

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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 Herrera Shipwreck Site

other names/site number Nuestra Senora de Belen y San Antonio de Padua, Belen, The Figurine Wreck

2. Location

street & number 2 1/2 miles offshore Whale Harbor n/a  not for publication

city or town Islamorada  vicinity

state Florida code FL county Monroe code 087 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.)

Barbara C. Mattick, DSHPO 5-2-06  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation  
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) \_\_\_\_\_

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 6/15/06

**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	0	objects
1	0	total

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

1733 Spanish Plate Fleet

**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)

18<sup>th</sup> - Century Nao  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation (hull) wood  
walls \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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)

Archeology: Historic -- Non-aboriginal

**Period of Significance**

1733

**Significant Dates**

1733

**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

# \_\_\_\_\_



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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1 **HERRERA SHIPWRECK SITE**  
**Monroe County, Florida**

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**SUMMARY**

*Herrera* (8MO00090) is the site of a wooden-hulled sailing ship that was part of the Spanish Plate Fleet destroyed in a hurricane of 15 July 1733. The wrecksite is in 20 feet of water on the western side of Hawk Channel in Monroe County, Florida. The wreck, located within the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, lies on submerged lands belonging to the State of Florida. The site includes a ballast mound approximately 18 meters long by 9 meters wide and hull timbers that generally are covered with sand and marine vegetation.

**SETTING**

The site of *Herrera* is on hard bottom at the western side of Hawk Channel. The ballast mound served as the foundation for an artificial reef and the shipwreck site now is a thriving biological community which helps to protect the wreck from further deterioration. Water depth is 20 feet over the wrecksite with generally good visibility. The bottom is hardpan with a thin veneer of coarse quartz sand and extensive seagrass beds; the surrounding environment is composed of seagrass, sponges, and a variety of marine life.

**DESCRIPTION**

The ballast mound that marks *Herrera* is approximately 18 meters long by 9 meters wide; the long axis of the shipwreck is oriented northwest to southeast. No intrusive materials were seen, indicating the site is not often visited. A scatter of ballast stones extends beyond the edge of the compacted mound; the scrambled appearance of portions of the ballast is evidence of modern salvage activities. No non-contributing resources are associated with the site.

Elements of the ship's hull are buried under the ballast and sand surrounding the site. Remaining hull timbers likely consist of the keel, frames, keelson, ceiling planking, and exterior planking as well as fasteners. The protective layer of ballast stones, sand, and reef structure conceals the ship's architecture and, possibly, rigging elements which may include deadeyes, chainplates, blocks, etc. Based on past recoveries from other 1733 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 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 in shallow water near shore; the site boundaries are intended to 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.

*Herrera* grounded in fairly shallow water, enabling the Spanish to salvage her cargo. Modern salvors did not find treasure on the wreck, so it is likely Spanish divers were successful in recovering the silver coins. The leather, tobacco, dyes, and sugar were ruined by immersion in salt water. Over the centuries the remains of her hull not covered with ballast and sand were carried away by waves and storms; shipworms (*Teredo navalis*)

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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**

The Spanish began salvage activities soon after the fleet disaster. *Herrera* was damaged and leaking causing her decks to flood but relatively intact, allowing recovery of nearly all of her treasure cargo.

In 1962, Don Gurgiolo found the wrecksite while conducting an aerial search for shipwrecks in his SeaBee seaplane. With him that day were Art Sapp, Don Knox, and Martin Meylach. They dropped a buoy at the site and Knox and Sapp dived a few days later. They found a partially buried ballast mound 80 feet long, 25 feet wide, and three feet high, a single cannon lay across one end of the ballast. Gurgiolo's group, as well as Bobby Klein, Craig Hamilton, and Bobby Welberry, dug into the site for several days in 1962. Finds recovered included dividers, a cross of Caravacas, 12 pewter plates, 12 pewter platters, five intact olive jars, 18 onion bottles, 20 teardrop padlocks, nearly 100 clay figurines, brazilwood, brass buckles, barshot, and lead musketballs. The iron cannon was recovered and relocated in front of Chesapeake Restaurant, where one can see it today with its muzzle pointing across US Highway 1 toward the site of the Torres salvage camp. Later, Leo Barker, Art Sapp, Ralph Weeks, and Bobby Savage recovered iron fittings, cannon balls, clay figurines, pewter artifacts, and ceramics. Many of these things were placed in the Miami River, and are probably still there. Jack Haskins and Robert Weller recovered pewter plates, an ivory-handled razor, musket balls, and figurines. A small wicker basket containing five silver rings, seven gold rings, and a small rosary was recovered by Bobby Kline. He gave his wife one of the gold rings and the rest were put on display at Ocean Reef resort, but later were stolen. The nearly 100 small clay figurines caused the salvors to nickname the site "the Figurine Wreck." As late as 1995 a contract salvor recovered a figurine from the wreck of *Herrera*.

