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SHIPWRECKS AND THEIR TREASURES: Part Nine by Ernie Richards

1659, Jupiter Inlet, Florida *San Miguel el Arcangel*

In 1549, a Spanish ship heading with two others from Cartagena, Colombia to Spain wrecked somewhere in the Florida Keys. Perhaps the only survivor was a 13-year-old boy being sent to his parents' homeland to further his education. His name was Hernando d'Escalante Fontaneda. Held captive among the fierce Calusa Indians for many years, Fontaneda learned much of their language and a great deal of their lifestyle and habits. He kept a mental journal of his seventeen years as a castaway, and after finally reaching Spain, Fontaneda, in 1575, published his memoirs of living for many years with the natives in Florida. In this journal he told of meeting others who had traveled to the lands of the Ais (Indian River region) and Jeaga (Jupiter Inlet region) tribes on Florida's east coast. While in the company of tribal members, their attention had been called to the possession by these Indians of respectable amounts of gold and silver bullion and coins ... Spanish gold and silver ... which obviously had come from shipwrecks that had occurred along this coast!

NOTE: Researchers for Jupiter Wreck, Inc. pretty much agree that the ship

being salvaged at Jupiter Inlet since 1987 sank in 1659 and is named *San Miguel el Arcangel*. Following their archival reports pertaining to wrecks in this area of Florida's east coast, we will trace a possible itinerary for the Terra Firma advice ship of that year. How it got to Panamá is not noted in the records so far available to us, but let the voyage begin here:

The viceroy of Peru at that time, Luis Enriquez de Guzmán—Count Alba de Liste—regularly sent reports to the king of Spain via the returning treasure fleets, as did other such high officials in the Spanish New World colonies. If no convoy was available, he saw fit to send an *aviso*, a messenger ship considerably smaller than a galleon, but quite heavily armed for its size. An "advice ship" was normally on the order of 60 feet in length, but any *navio* (ship) could be pressed into service as an *aviso*! In 1659, Alba de Liste had quite a few letters and documents to be delivered to the king, and he dispatched them with his official courier, Juan Ramirez de Miranda. A few small boxes of important papers were placed "in the care of" Ramirez, at least one boldly addressed to the king and others destined for the *Casa de Contratación* (House of Trade). He accompanied the parcels—which had been sealed in waxed cloth, with another layer of

heavy cloth on top of that—from Lima's port city of Callao north to Ciudad de Panamá. From there, all passengers' belongings and goods were carried across the Isthmus by mule train to the Caribbean harbor at Portobelo, the people themselves traveling by horseback or in a cart pulled by some draft animal.

At the "beautiful port," special courier Ramirez sought a suitable small ship for hire and found *San Miguel el Arcangel* available. He made a deal with captain and owner Juan de Ortolaza (variously spelled Ortolara or Ostolassa in the records) to carry him on his mission for the viceroy for 5,100 pesos. The ship's pilot was named Lázaro Sanchez, a resident of Tenerife (Canary Islands). The captain apparently applied for an official "registry" in order to be able to carry passengers and merchandise to

