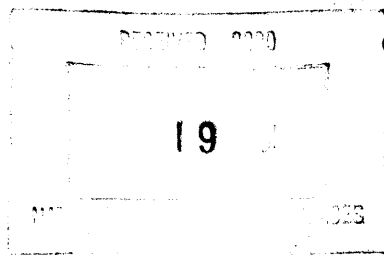


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



529

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Urca de Lima

other names/site number Urca de Lima State Underwater Archaeological Preserve; Wedge Wreck/SL24

2. Location

street & number 200 yards offshore Jack Island Park, north of Ft. Pierce Inlet n/a  not for publication

city or town Ft. Pierce  vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county St. Lucie code 111 zip code n/a

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Janet Snyder Matthews 4/10/2001  
Signature of certifying official Title Date

Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Erika Martin Seibert  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5/31/01

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
1	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	11	objects
1	11	total

**Name of related multiple property listings**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

n/a

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: Water-related (ship)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation: Water-related (shipwreck)  
Landscape: Underwater (underwater site)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

18th -Century Urca (flat-bottomed storeship)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Wood (hull)  
walls Wood  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof \_\_\_\_\_  
other Wood  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce \_\_\_\_\_
- Maritime History \_\_\_\_\_
- Transportation \_\_\_\_\_
- Architecture \_\_\_\_\_
- Archaeology: Historic-Non-Aboriginal \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1715 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1715 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

n/a \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

First Spanish Period (1513-1763) \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_

Urca de Lima  
Name of Property

St. Lucie Co., FL  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	5 6 9 3 0 5	3 0 4 2 1 7 5
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Della Scott-Ireton/Archaeologist II & Barbara Mattick/Deputy SHPO for Survey & Registration

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date March 2001

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name State of Florida

street & number telephone (850) 487-2333

city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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St. Lucie County, Florida

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**SUMMARY**

The *Urca de Lima* (8SL00024) is the site of a wooden-hulled sailing ship that was part of the 1715 Spanish Plate Fleet wrecked off the east coast of Florida in a hurricane. The wrecksite is in the Atlantic Ocean 200 yards off Jack Island Park and 1,000 yards north of Pepper Beach Park, St. Lucie County, in 10 to 15 feet of water on submerged lands belonging to the State of Florida. The site includes a 100 ft x 50 ft ballast mound and hull timbers that generally are covered with sand. Non-contributing resources include five replica cement cannons, an iron anchor from one of the 1715 wrecks, one marker buoy, three mooring buoys, and a bronze plaque designating the wreck as an Underwater Archaeological Preserve.

**SETTING**

The site of the *Urca de Lima* is a dynamic, high-energy environment on the second offshore reef. This reef trapped the ship in 1715 and most likely was very similar to the present reef system, although better water quality in the past probably led to more biodiversity than is seen today. Water depth is 10 to 15 feet over the wrecksite and clarity varies with weather and tidal conditions. The bottom sediment is coarse quartz sand; the reef is composed of dead coral heads and some live soft corals and sponges as well as live rock and marine vegetation adhering to a massive coquina rock outcrop.

**DESCRIPTION**

The ballast mound that marks the *Urca de Lima* is approximately 100 feet long by 50 feet wide; the long axis of the shipwreck is oriented northeast to southwest. A scatter of ballast stones extends beyond the edges of the compacted mound. Mooring buoy anchors are situated to the northwest, southwest, and southeast of the ballast mound. North of the ballast mound is a marker buoy and a submerged bronze plaque mounted in cement that proclaims the shipwreck an Underwater Archaeological Preserve. South of the ballast mound five replica cement cannons have been placed to simulate the ordnance spill that occurred as the ship wrecked and broke apart. These cannons, along with a contemporary anchor placed to the west of the ballast, represent efforts to "rebuild" the site to appear as it would have before the original iron cannons were raised in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this way divers and snorkelers can better understand how a 1715 site would have looked before modern salvage. The non-contributing resources do not adversely affect the site's historical or archaeological integrity as they were placed on top of the sand away from the main area of wreckage and do not interfere with the ballast mound or underlying timbers.

