

Artifacts

In spite of the Spanish efforts to rescue the cargo, many items were left on the wreck. The crew must have been unable to find or to transport many objects. Perhaps they thought some of them were not important enough to save. Hundreds of artifacts came from the wreck of *El Nuevo Constante*. They are unusual because of their variety and their good preservation. Examples include all types of metal and wooden ship fittings and structural parts. Other artifacts are weapons, possessions of the crew and passengers, and cargo.



Annatto Dye

Divers found 19.1 pounds of annatto at the shipwreck. It was in small, dark red blocks. A few were almost brick size, but most were smaller. Marks of straps or bands were on several pieces. Cloth impressions were on some. These marks suggest that the blocks may have been wrapped for transport. No preserved annatto seeds or pods were in the material from *El Nuevo Constante*. However, the impression and molds of many seeds were in several [concretions](#).



Credit: Coastal Environments, Inc.

Buckle

Only a few artifacts were found that came from clothes or personal belongings. This fact suggests that the passengers and crew removed most of their possessions after the ship grounded. Among the few items found is this pewter shoe buckle. During the 1700s, shoe buckles reached their peak in popularity. Their style and quality showed the wealth of the wearer. This buckle is simple in design, so it is possible that a crew member owned it. The buckle is just over 1.5 inches wide.



Cannons, Cannon Balls and Cannon Shot

Three iron cannons and an assortment of ammunition were found at the wreck. The cannons are all about the same size. Cannons of this type usually are called nine-pounders, but the Spanish documents refer to them as eight-pounders. They are 8 feet long and have a muzzle bore diameter of about 4.25 inches. They fired cannon balls weighing about 9 pounds.



Credit: Coastal Environments, Inc.

Ammunition includes several types of shot. The largest of these are three cast iron cannon balls (A). They weigh from 8 to 10 pounds apiece and measure about 4.1 inches in diameter. These were the solid shot used in the eight-pounder cannons. Six smaller-sized balls (B) may have been shot for four-pounder cannons. They are about 2 inches in diameter.

Small iron (C) and lead (D) balls that are 1 to 1.5 inches in diameter came from the ship. They probably were used as grape or canister shot. Grape shot is a cluster of several small balls tied or wrapped with canvas in a bundle. Canister shot refers to small shot enclosed in a wooden or metal canister that burst open upon firing. Generally, lead was used for canister shot while iron was used for grape shot. The cannons recovered from the wreck could have fired both canister and grape shot.



Cowhide

Cowhide is one kind of organic item that survived. Although most of the pieces are tattered, one cowhide is complete, and several others are nearly whole. The complete hide had been folded and stitched around its edges to form a large bag. Stitching holes are about .25 inch apart. The threads have not survived, but their lashing marks are still evident.



Credit: Coastal Environments, Inc.

Ingots

Gold Ingots

Ten pieces of gold from the wreck weigh a total of 50.4 pounds. Most are disk-shaped, and one is an irregularly shaped piece. The disk-shaped ingots were cast by pouring melted gold into shallow circular holes in the ground. Two disks bear the stamps of Roman numerals V and VII. These numbers probably are owner's marks, not related to weight or gold content. Three small, crescent-shaped indentations also are on the flat sides of two of the ingots. The ingots range in diameter from 2.5 inches to 6.1 inches.

