistically names the

he Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, which



becomes the seat of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Magellan and his crew become the first Europeans to visit the islands that will later (in 1542) be named the Philippines after crown-prince Philip II. Arab traders had introduced Islam in the 14<sup>th</sup> century; the pious Magellan meets a violent death here at the hands of natives hostile to his conversion efforts

**1522** A single ship from Magellan's problem-plagued expedition, captained by Juan Sebastián del Cano and carrying just twenty survivors, completes the circumnavigation of the globe

**1533** Francisco Pizarro, formerly with Balboa on the overland expedition that discovered the "Southern Sea," conquers the Andean-Pacific kingdom of Peru

**1542** Guatemala-based shipbuilder Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo dies of injury during his voyage to chart the Pacific coast of Lower and Upper California for the Viceroy of New Spain; a portion of his crew survives the return voyage

**1549-1551** Francis Xavier introduces Christianity to Japan

**1556** Charles V abdicates; his son Philip II becomes King of Spain (until 1598)

**1557** Portuguese found a settlement at Macao, in southeastern China

**1564** Miguel López de Legazpi is sent from New Spain to establish Spanish governance over the Philippine Islands

**1565** Round-trip voyages begin between Cebu in the Philippines and New Spain

**1569** Alvaro de Medaña sails west from Peru and discovers the Solomon Islands; unable to organize a second voyage until 1595, he dies enroute; Englishman Samuel Wallis discovers Tahiti, fated to become the quintessential island paradise in the European imagination

**1571** Spanish governor López de Legazpi founds the city of Manila on the site of a "Moro" town conquered the preceding year

**1572** Galleon trade begins between Manila and Acapulco in New Spain

**1574** Spaniards and Filipinos narrowly repulse the onslaught of 72 ships and 4,000 men led by Chinese pirate Limahon

**1576** Englishman Martin Frobisher makes the first of three journeys to Greenland in search of a "Northwest Passage" from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific

**1577-1580**

Commissioned by England's Queen Elizabeth, Francis Drake is the first commander to circumnavigate the globe,





assisted by maps captured from a Manila-bound galleon

**1587** English privateer Thomas Cavendish captures the Manila galleon *Santa Ana* off the coast of Baja California, the richest treasure haul in history

**1591** Manila galleon trade officially restricted to two galleons per year

**1594** Dutchman Willem Barents sets out to find a "Northeast Passage" to the Indies across the top of Europe and Asia, dying in the process; his crew become the first Europeans to winter in the Arctic

**1595** Sebastián Rodríguez Cermeño, attempting to chart the Alta California coast enroute from Manila, suffers shipwreck and limps to Acapulco in an auxiliary launch

**1598** Philip III accedes to the Spanish throne (until 1621)

**1599** King Philip III instructs the authorities in New Spain to take protective measures against Dutch and British privateers besetting the returning Manila galleons

### 17<sup>th</sup> century

**1600** Queen Elizabeth of England charts British East India Company

**1602** Dutch East India Company formed; Viceroy of New Spain commissions merchant Sebastián Vizcaíno to chart the coast of Alta California in search of viable harbors for repairing the manila galleons; he names San Diego, Monterey, Carmel and Point Año Nuevo, but is forced to turn back near Mendocino because of illness and bad weather

**1603** Tokugawa Ieyasu is appointed shogun of Japan (his descendants

remain in power until 1868); Spanish massacre thousands of Chinese traders and workers in the Philippines  
**1604** French East India Company formed  
**1606** Dutch navigator William Jansz sights Terra Australis Incognita  
**1607** Englishman Henry Hudson begins exploration of Canada via Hudson River; discovers Hudson Bay in 1610 and is abandoned there by most of his crew in 1611  
**1609** Outgoing Spanish governor of the Philippines Rodrigo de Vivero, shipwrecked in Japan, seizes the opportunity to open trade talks with Shogun Tokugawa Iyeyasu  
**1611** The Viceroy of New Spain appoints Sebastián Vizcaino first official European ambassador to Japan; Vizcaino surveys the coast but fails to locate the fabled Rich Isles of Gold and Silver  
**1621** Philip IV accedes to the Spanish Crown (until 1665)  
**1622-1624** Executions of Christian missionaries in Japan reach their peak  
**1623** Dutch massacre the English in the Moluccas (Spice) Islands  
**1637** Crossing Siberia, Russian explorers reach the Pacific Ocean  
**1641** Only the Dutch retain a small trading post in isolationist Japan  
**1642** Dutch navigator Abel Janszoon Tasman discovers and names Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) and the west coast of New Zealand  
**1644** Manchu dynasty begins in China (until 1912)  
**1661** England acquires Bombay  
**1670** England establishes Hudson Bay Company  
**1685** Canton opens to Western merchants  
**1699** Englishman William Dampier navigates northern coast of Australia