Elements of the ship's hull continually are covered and uncovered by a thin veneer of bottom sediments due to wave action, storms, and currents. Remaining hull timbers consist of portions of the keel, frames and futtocks, keelson, exterior planking, and ceiling planking. Large concretions most likely represent fasteners or other ship hardware. The protective layer of ballast stones, sand, and sediment conceals additional ship architecture and, possibly, rigging elements which may include deadeyes, chainplates, blocks, etc. Based on past recoveries from *Urca de Lima* and other 1715 shipwrecks, ship-related artifacts such as fasteners and ceramic sherds may also be present. Over the intervening years, some shipwreck material has been dispersed by

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wave and current action away from the primary area of timbers and ballast. This material forms the “wreck scatter” common to sites in a high-energy environment near shore; the site boundaries encompass the area of wreck scatter. While displaced from their original context, scattered artifacts may still be linked to the shipwreck and can provide important information about site formation processes.

*Urca de Lima* fared better than the other ships in the 1715 fleet, grounding in shallow water and remaining relatively intact. Stores salvaged from her hold supplied the survivors until they were rescued a month after the disaster by salvage crews sent from Havana. Records indicate *Urca de Lima* was the first of the wrecked ships to be salvaged by the Spanish; all accessible cargo was removed from the hull and the wreck was burned to the waterline to conceal her position from English freebooters. Over centuries the remains of her hull not covered with ballast and sand were carried away by waves and storms; shipworms that thrive in the warm water ate any exposed wood. The shipwreck seen today, if left undisturbed, has reached a state of equilibrium with the marine environment and has stabilized.

#### SITE INVESTIGATIONS

Fifty years after the 1715 fleet disaster, marine surveyor Bernard Romans was sent to the east coast of Florida to map the area for the British Crown; while surveying his crew found the remains of *Urca de Lima*. Although Spanish ships were known to have been lost off the east coast, an 1837 book about Florida mistakenly placed the location of the 1715 wrecks in the Keys. Not until 1928 was the wreck of *Urca de Lima* rediscovered. As the first 1715 fleet ship to be located in modern times, the *Urca* was heavily salvaged. Cannons and anchors were raised from the site and some were placed in front of the Ft. Pierce City Hall where, although badly corroded and misshapen, they can still be seen. Treasure hunters subsequently found the resting places of several other of the 1715 fleet and leases were granted to salvage whatever treasure was left by the Spanish. In 1955 a salvage permit was granted for *Urca de Lima*, but only one silver bar, two silver wedges, many sherds of broken porcelain, and a few iron cannons were found. The pie slice-shaped silver wedges, from which the nickname “Wedge Wreck” was derived, probably were contraband smuggled in the false bottoms of barrels. Sporadic salvage continued on *Urca de Lima* until 1962 and the last salvage permits were granted in 1983 and 1984.

The popularity of the site with snorkelers and scuba divers prompted local officials to approach the state with an idea of creating a shipwreck park at the wrecksite. In 1985 the surviving hull structure and ballast mound were mapped and recorded to provide an accurate site plan (see attached). This was accomplished by placing a baseline along the longitudinal axis of the wreck site and taking 90° offsets and triangulations to accurately record the position of exposed timbers and to delineate the ballast mound; no excavation was performed. The few artifacts encountered, such as ceramic sherds and encrusted fasteners, were left *in situ*.

A brochure was prepared that describes the *Urca*'s history and its role as an Underwater Archaeological Preserve, and an underwater site guide was created to orient divers on a self-guided tour of the shipwreck (see attached). *Urca de Lima* was designated the State of Florida's first Underwater Archaeological Preserve and was officially dedicated in 1987 with the placement of a bronze plaque declaring her status.

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SUMMARY

The *Urca de Lima* State is significant at the national level under **Criterion A** in the areas of **Commerce, Maritime History, and Transportation**; under **Criterion C** in the area of **Architecture**; and under **Criterion D** in the area of **Archaeology: Historic-Non-Aboriginal**. Under **Criterion A** this shipwreck is significant as one of the most intact examples remaining of the 1715 Spanish Plate Fleet disaster. Furthermore, this shipwreck is, to date, the only known surviving example of the flat-bottomed storeship type called an *urca* that was used extensively by the Spanish in the *Carrera de Indias*. As a part of Florida's and the nation's history, *Urca de Lima* represents an element of the early maritime commerce that skirted, and occasionally wrecked upon, the shores of today's state and that was the impetus for the Spanish colonization and occupation of what is today the state of Florida.

