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## Spanish Plate Fleet Wrecked off Florida, circa 1960s

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# Photouring Florida

By HAMPTON DUNN



## SPANISH PLATE FLEET WRECKED OFF FLORIDA

By HAMPTON DUNN

WINTER PARK --- Bob Langford, owner of Langford's Hotel here, got excited when he heard about "the Fort Pierce Find." This was the recovery a few years ago of valuable treasure from the site of the sinking of the Spanish Plate Fleet off Cape Canaveral. The hotel owner was one of the first to acquire some of the relics. He placed them on display and changed the name of his dining room to the Anchor Room.

One prized memento .is the anchor (photo) from the wreck of the "La Holandesa," flagship of the fleet.

The fleet of 11 ships was under command of Captain-General Don Juan Esteban de Ubilía, who was commissioned to bring home to Spain millions of dollars of bullion and other treasures that had piled up in the West Indies during the long War of the Spanish Succession. The fleet sailed from Havana, after a delay, on July 27, 1715. Making its way up the Florida coast, the ships on July 31 were suddenly involved in a violent hurricane. All but one of the vessels were dashed onto the reefs between Fort Pierce and Sebastian Inlet. The captain of the La Holandesa, Sebastian Mendez, led a party by foot to notify the Spanish settlement at St. Augustine of the disaster. Mendez testified that although he had sailed many years and suffered through many tempests, he had never seen anything like this hurricane in violence.

Although efforts were made shortly after the wreck to recover the treasures, not much was saved and pirates stole that which was. In 1955, retired builder Kip Wagner spotted a silver "piece of eight" on the beach. Thus began the search which resulted in salvaging great wealth from the Spanish Fleet wreck.