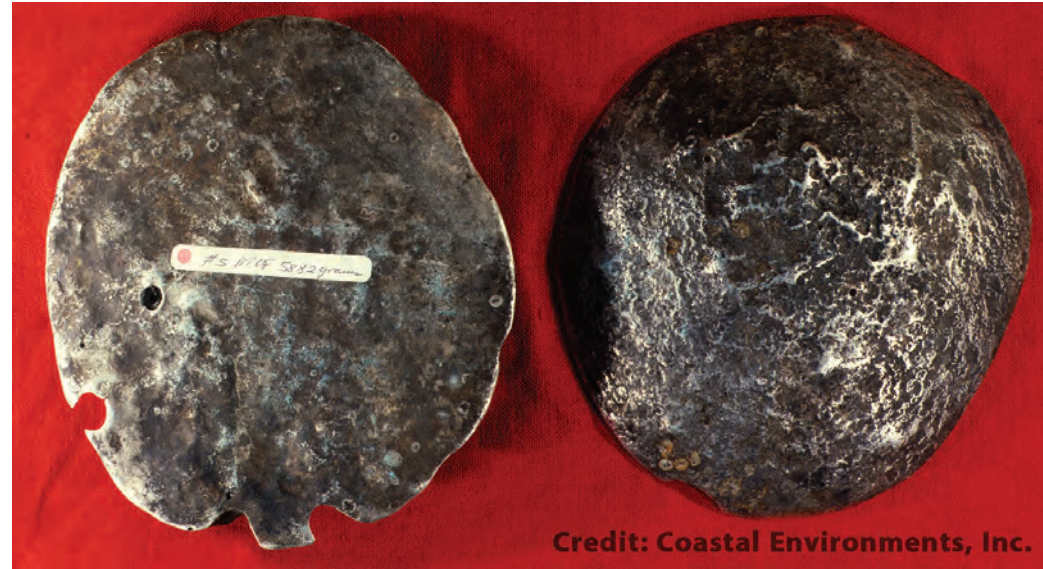
Spanish officials had strict control of precious metals leaving the New World. They normally marked ingots with many insignia, tallies and stamps. The absence of such marks on the gold pieces from *El Nuevo Constante* means that they were not shipped legally. Also, since no gold ingots are on the cargo list, they probably were smuggled on board.



Silver Ingots

Thirty pieces of silver were found on *El Nuevo Constante*. Together, these weigh more than 80 pounds. The silver is mainly in two shapes: flat disks (upper left) and cupcakes (lower left). There are also several irregularly shaped pieces. The Spanish called the disk-shaped ingots “*planchas*.” They were cast in simple, circular molds or in shallow holes in the ground. The six disks of silver weigh more than 62 pounds. Thirteen pieces shaped like cupcakes weigh a total of about 11 pounds. Most of these have rounded or pointed tops, but one has a flat top. The other ingots had irregular shapes. The disk-shaped ingots range in diameter from 4.2 to 8.2 inches, and the cupcake-shaped ingots range from 1.9 to 2.8 inches in diameter.