### 18<sup>th</sup> century

**1700** Charles II of Spain names as his heir Frenchman Philip of Anjou who, as Philip V, inaugurates the Bourbon dynasty in Spain (rules intermittently until 1746)  
**1709** English privateers capture the Manila galleon *Encarnación*  
**1722** Dutch navigator Jacob Roggeveen discovers Samoa and Easter Island  
**1728** Danish navigator Vitus Bering explores Bering Strait between Siberia and Alaska  
**1743** English Navy captures the Manila galleon *Covadonga*  
**1747** British physician James Lind discovers the efficacy of citrus in combatting scurvy, but his findings are not widely disseminated  
**1752** Chinese conquer Tibet  
**1757** England establishes rule in India  
**1762** English Navy captures the Manila galleon *Santísima Trinidad*  
**1763-1764** Louis Antoine de Bougainville becomes the first Frenchman to navigate the globe, inadvertently transporting the first woman to do so, Jean Baré, disguised as a male crew member  
**1768-1771** English navigator James Cook discovers and circumnavigates



the separate land masses of Australia (which he names New Wales) and New Zealand, landing at the latter in 1769

**1772-1775** Captain Cook's second voyage explores the Antarctic regions and South Pacific islands

**1774** Spanish explorer Juan Pérez sights but does not disembark on the future Vancouver Island

**1778** On his third voyage, Captain Cook encounters a previously uncharted chain of islands (Hawaii), which he names for the Earl of Sandwich, before continuing on to explore the coasts of Oregon, Washington and British Columbia to the Arctic Circle; returning to winter in the Hawaiian Islands, he is murdered and dismembered by natives who had revered him scant weeks earlier

**1785** Royal Philippine Company begins regular trade voyages (to 1834)

**1786** The first non-Spanish Europeans visit the young settlements at Monterey and Carmel as part of the round-the-world French scientific expedition lead by Count Jean François de la Pérouse, who later disappears in the South Seas with his entire expedition

**1788** Britain transports first convicts to Australia

**1789** Viceroy of New Spain sends Juan Francisco Bodega y Quadra as head of an expedition to occupy Nootka Sound, summer haven of the predominantly British fur traders of the Pacific Northwest

**1792-1794** English navigator George Vancouver, formerly with Captain Cook, explores the northwest coast of North America, circumnavigating the island that bears his name cooperatively with Spanish forces captained by Bodega y Quadra

**1793** First free British settlers arrive in Australia

**1796-1801** Prussian scientist Baron Alexander von Humboldt explores large portions of South America, Mexico and the Caribbean



### 19<sup>th</sup> century

**1804** Merriwether Lewis and William Clark explore the Northwestern United States to the Pacific Northwest

**1806** South American wars for independence from Spain begin, concluding by 1822 (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines remain under Spanish rule until 1898)

**1815** The last galleon arrives at Manila

**1820** Americans begin to missionize Hawaii, a mid-Pacific archipelago never "discovered" by the Manila galleon pilots



## Galleons and Galleon-Hunters at Monterey?

Tim Thomas

The Spanish galleon was a specially designed sailing vessel used for long overseas voyages. The original Spanish ship designers borrowed the best characteristics of already-existing ships, like the carrack, which gave the galleon its classic fore and aft castles, and the caravel, with its beautiful lateen (triangular) sails.

The design predated the China trade. In June of 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo and his chief pilot Bartolome Ferrelo sailed two galleon-like ships, the *San Salvador* and *Victoria*, upward along the California coast looking for the Strait of Anian, a legendary and long searched for passage connecting the Pacific with the Atlantic. Cabrillo sailed into Monterey Bay on November 16<sup>th</sup> and recorded in his log:

*...When day dawned we found ourselves at the entrance of very large bay that appeared to have an anchorage and a river [the Salinas] emptying into it. We then lay off and on that day and night until the next day, but did not discover a sheltered place, nor did we see any river, but in order to take possession we did so by anchoring in twenty-three fathoms. We did not attempt a landing, because of a heavy sea. This is in the thirty-ninth degree of north latitude. The shore is covered with pine trees to the sea, and we gave it the name of Bay of Pines.*

Cabrillo's expedition gave us some of the first written accounts of flora, fauna and California's Native people. Sixty years later, searching for places where the returning Manila galleons might stop for repairs and reprovisioning, and also scouting potential settlement sites, Sebastián Vizcaíno charted the coast of the two Californias in the *San Diego*, a small galleon designed for exploration.

The galleon is most often associated with Spain, but other countries imitated the design as well. The English privateer Francis Drake, who had seen many Spanish galleons at close hand, suggested ideas to improve them to English shipbuilders. The resulting British galleon was narrower and faster than anything Spain had on the water.

By the time of the Spanish arrival in the Philippines in 1564, the area was already a well-known trading center among merchants of the Far East. Although the Spaniards found a fairly easy route to the Philippines

by sailing clockwise from Acapulco, contrary winds and ocean currents prevented them from simply returning the way they had come, and they had difficulty finding a viable return route. In 1565, after much trial and error, they discovered a route that took the galleons past Japan and into the Kuroshio current, which pushed the ships across the North Pacific to the latitude of Cape Mendocino. Once they had sighted Alta California, they would then head southeast down the coast with the wind at their back, arriving in Acapulco between three and six months later, depending on the weather. This navigational discovery allowed for the regularization of a most lucrative trade between the Philippines and the port of Acapulco in New Spain, and *naos de la China* continued to ply this route until 1815.

