

4-1-1995

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Jerry Gurulé

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Recommended Citation

Gurulé, Jerry. "Charles E. Pearson and Paul E. Hoffman, The Last Voyage of El Nuevo Constante: The Wreck and Recovery of an Eighteenth-Century Spanish Ship Off the Louisiana Coast." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 4, 2 (1995): 220.
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr/vol4/iss2/8>

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The Last Voyage of El Nuevo Constante: The Wreck and Recovery of an Eighteenth-Century Spanish Ship Off the Louisiana Coast. By Charles E. Pearson and Paul E. Hoffman. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995. xix + 245 pp. Illustrations, tables, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.)

In November of 1979, Curtis Blume was dragging his nets in the waters of the Gulf, not far from the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge in southwestern Louisiana, when he found evidence of what would later prove to be the Spanish shipwrecked vessel, *El Nuevo Constante*. This book is the story of that ship, from its purchase, through its history, its cargo, its wreck, early Spanish salvage efforts, its accidental discovery in 1979, and the archaeological research that also yielded its artifacts.

The authors, Charles E. Pearson and Paul E. Hoffman, have gathered much of their historical materials from archival research in Spain (Archivo General de Indias, Seville), Louisiana (Louisiana Historical Center, Louisiana State Museum, New Orleans), and Mexico (Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico).

The positive identification of the *El Nuevo Constante* was not done through the usual dated artifacts since none existed, but rather it was done first through topographic evidence, such as the use of the word *Constante* or some variant for topographical features in the area. The archival research also detailed the location of the shipwreck. Matching that information with the archaeological data, a positive determination was finally reached.

Specific historical information, recovered artifacts, and archaeological research enumerated in this work insightfully provide the reader with a wealth of data about trade in the Spanish colonial empire of the eighteenth century. The ship's cargo list (a copy of the original and an English translation) and the manifest of the *Constante* provide names of shippers, the cargo, the quantity, and its value. The return cargo often consisted of important trade items such as cochineal and indigo dyes. Descriptions of the cultivation and processing of

indigo and cochineal together with accompanying illustrations depict two particularly successful industries in the Americas.

The archaeological recovery of artifacts is also significant in this book. Among the many items found, the pieces of Guadalajara ceramic ware indicate that these wares were popular articles of trade. Of particular importance were the *zurrones*, the leather storage bags used for cochineal, cacao, and indigo. The recovery touches on a subject given little attention before, but with the quality and quantity of the items recovered in this shipwreck, it seems that a more detailed analysis would have been appropriate. More detailed information on these *zurrones* may have given more information about the cochineal, indigo, and cacao they originally contained since they represented a major part of the cargo of *El Nuevo Constante*.

Although much is known about *El Nuevo Constante* after its purchase in 1764, little is known about her before this date. Originally named the *Duke of York*, she probably was built in England. More historical information would have been helpful to complete her story including more about the owners, Doña Mariana de San Ginés, and her daughter Doña María de San Ginés. More information on Felipe Arzac, agent for the San Ginés family, is also needed since, according to the records, he sailed with the ship, (at least from Cádiz to Veracruz), and he is listed as consignee for a portion of the cargo the *Constante* carried. The fragmentary information supplied in this book suggests his heavy involvement in the major events of this narrative.

This work is certainly a compelling chronicle from all perspectives and contains easily understood and well-documented citations and footnotes. The text communicates the history and the archaeological data, while the tables, charts, and photographs enrich that understanding visually. This is a recommended book for the student and enthusiast of the Spanish colonial era as well as the general reader.

Jerry Gurulé
Spanish Colonial Research Center
University of New Mexico