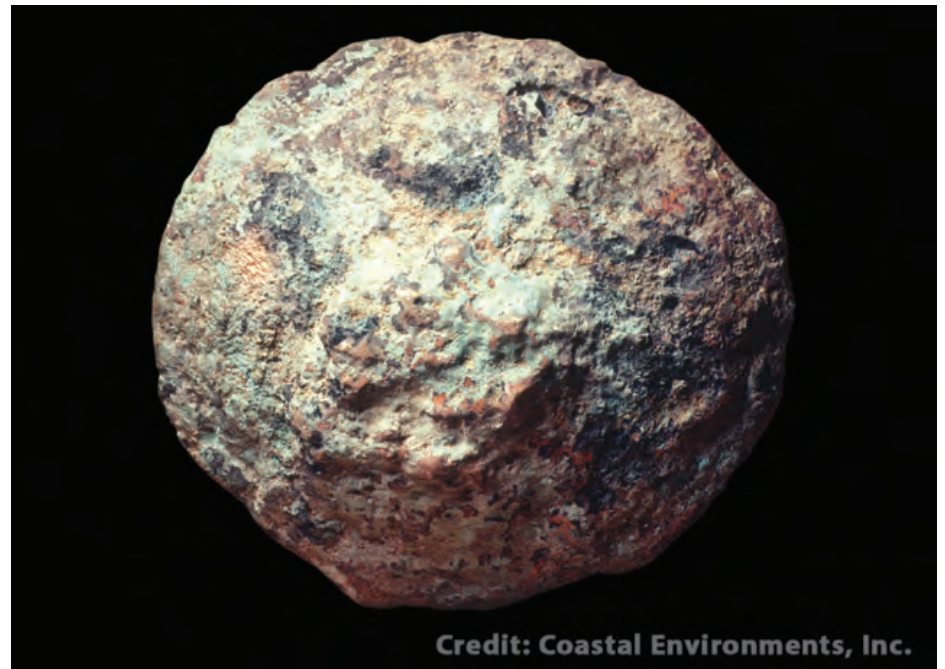
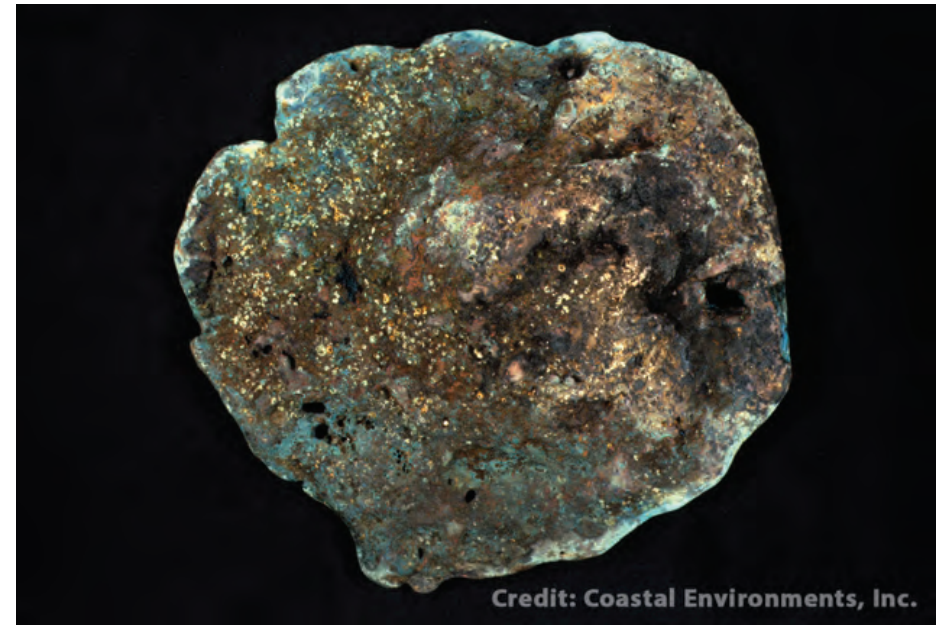
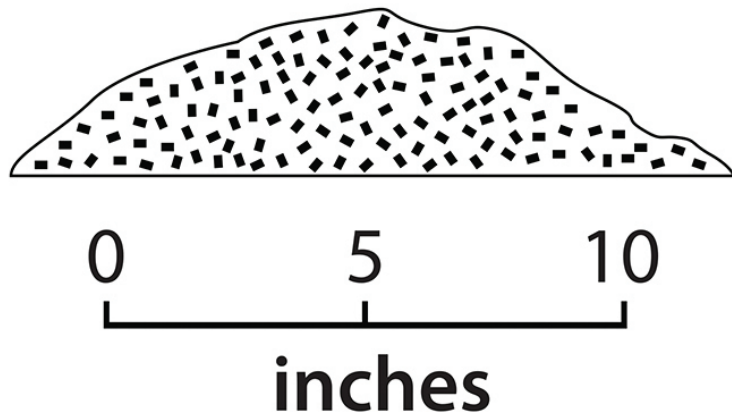
None of the silver has tax stamps or owners’ marks. Furthermore, the historical records did not list silver ingots as cargo on *El Nuevo Constante*. Therefore, it is likely that all of the silver ingots found at the wreck were smuggled out of Mexico. These items probably were hidden in the lower part of the ship. After the wreck, the Spanish could not reach them, and their owners could not safely retrieve them. Spectrometric tests on one piece show it is 91.5 percent silver and 6.4 percent iron, mixed with small amounts of lead and copper.



Copper Ingots

At the wreck, 103 of the original 143 copper ingots were found. They weigh more than 7,000 pounds. These ingots are disks, flat on one side and slightly convex on the other (below). Recovered pieces vary in diameter from 12 to 24 inches. They range in weight from about 24 pounds up to 145 pounds.

The ingots were cast in a process that allowed the molten copper to cool in depressions scooped out of the ground. The upper, flat surfaces show swirls and bubbles formed during pouring and cooling. Many ingots contain small pieces of charred wood from the fire used in processing the copper. Much of the copper probably was stored deep in the holds of the ship, where it served as ballast. Once the vessel grounded, the holds flooded, preventing recovery of the copper.



