

# Will they be \$1 million gold pieces?

## Coins found off Vero Beach to be sold



One of the 2 escudos denomination gold coins recovered off Vero Beach in 2015.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS BY NUMISMATIC GUARANY CORPORATION  
The gold coins were struck between 1694 and 1713 in Colombia.

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SPECIAL TO TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS

**INDIAN RIVER COUNTY** — More than 200 Spanish coins that were part of a sunken treasure retrieved off Vero Beach last summer have been authenticated by experts and offered to collectors for sale.

The coins, valued at more than \$1 million, were part of the 1715 fleet that sunk in a hurricane off the coast on July 31, 1715. They were recovered by a contractor working for 1715 Fleet-Queens

Jewels LLC, a historic shipwreck salvage company. The discovery was made in 6 feet of water by diver William Bartlett.

Salvage company co-owner Brent Brisben said the historic, recovered coins were struck by hand in Colombia, Mexico and Peru between 1692 and 1715 during the reigns of Spanish kings Charles II and Philip V. About 224 coins from the 1715 Fleet that Brisben and his team recovered last summer, along

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## Coins

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with 71 other coins from previous discoveries in 2010 and 2013 are part of the current sale.

"It's an exciting time for us," Brisben said. "We've never sold any of the coins we discovered during our significant finds before. I couldn't have dreamed what has happened to us over the past seven years when we first started this business."

On July 31, 2015, the 300th anniversary of the sinking of the 1715 fleet, 350 gold coins, including nine extremely rare, presentation coins called "Royals" were discovered. Some of the coins were

given by the company to its crew members and sub-contractors as their share of the recoveries. All of the large gold "Royals" were privately sold earlier this year to an anonymous collector for approximately \$275,000 each.

John Albanese, whose company Certified Acceptance Corp. of Bedminster, New Jersey, is brokering the sale for Brisben, said about three-fourths of the coins were spoken for as soon as they came to market. Nearly all of the coins are still in mint condition, and the sunken treasure coins have never before been offered for purchase.

"I've handled coins from about four or five shipwrecks in the last 20 years," Albanese said. "In my experience, I have found there are several thousands of people who collect shipwreck coins and

are very anxious to purchase them."

The coins were examined and certified genuine by Numismatic Guaranty Corporation in Sarasota, the world's largest rare coin authentication company. Officials there said there's always interest by collectors and researchers whenever shipwreck coins come on to the market.

"Coinage of the 1715 Fleet offers up rare riches, providing researchers a unique opportunity to study the trade and transport of the day, and gives collectors a chance to acquire a high-grade example of a coin from the golden shipwreck treasure of lore," Numismatic Chairman Mark Salzberg said. "A quantity of uncirculated Spanish gold coins such as these simply does not exist outside of a shipwreck discovery."