Manila quickly became the hot spot for Asian trading as Spanish officials, merchants, and priests traded Mexican silver for spices from the "Spice Islands" (the Moluccas south of the Philippines) as well as samurai swords from Japan and silk, porcelain, gold, ivory, gemstones, jade and mercury from China. Huge mark-ups on luxury items like these were what made the Manila galleon trade so profitable. Upon reaching Acapulco, goods were traded to merchants who came from all over the New World. A portion was transported overland to Vera Cruz where it was loaded onto ships destined for Spain.

Life aboard a galleon was not for the faint of heart. The first leg of the voyage, from Acapulco to Manila, could take up to three months, and the return trip often lasted twice as long. After a few weeks, food and fresh water were in short supply. Shortages were aggravated by the general determination to carry as many saleable items as possible. Even crew members were allotted a certain amount of storage space for merchandise that they intended to sell for great personal profit once the ship reached Acapulco. An Italian passenger aboard the *San Andrés* in 1719 recalls the cuisine:

*The ship swarms with little vermin the Spaniards call gorgojos bred in the biskit; so swift that they in a short time not only run over cabbins, beds, and the very dishes the men eat on, but insensibly fasten upon the Body. There are several other sorts of vermin of sundry colours, that suck the blood. Abundance of flies fall into the dishes of broth, in which there also swim worms of several sorts... Upon flesh days he gave me tasajos fritos, that is, steaks of beef, or buffalo, dry'd in the sun, or wind, which are so hard that it is impossible to eat them, without they are first well beaten...in every mouthful whereof there went down abundance of maggots, and gogrojos chew'd and bruis'd. On fish days the common diet was old rank fish boil'd in fair water and salt; at noon we had mongos, something like kidney beans, in which there were so many maggots that they swam at the top of the broth...*



Storms could take their toll on a galleon. In 1601 a single galleon had to weather eighteen strong Pacific storms between Manila and New Spain. By the time she limped into port, she was barely able to keep afloat. In 1680, Cubero Sebastián reported a storm that lasted 80 hours. "All, even the pilot, confessed to the priest, who finally calmed the storm by throwing a relic into the sea," he remembered. "For days afterwards, people trembled from terror as they moved about the ship."

It was not uncommon for men to be swept overboard. Francesco Giovanni Gemelli Careri wrote of another Pacific storm, "We all watch'd day and night, the danger was so great; for the Waves broke upon the Galleon, and beat terribly upon its Sides. There was no standing or sitting in a place, but we were tossed from side to side." A galleon pilot wrote in his log on October 7, 1775: "A gale blowing from SSE. At two o'clock in the afternoon it attained such violence that I believed the ship was going down. Votive offerings were made to the patroness of the galleon to abate the tempest."

The last leg of the trip along the California coast was usually the hardest, because by then a good portion of the crew was wracked with scurvy and beriberi, vitamin deficiency diseases caused by the inadequate diet. Frenchman Jean Mocquet left a first-hand description of scurvy's toll, here somewhat condensed:

*It rotted all my gums, which gave out a black and stinking blood. My knee joints were so swollen that I could not extend my muscles. My thighs and lower legs were black and gangrenous, and I was forced to use my knife each day to cut into the flesh in order to release this black foul blood.*

*I also used my knife on my gums, which were livid and growing over my teeth. I went on deck each day, and over to the rail, clinging to the ropes, and holding a little mirror before me in my hand to see where it was necessary to cut. Then, when I had cut away this dead flesh and caused much black blood to flow, I rinsed my mouth and teeth with my urine, rubbing them very hard. But even with such treatment there is much swelling again each day...*

*And the unfortunate thing was that I could not eat, desiring more to swallow than to chew, because of my great suffering in this trying malady. Many of our people died of it every day, and we saw bodies being thrown into the sea constantly, three or four at a time. For the most part they died with no aid given them, expiring behind some case or chest, their eyes and the soles of their feet gnawed away by rats...*

*Among us was the greatest confusion and chaos imaginable, because of the great number of men of every class who were vomiting, some here, some there, and relieving themselves on each other. On every side were heard the cries of those assailed*

*by thirst, hunger and pain, cursing the hour when they had come aboard...*

From disease, malnutrition and storms, the death rate could be devastating; there was at least one instance of a “ghost galleon” that arrived at Acapulco with no one left alive.

## Monterey and the Manila Galleons

Although returning Manila galleons passed Monterey Bay on a regular basis, little is written of these voyages before the settling of Monterey in 1770. No visual record or oral tradition has come down to us from the Native populations, but imagine what it must have been like for the Rumsien people, who had lived here for countless generations and knew only of their small shared world, to witness so many oddly-garbed strangers arriving in an enormous watercraft.