In 1977, the State of Florida's Underwater Archaeological Research Section conducted a survey of the wrecks of the 1733 fleet, including *Herrera*. At that time the site of *Herrera* had reported ballast moved and piled into two rough mounds, exposing timbers and fasteners. A test pit revealed some areas of the wrecksite to be undisturbed. Artifacts observed included ceramics such as porcelain, Guadalajara Ware, red ware, and olive jar, and a piece of what might have been dyewood. The site was photographed and visible ballast was recorded and mapped to create a site plan. This was accomplished by using a protractor mounted on a rod that was inserted into the middle of the ballast mound; measurements were taken every 10 degrees for 360°. A report was prepared of survey efforts, including a description and site map of each wreck site (Smith and Dunbar 1977).

In 1988 a second survey of *Herrera* was conducted by the Florida Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Archaeological Research with participation from Florida State University and Indiana University during an underwater archaeology field school. The purpose of the survey was to locate a candidate for Florida's second Underwater Archaeological Preserve from among the known sites of the 1733 fleet. Eleven wrecks of the 1733 fleet were surveyed and a system was developed to rank sites for various criteria, including accessibility, archaeological integrity, biological features, and research and park potential.

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Duncan Mathewson visited the *Herrera* site in a field school in 1990s, using a blower to uncover timbers and recovering a silver coin.

In 2004, the Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research resurveyed the wrecks of the 1733 fleet as part of a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Coastal Management Program. The purpose of the grant was to obtain archaeological and historical information about the 1733 fleet disaster in order to create a maritime heritage attraction for historical, recreational, and educational tourism. All of the sites of the 1733 shipwrecks, including *Herrera*, were surveyed using an azimuth and measuring tape to record the ballast mounds using distance and bearing. Ballast, timbers, areas of disturbance, and large biological features such as coral heads were recorded on individual site plans for each shipwreck. The sites also were recorded with video and photography.

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**SUMMARY**

*Herrera* is significant at the national level under **Criterion D** in the area of **Archaeology: Historic-Non-Aboriginal** as one of the shipwrecks of the 1733 Spanish Plate Fleet disaster. *Herrera* is one of very few positively identified examples of the *nao* ship type that was heavily used for commerce in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and that transported treasure and goods between Spain and the Americas in the *Carrera de Indias*. As a part of Florida's and the nation's history, *Herrera* 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 shipwreck has stabilized in the marine environment and can, through future archaeological investigation, provide additional information about 18<sup>th</sup>-century merchant vessels, the *nao* ship type in particular, the Spanish *flota* system, and trans-Atlantic maritime culture.

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Herrera**

The 242 ½ ton *Nuestra Señora de Belén y San Antonio de Padua*, known as *Belén* or *Herrera* after her owner, Cadiz merchant Don Luís Herrera, was built in England and was designed to carry 10 or 13 iron cannon. She carried Old World goods from Spain to trade at the Vera Cruz fair. Her return cargo consisted of animal hides, cochineal, indigo, sugar, tobacco, 12,000 *pesos* in silver, and several boxes of gifts. *Herrera* was near the center of the fleet when it left Havana harbor. The hurricane pushed the ship over the outer reef but, damaged and leaking, she sank near the western side of Hawk Channel. Spanish accounts place the wreck near *Matecumbe El Grande* (Upper Matecumbe Key) and state that her decks were flooded. Modern salvors did not find treasure on the wreck, so it is likely Spanish divers were successful in recovering the silver coins. The leather, tobacco, dyes, and sugar were ruined by immersion in salt water.

Once the cargo was recovered, the Spanish left the wreck to the sea to become home to generations of marine life.



