

The background of the cover is a deep blue underwater scene. In the upper right, a diver is seen from behind, swimming upwards towards the surface. In the lower right, another diver is visible, illuminated by a bright light source, possibly a flashlight. On the left side, the dark, skeletal remains of a shipwreck are visible, including what appears to be a ladder or part of the hull. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and adventurous.

Larry Verstraete

LOST TREASURES

True Stories of Discovery

By the author of the
Silver Birch Award winner
Survivors!



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Larry Verstraete

LOST TREASURES

True Stories of Discovery

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— treasures one and all*

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Introduction

Kip Wagner spotted it while walking along a shell-strewn Florida beach. Sue Hendrickson's looked like an ordinary chunk of rock. Ten-year-old Bingham Bryant's was gathering dust in his school library.

Treasure means different things to different people. It comes in many forms and shapes, and is just waiting to be discovered. What is considered valuable, rare or of great worth varies from one person to the next.

For Kip Wagner a few silver coins washed up along the beach led to the discovery of a fleet of sunken Spanish galleons — and a treasure worth millions.

Sue Hendrickson's strange rock was actually a fossil vertebra, part of a huge *T. Rex* skeleton, the largest ever found. Today Sue, the dinosaur, stands on display in the Field Museum in Chicago where Sue, the paleontologist, can visit the skeleton that was named after her in recognition of her find.

Bingham Bryant discovered a long-lost masterpiece that had been sitting on a bookcase in his school for decades, unnoticed and unappreciated. It sold at auction for more than \$600,000.

Have *you* ever dreamed of finding treasure? Have you imagined yourself stumbling across something rare or valuable that has been abandoned, forgotten, misplaced or overlooked by others? From pirate booty and exotic coins to rare fossils and lost artworks, the lure of treasure is irresistible.

In this book, you will read about great treasure hunts, follow treasure hunters on their quests, discover where their treasures are on display, and learn some treasure-hunting secrets along the way. So get ready for adventure.

And on the way, look for this icon:



It will tell you where the treasure is located, or the museum where it now resides.

Many Kinds of Treasure

Treasure has many meanings and takes many forms — from ancient coins to rare stamps to pirate gold. Here are some treasure terms you'll find in the book:

antiquity: an object dating from ancient times

artifact: an object made by a human being

booty: seized or stolen valuables; plunder

cache: a hidden store of things, usually weapons or valuables

collectible: an object that is collected for pleasure or profit, such as a stamp or coin

gem: a precious stone

hoard: a pile of hidden valuables

masterpiece: an exceptional creative work, such as a film, sculpture or painting

mint condition: description for a used object that is in new or perfect condition

motherlode: a vein or streak of gold or other precious metal in the earth's crust

nugget: a lump of gold or other precious metal in its natural state

piece of eight: a silver coin used in Spain and its colonies between 1500 and 1800

trove: valuable items that have been deliberately hidden by someone who intended to recover them later

Chapter 1

PIRATE TREASURE

In Their Own Words

"I realized that Bellamy's bones could literally be under my fingers. With every thrust into the sand, I reached for the lid to a coffin."

Barry Clifford, describing his chilling search for the Whydah, a sunken pirate ship

"It doesn't matter what others believe. I'm convinced, and that's enough for me to carry on."

Dan Blankenship, determined Oak Island treasure hunter

"Bill found the first coin on the site. He became so excited that he screamed and spat out his regulator."

Diver Haig Jacobs on finding the wreck of the Santa Maria de la Consolacion and her treasure

"The path that must be followed to find my treasure," Captain Kidd, 1691

Message on a map found hidden in a wooden chest belonging to Hubert Palmer



Chapter 1 ~ PIRATE TREASURE



*Expedition Whydah Sea Lab & Learning Center,
Provincetown, Massachusetts*

The Search for Black Sam's Treasure

All his life Barry Clifford had heard stories of Sam Bellamy and his ship, the Whydah. He dreamed of finding the pirate's lost ship and its vast treasure. He dreamed of solving a mystery 250 years in the making.