The *Urca de Lima* is significant under **Criterion C** as it is the only known example of an *urca* that has been positively identified in the New World. *Urcas*, as a ship type, are primarily known from documentary sources which merely mention that *urcas* were used in Atlantic commerce. *Urca de Lima* provides an opportunity to learn more about the hull architecture and construction techniques of this unique vessel type.

The *Urca de Lima* wrecksite also is significant under **Criterion D** as it has stabilized in the marine environment and can, through future archaeological investigation, provide additional information about 18<sup>th</sup>-century merchant vessels, the *urca* ship type in particular, the Spanish *flota* system, and trans-Atlantic maritime culture.

HISTORICAL/ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT: The Spanish Plate Fleets

The 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish conquests of Mexico and Peru resulted in large quantities of precious metals and gemstones, as well as exotic New World goods, being shipped across the Atlantic to enrich the treasury of the Spanish Crown and to support its far-flung empire. Freebooters and privateers of rival countries such as England, France, and the Netherlands soon began to menace Spanish shipping to steal the riches for themselves. To combat this threat Spain, at that time one of the most powerful countries on earth, devised a *flota* or convoy system consisting of armed warships to accompany and protect the merchant vessels on their voyages to and from the New World. Called the *Carrera de Indias*, this convoy system was in use for over 200 years, beginning in the 1530s. At least two large armed galleons sailed with each convoy: the *capitana* led the way and served as flagship of the fleet, while the *almiranta* brought up the rear. Additional warships often joined large fleets to offer more protection. Other ships that made up the Plate Fleets included smaller vessels called *pataches* that were used to communicate between ships and *refuerzos*, or supply ships, that carried victuals and extra gear as well as regular cargo. Merchant vessels of various sizes and types carried cargo and treasure, as well as passengers and their personal possessions.

Large armadas sailed each year from Spain loaded with finished goods (clothing, books, equestrian tack, etc.), foodstuffs, and European luxuries intended for the colonial market; this armada split into two fleets upon reaching the islands of the Caribbean. One group, the New Spain Fleet or *flota*, sailed to Veracruz in New Spain (Mexico) to load cargoes of New World products as well as Chinese porcelain shipped across the Pacific in the Manila galleons and brought across the isthmus of Panama via mule train. The Tierra Firme fleet, or

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*galeones*, sailed for Cartagena de Indias to load South American products. The primary cargo of both fleets was immense amounts of precious metals, generally in the form of bullion and coin, from Mexico, Central, and South American mines and mints. The bulk of the treasure, particularly that intended for the king's coffers, was loaded onto the *capitana* and the *almiranta* since they were the two most heavily armed ships. The two fleets reconvened in Havana for mutual protection and assistance during the long journey back to Spain.

Theoretically, the convoy sailed from Spain each spring (before the Atlantic hurricane season) and completed the round-trip voyage each year. In practice, delays caused by weather, shipwreck, and especially bureaucratic inefficiency often caused the fleets to sail less regularly or, worse, to sail during hurricane season. While the *Carrera de Indias* convoy system proved effective for defense against pirates, and remained in use until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, it could not protect the fleets from storms, treacherous shoals, and reefs.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Built strong and heavily-planked to ride through Atlantic swells, *Urca de Lima* was one of eleven vessels commanded by *Capitán General* Don Juan de Ubilla. Loaded with the products of Mexico and Manila, Ubilla's New Spain fleet had rendezvoused in Havana in the summer of 1715 with the South American Tierra Firme fleet to begin the long voyage back to Spain. The combined armada set sail on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July and began to make its way northward through the Straits of Florida toward the open ocean. A few days later a violent hurricane caught the ships off the east coast of Florida, driving them onto the shallow reefs and treacherous hard rock bottom. Miguel de Lima, owner of the *Urca*, described the wreck of his ship:

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

Since *Urca de Lima* did not break up, it was the first one to be salvaged by the Spanish and then was burned to the water line to conceal its location from freebooters. A few coins were recovered from the beach onshore of the wrecksite in the late 1700s before the 1715 fleet became an obscure memory. The shipwreck lay undisturbed until the early 1900s when modern treasure hunters relocated it and began to mine it for treasure and artifacts. Although the ship's original cannons and anchors have been removed and portions of the ballast mound have been disturbed, the ship's lower hull structure remains *in situ* under the shifting sand.

