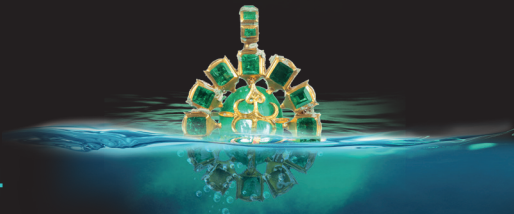


allenXPRESS

Newsletter of Allen Exploration 4
September 2024

ALLEN^X
EXPLORATION

allenexploration.com



Newsletter 4

Captain's Log
Hunting New Wrecks

On the Banks
X Marks the Spot

Find of the Month
Gold of the 'Orient'

CAPTAIN'S LOG

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As always happens when the end of the exploration season approaches, the finds start to hot up. We've been chasing in and out of the *Maravillas* scatter trail, along the flank of the western Little Bahama Bank, as the weather allows.

Allen Exploration is on the trail of two major targets right now. The first is the scatter trail left behind when the *Maravillas'* sterncastle broke up and blew away.

This narrow area of south-running finds is still giving up iron ship's hull spikes, silver coins and a small silver ingot. The lighter finds have been scattered to the four winds by the howling winds and waves out here.

While pottery is the most common type of artifact on virtually every archaeological site on land and underwater, it's slim pickings along the *Maravillas'* scatter trail. But other heavyweight discoveries include a small and large grinding stone that would have been used for grinding grain and herbs to prepare the crew's meals on the *Maravillas'* forecastle.

AllenX's second target is the so-called 'Genovees' shipwreck, a later 17th-century true mystery that you can read about in this issue of *AllenXPRESS*. There's some confusion about what ship this may or may not be. Either way, it's a fascinating story whose discovery would be scientifically stunning.



Carl Allen heads offshore

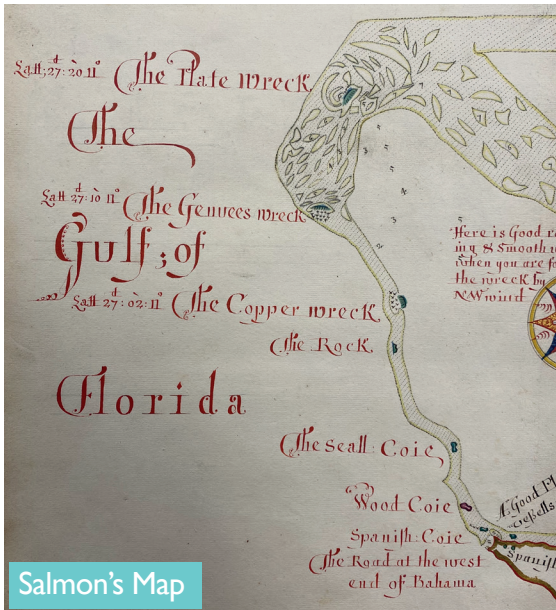


Carl & Gigi Allen in The Bahamas

While we search, this month we've discovered three iron anchors, one relatively modern wreck in the form of hatch covers and two new wreck sites strewn with piles of ballast, concreted rigging and hull fittings. Who knows what secrets are hidden among them? If the weather holds, we might be able to start their investigation. The dream continues, right here, right now.

Carl Allen

ON THE BANKS



A huge anchor surfaces near the Maravillas



Down by the western Little Bahama Bank, the patience game following the *Maravillas*' southern scatter trail continues. The couple of anchors discovered are too late in date to be linked to the Spanish galleon. One is 20th-century and another an Admiralty design of the 19th century. A third found southwards, with V-shaped arms, is intriguing. It could date as early as 1700.

While the systematic survey of the *Maravillas*' scatter trail goes on, AllenX is starting to search for an enigmatic wreck known as the Genovees. This ship first appeared in history as lost off the western Little Bahama Bank in a color map drafted by Charles Salmon, who sailed with William Phips on the *Rose* in search of treasure wrecks to salvage in the northern Bahamas. Salmon was mainly an observer for the English Treasury, but left behind an invaluable and unique map of the area, which he drew in the Spring of 1684. The high-quality chart shows three wrecks along the western flank of the Little Bahama Bank: the Plate Wreck to the north, a Copper Wreck to the south and,

DID YOU KNOW?