April 26, 1717

Black Sam Bellamy, the pirate captain, scoured the Atlantic Ocean with a watchful eye. A monster storm was brewing. All the signs were there. Dark clouds swirling along the horizon. White-crested waves pounding the hull, spewing water over the deck. Gusts of wind attacking the sails. The ship's masts groaning and creaking under the pressure. The storm was almost upon them.

Bellamy knew he and his crew had to steer clear of the shoreline, with its hidden sandbars and shallow beaches. He ordered his ship, the *Whydah*, into deeper waters and signalled the four other ships in his fleet to do the same.

The *Whydah* was Bellamy's pride. Sleek and sturdy, capable of great speed, it made an ideal pirate ship. For months, Bellamy and his fleet had sailed the ocean, outrunning other vessels, capturing them, plundering their treasures. Now, heavy with gold and silver from at least 53 vessels, the ships were heading north, returning home to Cape Cod, a spit of land near Boston, Massachusetts. It was time to divide

***Men and treasure
poured into the
swirling ocean.
The broken ship
disappeared,
swallowed
completely by
sand and sea.***



the treasure, repair the ships and plan the next move.

Sam Bellamy had another reason to get to Cape Cod — Maria Hallett.

Maria was the love of Bellamy's life. They made a fine match. He in his twenties, ruggedly handsome, wild and care-free. She only sixteen, a beauty with flowing hair and sparkling blue eyes.

Bellamy knew that Maria was waiting for him.

But the storm came sooner than expected, and Bellamy could not escape it fast enough. Tossed by wild winds, pounded by waves three storeys high, the *Whydah* was pushed to shore, thrust against a sandbar stern first and smashed by a wall of water. Its sails and masts collapsed, and the ship rolled on its side. Cannons snapped from their mounts, knocked out support beams and plunged through the deck, crushing sailors and pinning them to the wreck.

A mountainous wave pulverized the hull, splitting it in two, cracking it wide open. Men and treasure poured into the swirling ocean. The broken ship disappeared, swallowed completely by sand and sea.

The crew never had a chance. Most drowned. A few hung on, only to be crushed when the ship rolled on its side. Of the 146 pirates aboard, just 2 survived.

For days after the storm, bodies littered the beach, washed ashore along with broken timber and lost cargo. Broken-hearted Maria Hallett walked the coastline, examining each bloated body, checking to see if any was her beloved Sam.

She never found him. Black Sam Bellamy was dead, swept away and lost to the sea.



More than 250 years later . . .

From the time he was a young boy growing up in Mas-



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Massachusetts, Barry Clifford was fascinated by tales of the *Whydah*. The ship had disappeared almost in his backyard. According to Thomas Davis, one of the surviving pirates, its cargo included 180 bags of gold and silver stored in chests below deck. By some accounts, the treasure was worth millions.

To Clifford, a diver, the *Whydah*'s story was tragic and sad, but also full of exciting possibilities. He dreamed of finding the lost ship.

Many warned Clifford that it was useless to even try. The region where the wreck occurred was treacherous, they said. A graveyard of lost ships. The water was cold, deep and criss-crossed by wild currents. The sands were shifting, thin as soup in places. Objects trapped on the ocean bottom often disappeared without a trace.

Besides, people liked to add, hadn't others already tried to find the *Whydah* and failed? People like Cyprian Southack, a map-maker and sea captain who had arrived on the scene barely a week after the *Whydah* tragedy. Sent by the governor of Massachusetts, he was charged with salvaging the wreck and its booty. Looters had already picked through the remains, plucking what they could from the sea. Southack did his own search, carefully combing the shoreline, questioning local residents for leads to the missing treasure. After nine days of trying, he gave up. There was little left to find. Southack gathered his charts and maps, packed his bags and scurried home.