Nationally, *Urca de Lima* is significant under **Criterion A** because it is associated with the *Carrera de Indias*, the Spanish system of fleet convoys that helped to shape the world's economy from the 16<sup>th</sup> until the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that transported enormous quantities of New World commodities to the Old World. The spread of this new-found wealth in turn fueled the European settlement of the Americas. At the state-wide level, *Urca de Lima* is one of the vessels that came to grief on the shores of today's state and her tale is part of Florida's



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history, illustrating the dangers that early mariners faced when sailing near the treacherous reefs of the east coast. Additionally, Florida was colonized by the Spanish to protect the route of the treasure fleets, resulting in the settlement of St. Augustine in 1565 and continuous European occupation. Other colonies along the eastern seaboard of the present United States, such as Santa Elena in South Carolina, were established as well. These nation-wide and state-wide impacts were the direct result of the *Carrera de Indias*, of which *Urca de Lima* was a part and is one of the best surviving examples.

Under **Criterion A, Commerce and Transportation** are areas of significance because the ship was linked directly to the *Carrera de Indias* which was the most complex and massive movement of goods, products, and people of the era. **Maritime History** also is an area of significance based on the participation of *Urca de Lima* in the *Carrera de Indias* as well as its association with the one of Spain's worst Plate Fleet disasters which had far-reaching consequences for the Spanish economy and, subsequently, for Europe and the Americas.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The *Urca de Lima* also is significant under **Criterion D** because of the high potential for new information the site can yield. Although parts of the shipwreck have been subjected to non-scientific treasure hunting activities in the past, much of the vessel's hull structure remains *in situ*. Since the treasure hunters were not interested in non-intrinsically valuable artifacts, some of these may remain in context within and immediately surrounding the ship's hull. Additionally, treasure hunters inflicted only limited damage to *Urca de Lima* since "more productive" 1715 shipwrecks were discovered along the coast. Remaining artifacts associated with the shipwreck may include ceramics, hull fasteners, and other items. All of the material culture related to the shipwreck can help to answer questions pertaining to 18<sup>th</sup>-century trans-Atlantic voyaging and commerce, international exchange, maritime culture, and shipboard lifeways such as victualing, status, gender, and recreation.

Since *Urca de Lima* was the only vessel in the 1715 fleet to remain intact through the wrecking event, it is likely to reveal more archaeological information than her sister vessels that were broken apart during wrecking and that may have become scattered over the years. Because shipwrecks are archaeological features in and of themselves, the probability that the wreck of *Urca de Lima* contains deposits of early 18<sup>th</sup>-century maritime material culture is high. Even though *Urca de Lima* was burned to the waterline, the bottom of the hull survives because it filled with sand and sediment that, along with the ballast, protected the bottom-most timbers, as well as artifacts within the hull, from deterioration due to waves, storms, and shipworm. These lowest hull elements, including the keel, floor timbers, keelson, main maststep, and lower futtocks, are the "backbone" of a ship and generally provide the most information pertaining to construction details and architectural design. Often, the missing portions of a shipwreck can be deduced based on the lines and curvature of the preserved lower hull.

An additional consideration is that *Urca de Lima* is one of a family of shipwreck sites that have been determined to be historically and archaeologically significant by the State of Florida. *Urca de Lima* was designated a State Underwater Archaeological Preserve based on its integrity and its potential for public

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education. The *Urca* also is featured as part of Florida's Maritime Heritage Trail, a series of coastal and maritime sites including Historic Shipwrecks, Coastal Environments, Lighthouses, Coastal Communities, Coastal Forts, and Historic Ports, that are interpreted for public education, recreation, and tourism.

ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

The specialized ships used by Spain to transport precious metals and other New World products were a hybrid of naval technologies developed through centuries of European maritime experience. Ships of the *Carrera de Indias* had to be large enough to carry profitable payloads as well as the supplies and victuals necessary to sustain sailors and passengers on long voyages. They also had to be shallow-drafted enough to be maneuverable through the shoals and reefs of New World waters. Additionally, the ships needed to be strong and seaworthy to survive repeated Atlantic crossings. Several ship types evolved to suit the needs of commerce and warfare, including armed galleons to protect the fleets and merchant *naos* to carry commodities. The *urca*, originally developed for commerce in European waters and adapted for the Indies run, proved to be a valuable addition to the fleets.