On top of treasure listed in cargo manifests, Spanish galleons carried vast amounts of contraband in the 17th and 18th centuries. The *Maravillas* officially transported 506 silver bars and 82,220 pieces of eight. But between just 1656 and 1678, Spanish salvors brought up 727 large silver bars and 345 small ones (total 1,072 ingots), as well as over 151,000 silver coins. At least 100% more treasure and valuables were smuggled on the *Maravillas* than was legally sanctioned. In Latin America, illegal trading was said to be “so commonplace that it was virtually the original sin in those parts.” Some Spanish ships, crews and merchants managed to hide a staggering 8 million pesos worth of goods from Madrid.



The Axis works the Maravillas

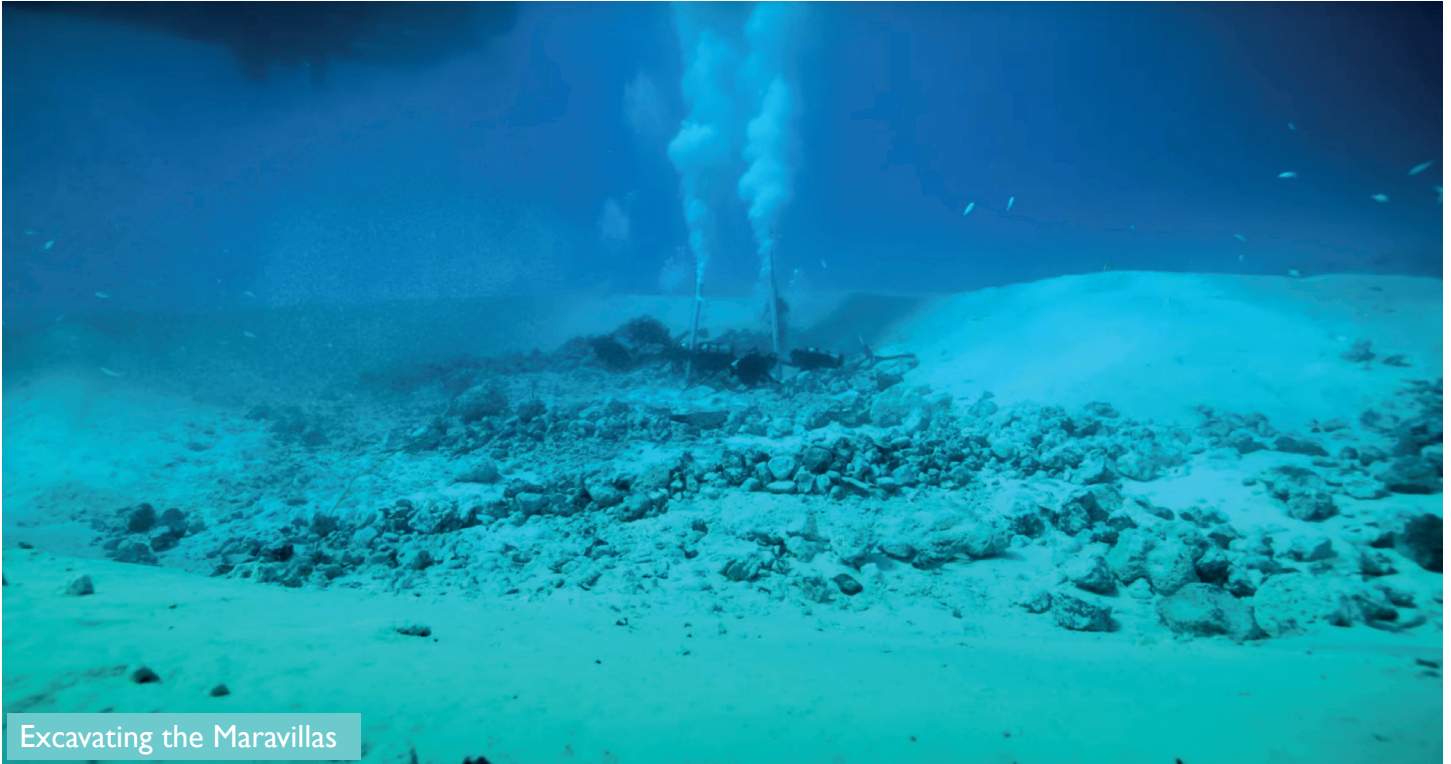
in between them, the ‘Genvees’. While the Plate Wreck is the *Maravillas*, the true names of the other two were already lost to memory by 1684.