Barry Clifford knew of Southack and his failed venture. He also knew of a map drawn by Southack that showed the coastline at the time of the disaster. On the map, near the town of Billingsgate, Southack had written: "The treasure ship *Whido* lost." The map gave Clifford hope. He was sure the *Whido*, or *Whydah*, was still out there.

Clifford compared Southack's drawings to modern aerial photographs of the area. Wind and water had eroded the coast-



line since the tragedy. Billingsgate no longer existed. The wreck of the *Whydah*, if it had survived at all, was likely no longer in the spot Southack had indicated.

The map gave Clifford hope. He was sure the Whido, or Whydah, was still out there.

Clifford reread Southack's letters and journals, noting names of towns and places; carefully, he charted these points with coloured pins on a large wall map. The cluster of pins was a start, the beginning of a search pattern. To find the *Whydah*, though, Clifford needed to explore below the waterline.

In 1982 he obtained a permit from the Massachusetts Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources. He chartered a boat and, with the help of friends, headed out to sea towing a magnetometer over the area suggested by the pins on the map. The magnetometer, an instrument that detects magnetic shifts from iron beneath the water, would help to locate anchors, bells, cannons and other traces of the doomed ship.

Using the magnetometer readings, Clifford created a more detailed map of the search area. There were hundreds of points, a multitude of possible locations. Were any of these the *Whydah*? There was only one way to find out — send divers below to investigate. That, Clifford knew, would take a lot of time and money.

In 1983 Clifford pitched his idea to a number of businessmen. He told the story of Black Sam and Maria Hallett, of the lost ship and the immense treasure that lay below the sea. Would you like to be part of history? he asked. Part of the team that finds the *Whydah* and her riches? In a short time, Clifford had a group of investors to back his search.

With the investors' money, he bought a research vessel and equipped it with the latest diving equipment. Then he hired a



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crew and, armed with his maps, set out to sea to investigate the strongest hits pinpointed by the magnetometer.

The task was daunting. The dive season was short, only a few months long, and the sea was often unruly. Waves rocked the boat, twisting lines and churning the stomachs of the crew onboard. There were hundreds of sites to investigate, and by the end of the summer only a handful had been searched. Money was dwindling quickly and frustration was high.

During the winter Clifford reviewed his research, looking for hidden clues and missed opportunities. The next year the search continued, again with little success. The crew located other wrecks, but not the *Whydah*. The investors were growing restless, and Clifford fought to keep their spirits alive. The *Whydah* was out there, lurking in the sand, he argued. Sam Bellamy had walked upon its decks, ordered its immense sails unfurled, led its crew to attack, and now the pirate ship and its great treasure was calling to them, waiting to be found.

In the spring of 1984, the crew resumed the search. Clifford felt that, in a strange way, Sam Bellamy was with them, guiding the hunt. Bellamy's body had never been found, his fate never determined. Yet Clifford often dreamed of the pirate captain and felt his presence at every turn.

Each night Clifford reread Southack's journal and studied his maps, hoping to uncover new information. "I realized that Bellamy's bones could literally be under my fingers," Clifford wrote in his book *Expedition Whydah*. "With every thrust into the sand, I reached for the lid to a coffin."

Once a diver came to the surface holding something cylindrical and heavy — a bomb. The site, they soon realized, was a dump site for discarded weapons and ammunition from soldiers practising manoeuvres and anti-aircraft drills during World War II.



On the afternoon of July 19, the crew headed to a spot about 460 metres from shore, a site that had been mapped earlier. The readings weren't the strongest there, but they had been consistent and frequent. It was getting late in the day, and a storm was brewing. Dark clouds swirled along the horizon. Thunder rumbled across the sky. Clifford shivered. He remembered the story of the day the *Whydah* went down. It must have been like this, he thought.

Divers searched the ocean floor. Within ten minutes, they surfaced. "We've found something . . . a big piece of iron," they reported.

Lightning flashed. The sky was growing darker.

One diver went back under and resurfaced in minutes, his face breaking into a huge grin. "A cannon!" he shouted.