The following account by galleon pilot José González Cabrera Bueno dates from 1734, thirty-six years before the settlement of Monterey:

*From Punta Año Nuevo the coast runs more to the east, making a large bay until it comes out from a point of low land, very heavily forested to the very sea, to which was given the name of Punta de Pinos, and is 37 degrees latitude. From Punta Año Nuevo to this point, high ranges run from northwest to southwest for 12 leagues. Looking straight at the point from the northeast to southwest, it is heavily grown with pine forest, as I have said, and forms near the southern point a maze of barrancas, which is a sign by which to recognize it.*

*On the northeast the Punta de Pinos forms a famous harbor, and by steering straight one may enter it and run close to the land in six fathoms. All this point and roadstead is rocky, but by steering to the southeast and east until all rocks are passed one comes to a famous beach [later named Del Monte Beach]. Before reaching it there is a good anchorage, clear and sheltered from all winds except from north-northwest.*

*In this port which they call Monte Rey there are many pines good for masts and lateen yards. Right close to the sea and the beach there is a salty estuary [Lake Estero] into which in spring tide the sea enters. To the southeast of this estuary at the distance of a musket shot from the beach, and close to the estuary, is a very moist plain, where by digging just a little, fresh, abundant and very good water flows.*

*This harbor is at 37 degrees, and it is a good port in which to succor the China ships, because the land is the first they see when they come to New Spain. Following the coast from the Punta de Pinos toward the south-southwest, there is another fine harbor [Carmel*

*Bay] running from north to south. It is sheltered from all winds and has a river of very good water and of slight of depth, whose banks are well grown with black poplars very high and smooth, and other trees native to Spain. It comes down from very high, white mountains, and is called Rio de Carmelo, because the friars of this order discovered it.*

There is additional concrete evidence that Spanish galleons visited Monterey. In front of the Custom House sits a bronze anchor raised from the Monterey Bay by Navy divers in 1944. Markings on its shank have been identified as Chinese characters. It is believed that the anchor was made in the Portuguese colony of Macao, on the southeastern coast of China, and traded in Manila. We know that the Spanish began using these Chinese anchors because they were far superior to their own hand-wrought iron anchors.

The colony of Monterey was established in June of 1770. On June 22, 1773, the Council of the Indies and the Spanish Governors of the Philippines decreed that all Spanish galleons must put in at Monterey, not only for the good of the ship and her crew, but also for the welfare of the new settlement. On December 14, 1773, the King himself made it official: a fine of 4000 pesos would be imposed on any captain of a galleon who did not comply with this order. Most galleon captains, unwilling to incur further delay on an already lengthy and trying voyage, preferred to risk the fine. Because so few of the galleons managed to stop at Monterey, the order was rescinded twenty-two years later, in 1795, just two decades before the galleon trade came to an end.

## Drake's Plate of Lead?

Sebastián Vizcaíno is believed to have been the first European to set foot on the shore at Monterey, in 1602—but was he? In June of 1934, a Monterey couple were beachcombing along Moss Beach on the Seventeen-Mile Drive when something caught the man's eye. Looking down, he noticed an oddly shaped, half-buried bottle in the sand.

After carefully pulling the bottle out of its trap, he noticed that it was hand-blown, full of hard-packed sand, and appeared very old. The couple took it home and used it as a bookend until 1949 when the finder, noticing that some of the sand had become loose, decided to try to empty it. After poking at the sand for a few minutes, a small, half-round object near the neck was revealed and, a little deeper, what appeared to be a roll of metal.

At that point, he decided to take the bottle to his friend Myron Oliver, a local artist-craftsman who owned a curio shop and knew antiques. Oliver was able to remove the two items from inside the bottle. The half-round object appeared to be a 16th century English silver sixpence, bent



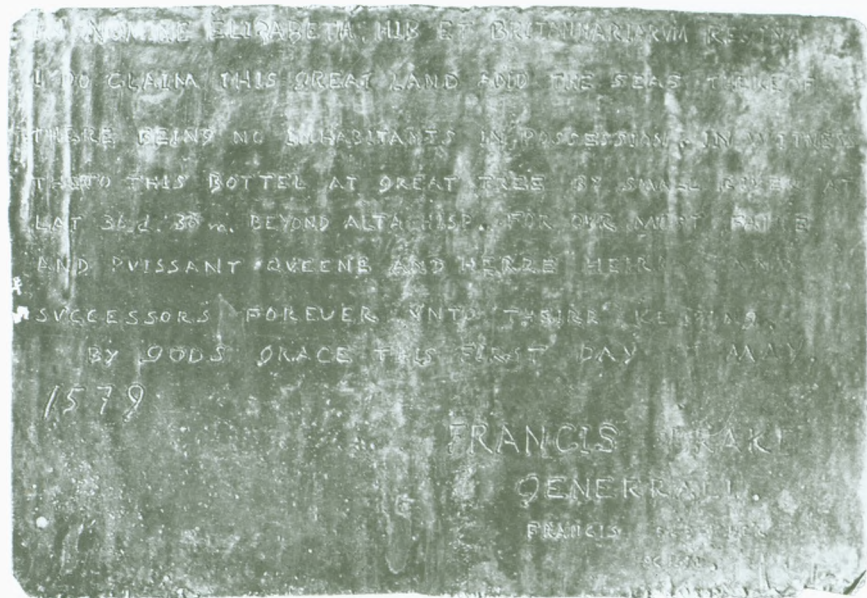
in half to fit inside the bottle. The metal roll turned out to be lead with writing on one side. As Oliver tried to unroll it, the soft lead kept curling up on him until he decided to put it on an old press to flatten it out. Unrolled, the plate measured about nine inches long by five inches wide and bore the following inscription in Latin and English:

IN NOMINE ELIZABETH HIB ET BRITANNA RIARUM  
REGINA I DO CLAIM THIS GREAT LAND AND THE  
SEAS THEREOF THERE BEING NO INHABITANTS IN  
POSSESSION. IN WITNESS THERETO THIS BOTTLE AT  
GREAT TREE BY SMALL RIVER AT LAT 36d. 30m. BEYOND  
ALTA HISP. FOR OUR MOST FAIRE AND PUISSANT  
QUEENE AND HERRE HEIRRS AND SUCCESSORS  
FOREVER UNTO THEIR KEEPING.