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**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The site boundary of the *Herrera* is defined as a circle of 1,000 yards radius around the geographical coordinates Latitude 24° 54.326' N, Longitude 80° 35.538' W, lying offshore and below the mean low water mark of the Atlantic Ocean and encompassing the ballast mound and associated hull structure and artifacts.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The *Herrera* site boundary is based on boundaries determined for another 1733 plate fleet wreck, *San Pedro*, that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001. The purpose of the 1,000 yards 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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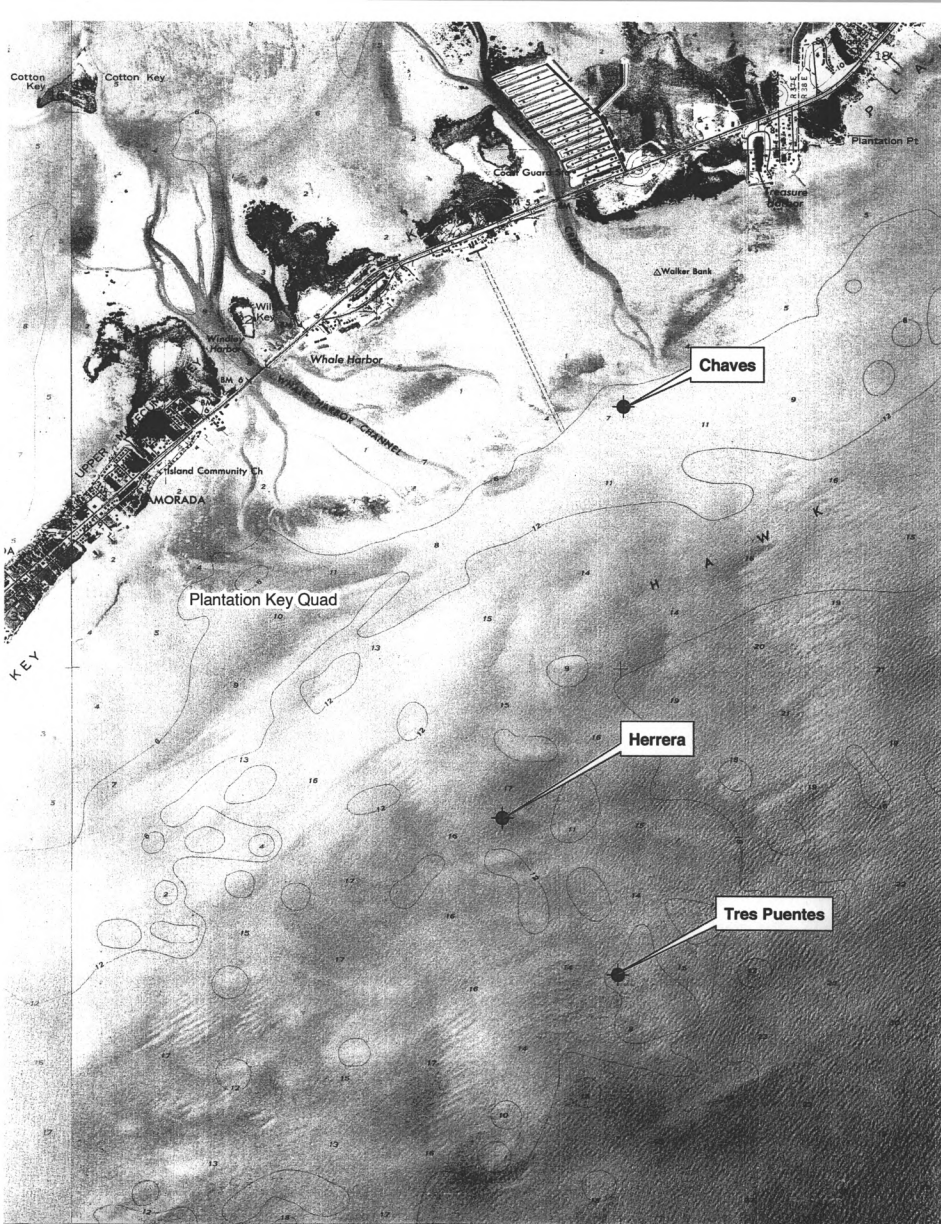
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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

- 1.a) *Herrera*
- b) Monroe County, Florida
- c) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
- d) August 2004
- e) Florida Bureau of Archaeological Research
- f) Ballast pile
- g) 1 of 1



Cotton Key Cotton Key

Plantation Pt

Coal Quar

Walker Bank

Wil Key

Wrecker Harbor

Whale Harbor

Chaves

Island Community Ch

MORADA

Plantation Key Quad

KEY

Herrera

Tres Puentes

Herrera  
2004  
Am