Designed for the rough waters off the Flemish coast, the *urca* was a stout, large-timbered bulk cargo carrier with a relatively flat bottom and rounded sides. To date, little information has come to light regarding *urcas*, and most of that information is from superficial descriptions in historical documents. As is the *status quo* for vessels of this era, no ship plans or blueprints exist for *urcas*; shipwrights often were illiterate and simply passed their craft from father to son. Through future archaeological investigation, *Urca de Lima* represents a unique opportunity to provide data about this vessel type that apparently often was utilized in the *Carrera de Indias*.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

*Urca de Lima* is significant under **Criterion C** as it is the only known example of the *urca* ship type used extensively in the Spanish *flota* system of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Since it was not broken apart during wrecking, as were the other ships of the 1715 fleet, it can provide important information about naval architecture and construction techniques, as well as the process of adapting European vessels to the needs of trans-Atlantic voyaging. Portions of the hull that are buried and protected under the sand (located through systematic probing during the 1985 survey of the wrecksite) are likely to yield information regarding wood usage, framing pattern, fastening methods, and possible reinforcement for service in the *Carrera de Indias*. Architectural techniques peculiar to the *urca*, including construction methods used to form the flat bottom, can be learned and documented through scientific research. Additionally, any modifications made to the hull of a European ship in preparation for an Indies voyage can be recognized. These details, which at first glance may seem arcane, are vital to understanding the ships that carried the wealth of the New World to the Old and that returned with the colonists who planted European roots in American soil.

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St. Lucie County, Florida

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**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The site boundary of the *Urca de Lima* is defined as a circle of 300 yards radius around the geographic coordinates Latitude 27°30.18' N, Longitude 80°17.9' W, lying offshore and below the mean low water mark of the Atlantic Ocean and encompassing the ballast mound, timbers, replica cannons, iron anchor, plaque, and mooring buoys on the site.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The *Urca de Lima* site boundary is based on the Management Agreement for Sovereignty Submerged Lands (No. 452-0003) between the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund of the State of Florida and the Division of Historical Resources. This Management Agreement was entered into upon the designation of *Urca de Lima* as a State Underwater Archaeological Preserve in 1987. The purpose of the 300 yard radius around the site is to encompass the scatter of material culture relating to the shipwreck that has dispersed with wave and current action away from the primary area of timbers and ballast.