BY GODS GRACE THIS FIRST DAY OF MAY

1579

FRANCIS DRAKE  
GENERALI  
FRANCIS FLERCHER  
Scriv.



We know that Francis Drake sailed along the California coast in his galleon the *Golden Hind* in 1579, and that Francis Fletcher was the ship's recorder. But were these items actually connected to Drake's famous voyage along the coast of Upper California?

Sent to a lab in Boston, the bottle and coin were deemed the proper age. The script and spelling on the scroll were judged to be typical for that time, and experts in California expressed confidence that it was authentic. But when the scroll was sent to London, historians and other experts who examined it were skeptical of its authenticity.

Over the years, other “Drake artifacts” have been found along the California coast, the most (in)famous being the “Plate of Brass”—reportedly found first near Drakes Bay in 1933, then apparently discarded and rediscovered near San Francisco Bay in 1936. The engraved brass plate was hailed as authentic by leading experts including University of California historian Herbert Bolton, who promptly arranged for its purchase by the University. Years later, after the death of all the principals, the plate was revealed to be a fake. Given the parallel timing, the Monterey bottle may have been part of this same elaborate hoax played by one set of experts on another. Unfortunately, the unintended consequences of this far from innocent prank continue to reverberate, as expertly explained in an article by Edward Von der Porten and associates in the fall, 2002 issue of *California History*.

In 1949, when a reporter for the *Monterey Herald* asked Myron Oliver his opinion regarding the authenticity of the bottle, coin, and leaden scroll, he averred that they were genuine. “And I know antiques,” he added emphatically. “I ought to; I’ve made enough of them!”

I wish I could say that the bottle, sixpence and scroll are now part of our Maritime Museum Collection but, unfortunately, that is not the case. In 1965, while the finder was away on vacation, his home was broken into. The three items were stolen and have not been seen since. So if you are ever at a garage sale and happen to see a funny-looking old bottle with an English silver sixpence and small lead scroll for sale, call me at the Maritime Museum, and I’ll be right over!





## Spanish Pieces of Eight: The First World-wide Currency

*Edward Von der Porten*

Christopher Columbus and his successors brought the first coins to the New World. Made of Spanish copper, silver, and gold, their denominations derived from medieval coinages. Standard silver coins, each called *un real* (a royal), weighed about one-eighth of an ounce. Larger coins included *two-real* and *four-real* denominations.

Civilizations conquered by the Spaniards in what we know today as Mexico and Peru possessed large amounts of silver. Intensive Spanish exploitation of Mexican and Upper Peruvian silver mines using slave and feudal-style labor led to a notable increase in the world's silver supply and, to the surprise of the Spaniards, created inflation as the money supply grew faster than the economy.

The silver also created a need for minting services in the Spanish New World, a demand met in 1536 with the establishment of a mint in Mexico City. Others followed in Potosí (today's Bolivia) and other cities as needed during the three centuries of Spanish rule. Merchants and mine-owners brought silver bars to the mints, where one-fifth was assessed on behalf of the king. A mintage fee was also charged to cover the cost of assaying the silver, hammering it flat, cutting it into more or less round planchets, weighing them, heating them, and striking the planchets with hand-held hardened steel dies—a process that created coins of guaranteed weight and purity.

The earliest coins minted in New Spain were stamped with the names of Charles V (Carlos I), Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain, and his mother Juana, daughter of the "Catholic Monarchs" Ferdinand and Isabel. These coins were issued in denominations of one quarter and one half as well as one, two, three and four *reales*, and were fairly well struck on round planchets. This series continued to be produced long after Carlos I abdicated to his son Philip II in 1556.

In 1572, well into the latter's reign, a new design was introduced, with one side featuring Spain's crowned Hapsburg coat of arms, flanked by the initials of the mint and assayer on the left and the value in reales on the right. On the reverse, the castles of Castille and the lions of Leon proclaim a united Spain, with the legend *PHILIPVS D.[eo] G.[ratia] HISPANIARVM ET INDIARVM REX* (Philip, by the grace of God, of Spain and the Indies King). (See photo on page 9, top and center.)



During the reign of Philip II, the standard coin for large transactions became the eight-*real* or *real de a ocho*, weighing about one ounce. It was also called a *duro*, a *peso* and, in northern countries, either “a piece of eight” or a “dollar” (after a German coin known as a *thaler* in reference to its source, *Joachimsthal*, a rich silver-mining valley). The coinage was less refined than under the reign of King Charles, with somewhat irregular planchets often struck more than once, creating double images and obscured details. Such coins are known as “cobs” from *cabo de barra* (end of the bar), referring to the way the bars were hammered and cut off to create the planchets.