Within seconds the sea was awash with divers, all of them



A diver searches the ocean floor for wreckage from the *Whydah*.



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anxious to see the find for themselves. Clifford jumped in, too. About 6 metres below the surface, he spotted three heavily encrusted cannon muzzles poking through the sand. Then he found other objects, some round, the size of baseballs, others oblong and larger. All of them were covered with centuries of heavy sediment and residue. Clifford pried a grapefruit-sized object loose and hauled it to the surface. Using his knife, he picked away at the crust.

As streaks of lightning blazed across the sky and drops of rain pelted the boat, Clifford realized what he was holding. “A cannonball,” he said.

But there was something else, too. A flat object, small and round. Clifford rubbed the sand away. It was a blackened silver coin. A date was stamped on it: 1684.

The sky was black now, the rain coming down in heavy sheets. To Clifford it was as if Sam Bellamy were there, speaking to them, congratulating them on their find.

That night Clifford couldn’t sleep. “I stared at the ceiling,” he wrote, “half expecting Samuel Bellamy to appear like a genie from a bottle and give me a salute.”

For the rest of that season and all of the next, the team dived again and again, hauling up hundreds of gold and silver coins. They also recovered gold bars, pistols, pewter plates, dishes and navigational equipment. Each artifact was carefully catalogued, cleaned and preserved.

Some finds were more chilling than others.

Beside a cannon they found a leg bone along with a leather shoe and a white stocking. It was an eerie reminder of the past, of the ship’s terrible end and the fate of the people who had once walked upon its decks.

The site was rich in treasure, and it was obvious that Clifford and his crew had made a significant find. But was this

***Beside a
cannon
they found
a leg bone.***



really the *Whydah*, or was it some other warship? More proof was needed.

In September 1985 they got it. Lying on its side, half buried in sand near a cannon, they found a ship's bell. When the crust was loosened and peeled away, they discovered evidence no one could deny. The bell was engraved *The Whydah Gally 1716*.

This was Sam Bellamy's ship, and this was his plundered treasure.

The *Whydah*'s treasure has been valued at over \$400 million. Although more than one hundred thousand artifacts have been recovered, divers still explore the site. Rather than sell the artifacts they discovered, Clifford and his investors opened a museum. At the Expedition *Whydah* Sea Lab & Learning Center in Provincetown, Massachusetts, visitors can see the *Whydah* bell, coins, bones retrieved from the wreck and weapons such as cannons, cannonballs and muskets. For Barry Clifford, the thrill of the hunt continues. He has been involved in searches for



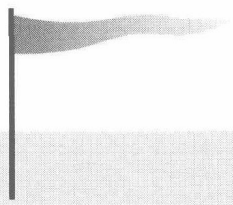
Barry Clifford with pieces of eight salvaged from the *Whydah*.



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other sunken ships, but the *Whydah* holds a special place for him. “Even though I have searched for sunken ships all over the world, I am always drawn back to the *Whydah*. I continue to search for everything that will tell me the whole story.”

Perhaps Clifford is not alone in his search. Locals claim that on windswept nights, when the waves crash upon the Cape, they can sometimes hear the ghost of Maria Hallett wailing above the din as she combs the shore looking for her lost love, Black Sam Bellamy.



Treasure Tips

Tales of treasure are everywhere. Perhaps even in your own neighbourhood!

Some stories of lost treasure go back only a generation or two. The memory of the event may still be fresh in the minds of people who lived at the time. With a few well-placed questions, some patience and an eagerness to listen, it might be possible for you to unravel the tale.

Tom Michalski, an American diver and dive shop owner, is a treasure hunter who knows how to dig into the past. For thirty years, Michalski has researched tales of lost treasure around Lake Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. By carefully listening to people's stories, he has been able to track down and recover heaps of treasure at the bottom of the lake, including, among other things, sixteen shipwrecks, five cars and mounds of antique bottles, dishes, guns, watches and wedding rings.