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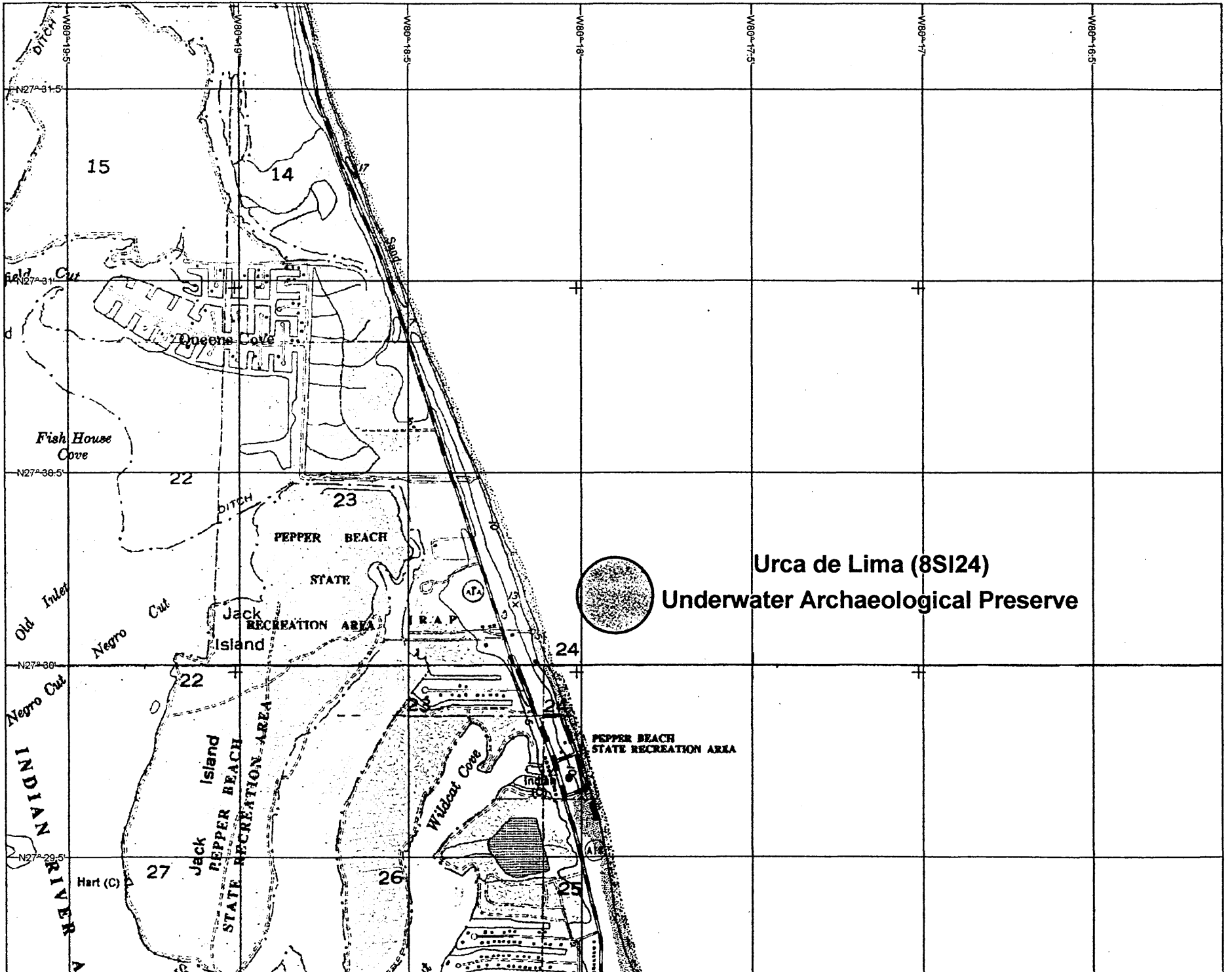
URCA DE LIMA  
St. Lucie County, Florida


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**PHOTOGRAPHS**


- 1.1) *Urca de Lima*
  - 2) St. Lucie County, Florida
  - 3) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
  - 4) July 1987
  - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
  - 6) diver with replica cannon on ballast mound
  - 7) 1 of 2

- 2.1) *Urca de Lima*
  - 2) St. Lucie County, Florida
  - 3) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
  - 4) July 1987
  - 5) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
  - 6) snorkeler with *Urca de Lima* plaque
  - 7) 2 of 2