The general pattern of the coinage lasted about two centuries, with many design variations occurring over the years and among the various mints. Planchet shapes grew more and more irregular, eventually becoming little more than rough rectangles. Striking became so haphazard that little of the design was impressed on the coins, but the weight and quality of the silver were generally maintained. This consistent quality, combined with the quantity (several million were produced annually) made pieces of eight the first world-wide monetary system, and still the longest-lasting in world history.

Pieces of eight, circulated throughout the Americas, also sailed west to the Philippines on the Manila galleons and east to Europe on Spain’s annual treasure fleets, the *Flota* and the *Armada*. From Manila in the east and Spain in the west, the coins coursed throughout the trading networks of Europe and Asia. Surviving examples sometimes show traces of this usage in many lands. Occasionally, large coins were cut into segments when smaller denominations were in short supply. Many were pierced so they could be strung together for carrying or wearing. Pieces of eight used in Asia often display “chop marks,” stamps of Chinese merchants and bankers assuring their customers that the coins had been tested and found genuine. Other governments counter-stamped the coins with their own symbols or king’s monogram to validate them for local use.

Revolutionary and post-independence Spanish-American governments countermarked the coins with appropriate symbols when they could not melt them down and remint them. Such countermarks may date from as much as 250 years after the coins were originally struck, testifying to their continuous circulation over that long period. So common were these Spanish-colonial coins in the English colonies and early United States that the *real* received the nickname “bit.” This usage echoes in expressions like “two-bit scoundrel” as well as in long-lapsed refrains like “shave and a haircut, two bits,” both referring to the quarter-dollar.\*

By 1732, the appearance of the cob coins had deteriorated to the point that King Philip V ordered more modern equipment sent to the Mexico City mint. Massive screw presses produced uniformly-struck coins on round planchets. As an additional improvement, the planchets were impressed on the edges with a raised pattern to discourage clipping

off bits of silver, as had been often and easily done with the irregular edges of the earlier coins. This edge-milling also made counterfeiting more difficult. Some mints continued to produce the older-style coins for decades, but eventually all Spanish New World mints received screw presses and began producing modernized coinage.

The new coins featured an elegant design, with two pillars symbolizing the Pillars of Hercules (Straits of Gibraltar), gateway to the Atlantic and the New World, joined by ribbons emblazoned with the motto *PLUS ULTRA* ("There is more beyond"). Two hemispheres show old and new worlds under a Spanish crown and over the sea, both of which unite them. Above, the motto *ULTRAQUE UNUM* ("Both worlds are one") reinforces the imperial message. The mint monogram appears twice, on either side of the date. (See photo on page 9, bottom.) The reverse has a crowned Spanish coat of arms flanked by the assayer's initial and the value in *reales*. The name of King Philip V is followed by the time-honored message *D. G. HISPANIARUM ET INDIARUM REX*.

In 1772, a fourth style of Spanish colonial coinage was introduced, in conformity with European fashion. The obverse displays a large, low-relief bust of King Charles III, while the pillars were moved to the opposite surface and squeezed in on both sides of the crowned Spanish coat of arms. This style continued in use until the end of the Spanish empire in the New World. The motif of the "pillar dollar," two pillars linked by a flowing banner, gave rise to the U.S. dollar sign.

\* Editor's note:

Robert Louis Stevenson visited California in 1879, thirty-three years after American annexation. Recalling that journey in "Across the Plains," he observed that "In the Pacific States, they...settle their affairs by a coin that no longer exists—the bit or old Mexican *real*." Wary of being short-changed—given a "short bit" (ten cents) when a "long bit" (twelve and a half cents) was due—the penurious writer hit upon a "radiantly simple" solution. Taking his two-bit pieces first to the U.S. post office, he would purchase a single five-cent stamp. Receiving two dimes in change, he guaranteed himself the full value of his coin, rather than losing 2½ cents on every glass of beer he imbibed at the local saloon, as did others of his acquaintance. "Benjamin Franklin would have patted me on the head for this discovery," the genial Scotsman concluded.



## FOR FURTHER READING

Allen, Mark, editor and William J. McCarthy, editorial consultant. *The Manila Galleons and the Forging of the Pacific Rim*. Special double issue of *Mains'l Haul: A Journal of Pacific Maritime History* 38:1-2, 2002. Maritime Museum Association of San Diego. See especially, William J. McCarthy, "The Manila Galleon: An Introduction," pp 5-9 and "*The Fiesta de las Señas* and Life Aboard Spain's Pacific Galleons," pp 20-29.

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## List of Illustrations

Front cover: Map by Hessel Gerritsz; Bibliotheque Nationale de France.

Inside front cover: Jesuit priest Pedro Murillo Velarde created this map of the Philippines in 1754; University of California Berkeley Libraries.

Title page: Japanese folding paper screen depicting a Spanish galleon driven by bad weather to the coast of Japan; Suntory Museum of Art, Tokyo.

Facing Contents page, top: Front of Stanton Center with exhibition banner; photograph by John Castagna. Bottom: galleon detail reproduced from 1754 map, preceding page.