Logwood Dye

In total, 76 pieces of logwood came from the shipwreck. They average 50 inches long and 5 inches in diameter. Several of the larger logs have small holes cut in one end, to help with lifting. The logwood was well preserved and still able to produce a dark blue dye, even after being under water for more than 200 years.

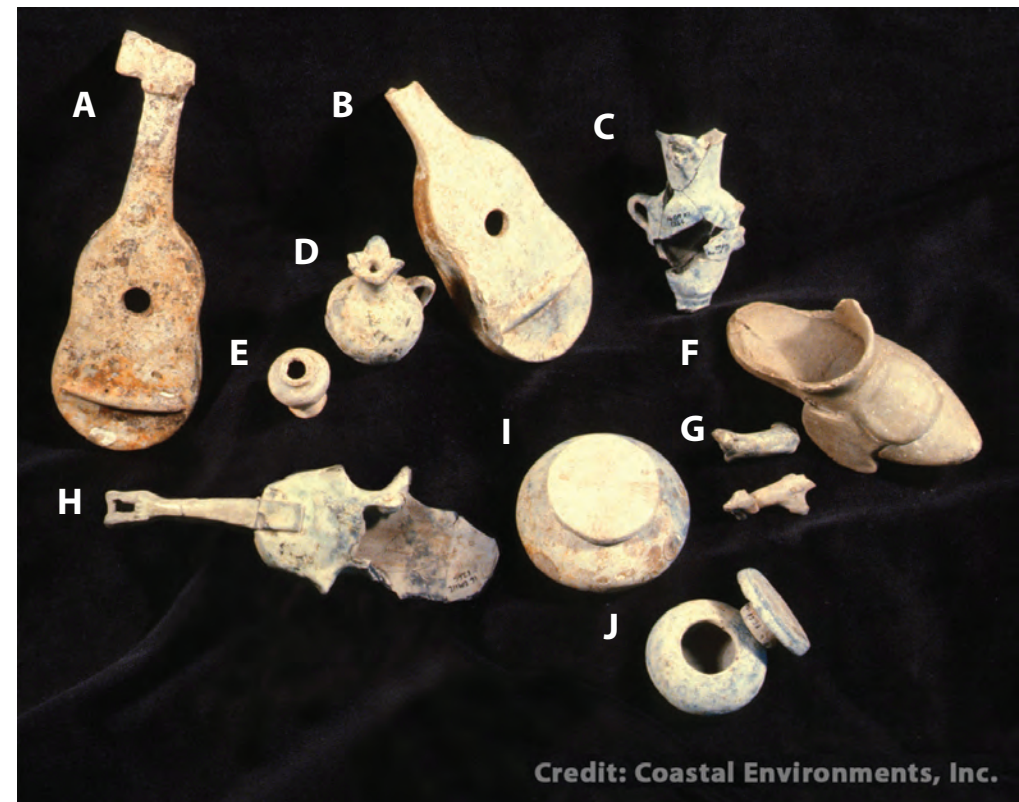


Small Ceramic Objects

Hundreds of fragments of decorative ceramic items and several whole pieces were recovered. The shapes include guitars (A and B), vases (C, D and E), miniature shoes (F), animals (G) and a violin or cello (H). These unusual forms are probably the gift items in the cargo list.

Small, rounded jars with fitted lids (I and J) also were on the wreck. The jars range from 1.7 to 2.7 inches in diameter and from 1 to 1.5 inches tall. These jars may have been the small bowls or pots on the list of cargo. Most of these pieces are gray in color, although some were once hand painted. The faded paint shows that many floral and geometric designs were used.

All these items were called Guadalajara ware, and they probably were made in the village of Tonalá. For scale, the ceramic guitar in the far left corner stands about 5.1 inches tall.



Tableware

Tableware from the wreck includes a pewter plate (top right), pieces of wine glasses, and fragments of several other drinking glasses (bottom right). They are all styles that were popular in Europe by 1750.

Turtle Shell

Excavators recovered 11.3 pounds of Hawksbill turtle shell (below) on the wreck. Cut edges are visible on many pieces, some of which are thin enough to see through. The shell would have been used to make items like snuff boxes, hair combs and frames for eye glasses.