 - Ballast Stone Scatter

 - Encrusted Object

 - Wood Structure




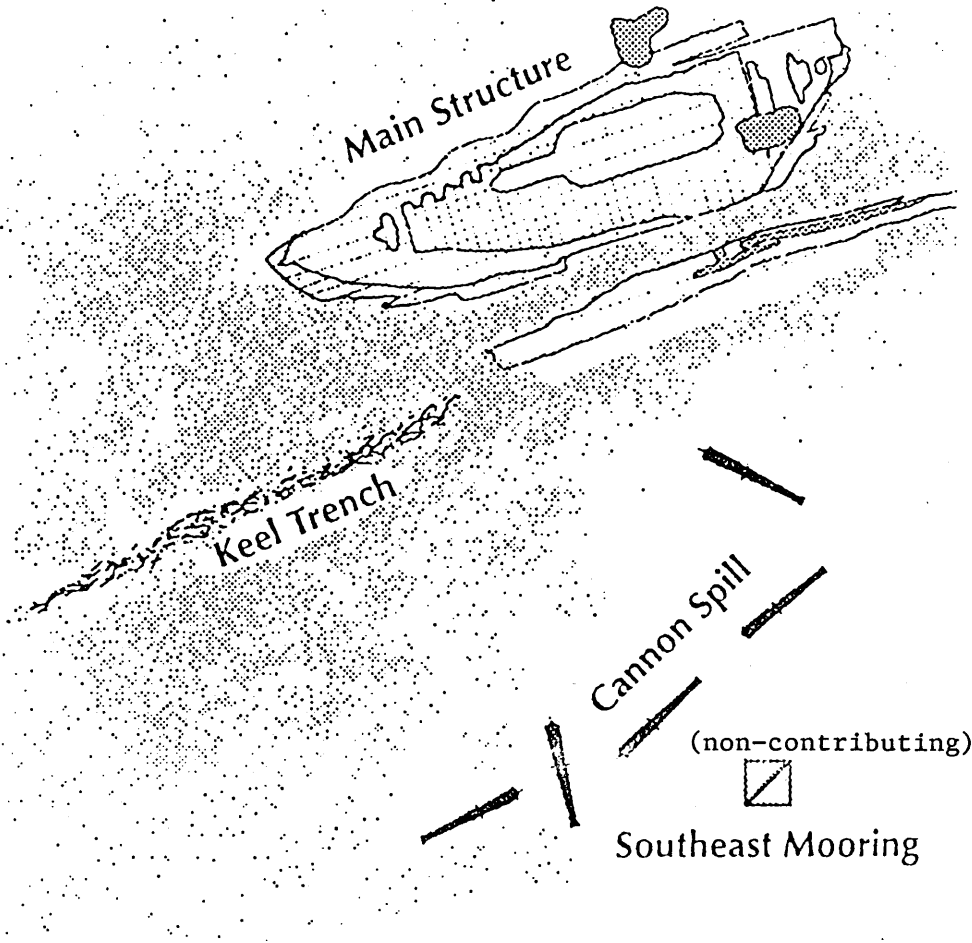
Northwest  
Mooring  
(non-contributing)



Marker Bouy and  
*Urca de Lima*  
Bronze Plaque  
(non-contributing)



  
(non-contributing)



Southwest Mooring   
(non-contributing)

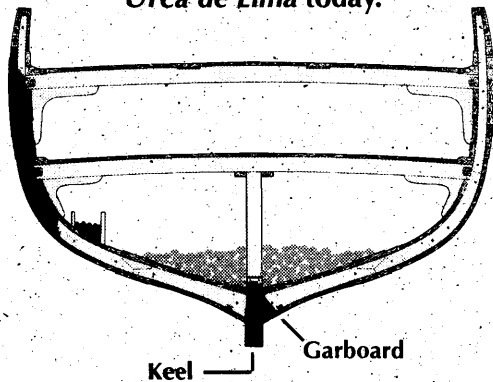
**Non-Contributing Resources**  
are noted



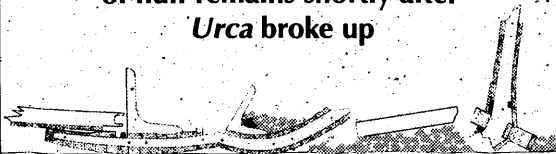
# Urca De Lima

The *Urca de Lima* park, at the site of one of the fabled Spanish treasure *flota* (fleet) wrecks that sank during a hurricane in 1715 off present-day Ft. Pierce, was opened as Florida's first Underwater Archaeological Preserve in 1987.

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



Idealized cross section of hull remains shortly after *Urca* broke up



Cross section of the *Urca's* remains today



## UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE

- Ballast Stone Scatter

- Encrusted Object

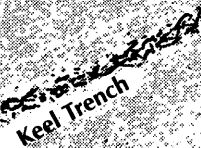
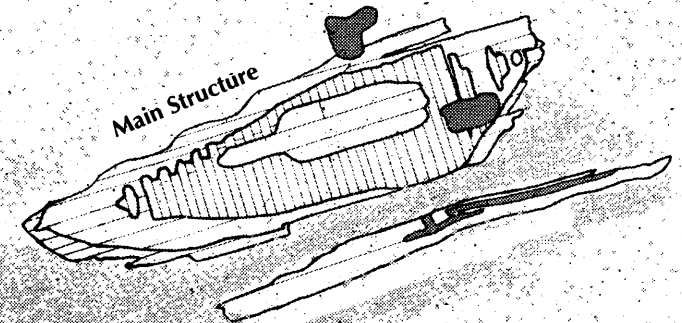
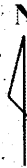
- Wood Structure