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**Corral de Libros**  
**Monterey and the Region in Books**  
**2000-2004**

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Anderson, Burton. *America's Salad Bowl: An Agricultural History of the Salinas Valley*. Salinas: Monterey County Historical Society, 2000. 208 pp.

Beebe, Rose Marie and Robert M. Senkewicz, editors and translators. *Lands of Promise and Despair: Chronicles of Early California, 1535-1846*. Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2001. 506 pp. Reviewed in *Noticias* LI: 4 (winter 2002) pp 30-34.

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Burness, Ted. *The Vintage House Book: Classic American Houses, 1880-1980*. Iola, Wisconsin: Krause Publications, 2003. 256 pp. *Noticias* review forthcoming.

Burton-Carvajal, Julianne, ed. *The Monterey Mesa: Oldest Neighborhood in California*. City of Monterey, 2002. 94pp. Essays on landscape, art, architecture and social history of the neighborhood overlooking the Royal Presidio Chapel.

Busch, Jerry. *Watching the Watsonville Wetlands: An Armchair Guide to the Watsonville Slough System*. Freedom: Watsonville Wetlands Watch, 2000. 80 pp. An artful, exquisitely designed overview.

Coates, Lawrence. *The Master of Monterey*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003. 273 pp. Charming novel about the American commodore who erroneously took possession of Monterey in 1842.

Coelho, Albert J. *The Arroyo Seco: The Central Coast's Grand Canyon*. San Francisco: Monterey Pacific Publishing, 2001. 90 pp.

Conway, J. D. *Monterey: Presidio, Pueblo, and Port*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2003 (The Making of America series). 160 pp. Reviewed in *Noticias* LII: 4 (winter 2003) pp 23-25.



Copeland, Dennis and Jeanne McCombs, compilers. *A Monterey Album: Life by the Bay*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Press, 2003. (Images of America Series) 160 pp. *Noticias* review forthcoming.

Coventry, Kim. *Monterey Peninsula: The Golden Age*. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia, 2002. (Images of America series) 128 pp. Reproductions of period postcards, with many erroneous captions.

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Fox, Sandi. *Quilts: California Bound, California Made, 1840-1940*. Los Angeles: The Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising Museum and Library, 2002. 207 pp.

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Keenam Jr., William. *The Sardine Factory: An Insider's Look at the Famed Restaurant and its Cuisine*. New York: Libhar-Friedman Books, 2000. (Great Restaurants of the World series) 160pp. A handsome, richly illustrated history of the pioneering Cannery Row establishment.

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Levy, JoAnn. *Unsettling the West: Eliza Farnham and Georginana Bruce Kirby in Frontier California*. Santa Clara: Santa Clara University and Berkeley: Heyday Books, 2004. 343 pp. Traces the parallel lives of a pair of proto-feminist reformers who settled in Santa Cruz.

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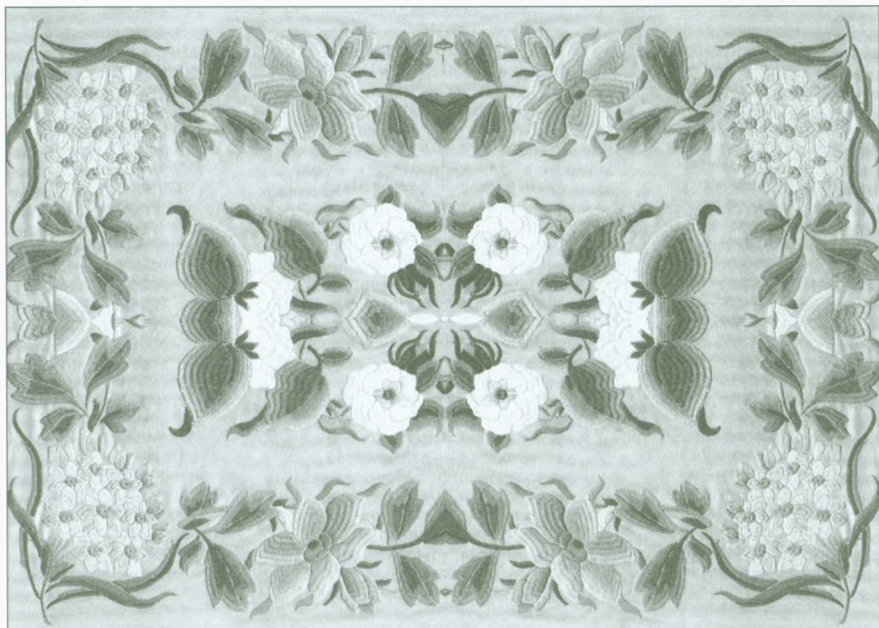
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*Book round-ups like this one, a new feature of Noticias, will appear from time to time as the yield of new publications warrants. The compiler would like to thank the staff and volunteers of the Mayo Hayes O'Donnell Library, Monterey Public Library's California Room, and the Pacific Grove Public Library for their gracious assistance, and to acknowledge additions by Julianne Burton-Carvajal.*





*Details of silk-on-silk embroidery from a manton de Manila (Manila shawl) made in China and transported to the New World via the Philippines. This example once belonged to Alta California Governor Pío Pico. Courtesy of Edna Kimbro.*





*The "cargo hold," featuring porcelains reconstructed from fragments recovered by the archaeological team, greets visitors to the exhibit.  
Photograph by John Castagna.*



# Treasures of the Manila Galleons

*Tesoros de los galeones de Manila*



**Spanish Treasure Ship**  
**La Santa, 1575-1580**  
The Santa, a large sailing ship, was built in the Philippines and was one of the largest ships of the Manila Galleon trade. It was built by the Spanish and was used to transport goods from the Philippines to Spain. The ship was built in the Philippines and was used to transport goods from the Philippines to Spain. The ship was built in the Philippines and was used to transport goods from the Philippines to Spain.

