

Beeswax Wreck Status Report 2008

2008 has been a progressive year for Team Beeswax. Many people have contributed to the further investigation of the shipwreck of a Spanish Manila Galleon cast ashore at near the Nehalem River, Oregon sometime around 1700 AD.

Team Beeswax Returned to the Field in May, 2008.

On May 7 team-members including Scott Williams, Eric Gower, Donna Shefcheck, Ryan Kaas, Jack Peters, Curt Peterson, Jeff Groth, Craig Andies, Ty Gabrowski, Clayton Krause, Vaughn Pipenberg, Don Bufford, Curtis Ebbesmeyer, Dave Ingrahm, Jim Hickey, Mark Beach, Eb Giesecke, Lise Zimmerman, Owen Nichol森, Bill Spurlock, and Lou Scott met at the Nehalem Beach State Park. Dave Wellman flew in to the airport a few hours later.



Mark Beach brought copies of some historic maps of the area to share, Dave Wellman came with survey equipment and others brought their specialized tools as well. Dave Wellman shared his 3D software and viewing of a shipwreck that had been exposed during the winter at Coos Bay, Oregon.

Curt Peterson has been continuing his ground penetrating radar surveys and is gathering substantial data on the tsunami deposit of 1700 AD.

Teams split into various directions over the next few days. Some members investigated areas along either side of the Nehalem Bay to identify and record artifacts as well as hints of 1700 AD tsunami deposits. Others ventured north seeking access to inaccessible coves and rocky shorelines (with varying degrees of success).



Artifacts Investigated this Year

On the way to the beach Rick Rogers and Bill Spurlock paid a visit to Jeff Smith, curator of the *Columbia River Museum* in Astoria, Oregon to look at the artifacts in that collection which are associated with the Beeswax Wreck site. The most interesting piece is a large wooden rigging block. This unique artifact was found near the beach in the late 19th century. The 1986 Archaeological Report by John Woodward showed that it had been radiocarbon dated to around 1640 AD.



A small sliver sample of a wooden disc found wedged in the rocks of Neahkanie by Seaside resident Rick Neuman was submitted to Paleo Research Laboratory and identified as teak wood, suggesting it came from some wrecked vessel. It's age is unknown, however.



One other piece of wood has been loaned to our team by Peter Neketin. It was said to have been found on the Nehalem Spit in the 1930s, and to be part of the Beeswax Wreck. This block of wood is quite dense and hard, seeming almost “petrified”. There are two iron fittings running through it, which do not appear to be of the type we’d expect from a 17th century wreck, but at this point we’re not certain. A sample of this wood was also submitted for identification, but it could not be identified to species or type.



Also in Astoria, at the *Heritage Museum*, is another artifact of interest. They display a block of wax with an owners mark embossed on one side.



Captain Rogers has completed a paper on the [Owners Marks which can be viewed through this link...](#)

A number of samples of wax that had been found in recent years have been donated to our research team, and samples were subjected to pollen and chemical analysis. To our surprise, they all turned out to be modern paraffin or resins, and not beeswax. It just goes to show that there is a lot of junk floating around out in the ocean!

The Porcelain Project



We are very pleased that Jessica Lally has finished her Masters thesis at Central Washington University. She has studied some 1200 sherds that have been gathered by a number of collectors in the Tillamook County area which are curated in a number of collections. Over 300 pieces were gathered in early 2008 after a series of winter storms.



Jessica has observed and studied eleven datable attributes found on the samples and plotted them on a graph that clearly indicates a late 17th century origin for the collection: the design motifs have a mean date of 1686, and Jessica interpreted the collection as representing a time period between 1680-1700, suggesting the vessel that wrecked at Nehalem is the *Santo Cristo de Burgos*.



A number of samples of terracotta or stoneware have also been collected and studies of those artifacts will begin in due time.

The Aquatic Team

The divers boarded a small charter boat in Garibaldi in hopes of diving on a few sites identified during the magnetometer search of September 2007. Unfortunately the ocean would not cooperate and the vessel was unable safely navigate the Garibaldi Bar due to late season surf and rising winds.



Persistent in their desire to get wet, the dive team proceeded to Short Sands Beach and entered a sea-cave at low tide to discover maritime debris and as well as one sherd of porcelain. They then entered the surf zone for a shoreline survey.



Community Outreach

A number of public presentations have been made this year. Eb spoke about the project at the Tillamook Public Library and Scott gave a talk to a standing room only crowd at the Nehalem Bay Historical Society in May, Washington Archaeology Week in Olympia in October, and to the Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society in January. Rick has spoken before the Society for Hawaiian Archaeology and elsewhere.



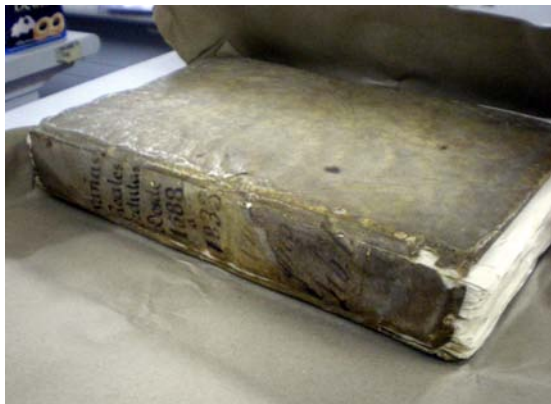
Oregon Public Broadcasting filmed the crew throughout the week in preparation for a special that aired in late 2008. Portland's *Channel 8 News* also came out and did a short piece for the Sunday Evening News. The *History Detectives* is preparing a piece to run on PBS stations sometime in 2009.



Archival Research

Team members have been looking at a number of resources for more information. Eb Giesecke has located mapping and other 19th century survey data that may offer a location hint. His work continues to provide our primary historical data.

Jeff Groth has been preparing the historic maps and survey data to be compiled into a GIS program that will display various data sets as overlays.



Rick Rogers has completed a review of the documents held in the archives at Manila in the Philippines. A number of documents mentioning the both of the probable shipwrecks, The *Santo Cristo de Burgos*, missing since 1693 and the *San Francisco Xavier* of 1705 were located and photocopied. Scott is working on collating historical sightings of the wreck into a master table.

The Magnetometer Survey

In September, 2008 a small team gathered to conduct a marine magnetometer survey offshore of the entire Nehalem Spit up to Falcon Rock. Sheldon Breiner and Jim Larrick flew up from San Francisco with a *Geometrics 388 Cesium Marine Magnetometer*. Dave Wellman flew them to Tillamook while Rick and Jeff drove to Garibaldi with the equipment. Jim Hickey and Scott served as ground crew, while Jack Peters and Craig Andies assisted Frank Bohannon aboard the finest research vessel in Garibaldi.



The *Cape Falcon* proved to be the perfect platform to serve for the survey. The weather could not have been better. The team ran three lanes and gathered good clean data. Sheldon is confident that he will be able to process the data in such a manner as to provide the dive team with probable dive sites by next summer's dive season.