Northwest Mooring



Marker Bouy  
*Urca de Lima*  
Bronze Plaque



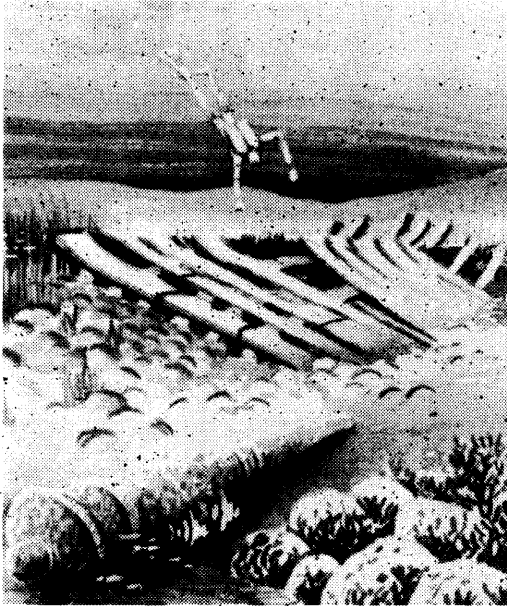
Southeast Mooring

Southwest Mooring

50 feet

# Urca De Lima

## Underwater Archaeological Preserve Off Ft. Pierce, Florida



### The Spanish Plate Fleet

*Urca de Lima* was part of the Spanish merchant convoy commanded by Capitan General Don Juan de Ubilla. Urcas were flat-bottomed, round-bellied storeships originally designed to ply the shallow waters off the Flemish coast. Due to their cargo carrying capacity, they soon were adopted for the Spanish-American trade between Europe and the New World.

Loaded with the products of Mexico and Manila, Ubilla's flota of ships rendezvoused in the summer of 1715 with the South American squadron of Antonio de Echeverz at Havana to begin the long voyage back to Spain. The combined fleet of eleven vessels set sail from Cuba on the 24th of July, but they were never to reach their destination.

### Shipwreck and Salvage

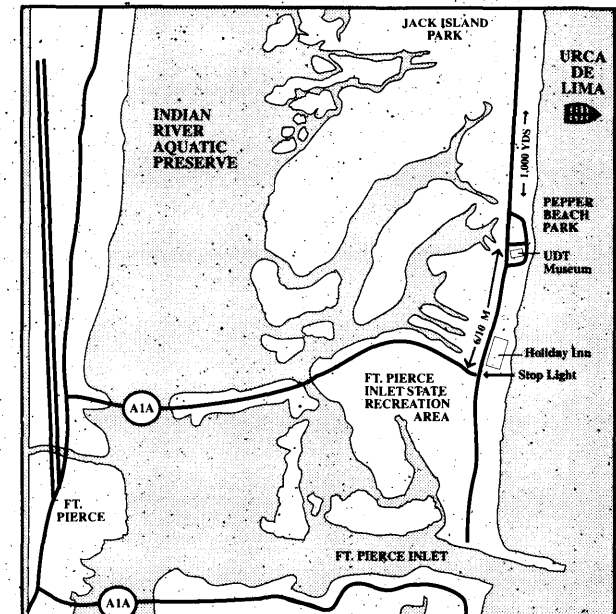
Only a few days out, the *flota* was struck by a fierce hurricane off the coast of Florida. *Urca de Lima* was grounded by the storm but left relatively intact. *Lima* had been heavily laden with general cargo, which included hundreds of uncured cowhides, packets of chocolate, vanilla, sassafras, incense,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

### How to Find Urca de Lima

**By Land:** Follow Highway A1A north from the Ft. Pierce Inlet to Pepper Park. Walk northward along the beach approximately 1,000 yards from the park boundary. The wrecksite lies on the first offshore reef in 10-15 feet of water, some 200 yards from shore.

**By Sea:** Proceed north from the Ft. Pierce Inlet parallel to shore. Look for a white marker buoy in 10-15 feet of water at 27°30.18'N and 80°17.90'W. Please tie up to one of the floating mooring bouys to avoid disturbing the remains of the shipwreck, and remember to display a "divers down" flag. No spear fishing is allowed within 100 feet of the site.

Web Address: <http://www.dos.state.fl.us/dhr/bar/uap/>



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