February 5 - September 4, 2005

*Introductory panel, with metal trunk from the permanent collection of the  
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Photograph by John Castagna.*

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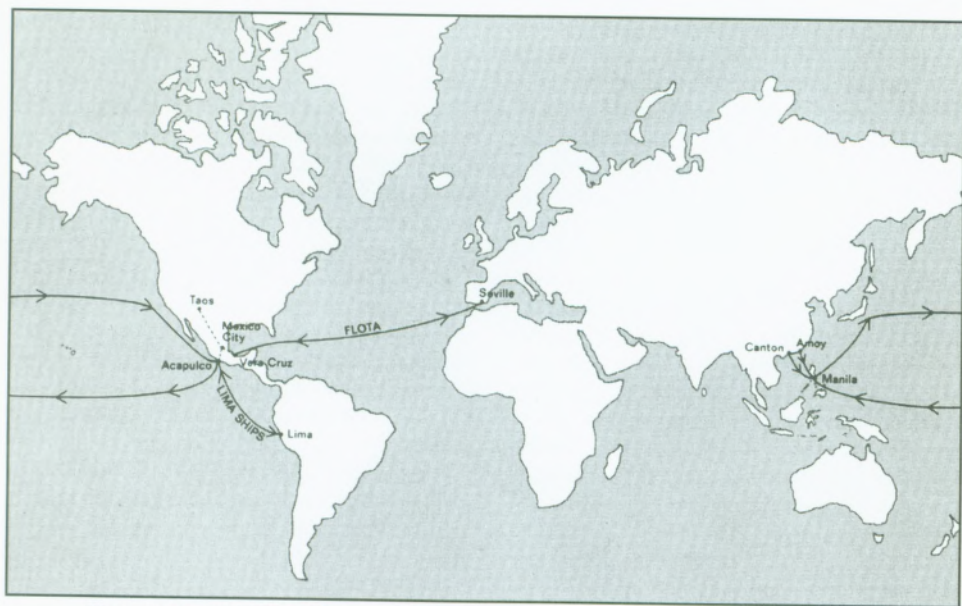
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1986-1988 Donald Woodward, Virginia Stone

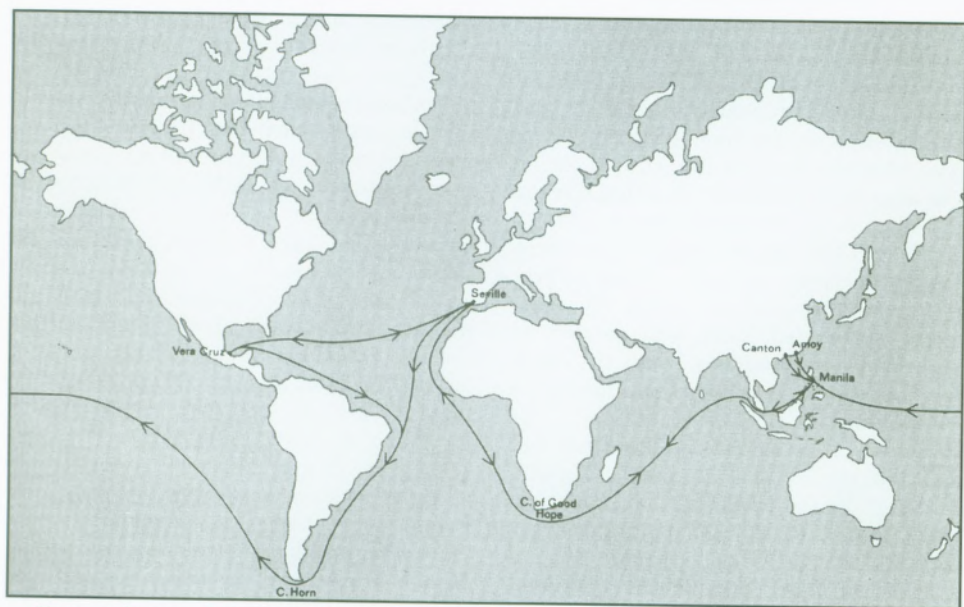
1988-1993 Virginia Stone

1993-1996 Philip Nash

1996-2000 Marilyn McMorran



*Westward route of the Manila galleons, 1572-1815, from Arts of Asia 17:1, 1987.*



*Eastward route of the Royal Philippine Company, 1785-1834, from Arts of Asia 17:1, 1987.*



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