The mystery gets deeper when later maps – beginning in 1771 with Thomas Jefferys, map maker to King George III – started labelling landmarks in the same area as the Genoa Bar and Dutch Wreck Bar, both north of Memory Rock. Genoa sounds very similar to the Genvees mapped in the preceding century. Both surely relate to the same great maritime republic of Genoa in modern Italy.

While there are conflicting accounts of what

ships really sank in this area, AllenX believes this wreck was a Dutch ship owned by an Italian merchant and that it was returning to Europe with payment for delivering a cargo of enslaved Africans to the Dutch island of Curacao. Throw into the mix another mystery map with an X marking the spot where this ship was lost, and this is an enigma that AllenX is excited to crack.

The truth is out there, but the only way to unlock the mystery is to dive and ground-truth whatever may survive under at least 10 feet of sand. The search goes on.



Excavating the Maravillas

THIS TIME IN HISTORY

In September 1742, John Sibbald and William Dowall on a Philadelphia privateer seized two Spanish royal prizes and brought them into Nassau's Vice Admiralty Court. The haul was worth 150,000 pieces of eight, not to mention private goods of quicksilver and wine valued at 30,000 more. Spanish delegates bought back the largest Crown ship in exchange for 40 chests of silver coins – 90,000 pieces of eight – and a dozen English prisoners. Meanwhile, the privateer's crew “were encouraged on shore with rioting and drinking, thereby to run them into debt.”



Silver coins surface



Hatches from a newly discovered wreck

FIND OF THE MONTH

Nothing has amazed AllenX's crew among the glittering jewelry it's been fortunate to find from the wreck of the *Maravillas* than one special discovery. Quite a few gold chains have turned up off the western Little Bahama Bank but an 887-gram chain, 176 centimeters long and made up of 80 flat circular links attached to tubular links, left everyone who touched the chain astounded.

The heavy gold chain was discovered by Kenton Dickerson southeast of the *Maravillas'* main ballast pile in a hot spot where a gold pendant, emerald and gold Order of Santiago pendant and gold coins had also turned up. Kenton had dived 25 feet down but surfaced almost instantly, out of breath and asking for a recovery bucket. Half of the chain was exposed on the seabed. "It was just so much to take in all at once," team diver Adam Treco remembers. "That trip was one of the coolest. Nothing's topped it, it was surreal."

For a top-end luxury, gold chains are surprisingly common on the wrecks of Spanish galleons in the Americas. They're commonly believed to have been used as an alternative currency to escape the Crown bean counters chasing royal taxation: wearing valuables made it untaxed private property. The extraordinary quality of the *Maravillas* chain's goldwork makes it impossible to believe



Exquisite golden chain from the *Maravillas*.

that merchants would pluck apart art like this to pay for goods. For that purpose, simple round links would have been far better suited. The *Maravillas'* jewelry is richly decorative art, not part of the Spanish monetary economy.

The best thinking by AllenX's archaeologists and art historians sources the artwork's manufacture to far away Manila, the 'Place of the Water Lilies' in the Philippines. When Spanish conquistadors landed there in 1565, gold was everywhere,

THIS TIME IN HISTORY

On September 27, 1514, Queen Joanna the Mad gave adventurer Ponce de León, the Don of Florida and Bimini, the rights to enslave the region's Indigenous people in a new colony of 500 settlers – excluding foreigners, Jews and anyone condemned by the Inquisition. Every settler was entitled to seize 80 Native Americans as servants and as his property.



Carl Allen tries for size the Maravillas' gold chain

from the rulers' golden teeth to jewelry. A Spanish government official from Mexico City wrote how in Manila around the peoples' necks were "gold necklaces like spun wax, and with links, as in the European fashion..." When Spain started searching, they found abundant gold from rivers to mining tunnels lit with pine-wood torches.

Manila was an impressive city of 600 houses with beautifully laid out streets, a large plaza, cathedral, government buildings like a "splendid palace" and a jail. The river was flanked by country houses, "some very costly, and all very convenient and pleasant, with gardens, orchards, and baths."

The city was also the emporium of the Indies, where merchants bought gold, pearls, amber, civet cats' perfume, sugar, indigo, tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, cacao and coconuts. China sent 20 to

30 junks to the Philippines a year stacked with oranges, chestnuts and plums, silk, velvet, gold and silver cloth, porcelain, pearls and saltpeter. At its peak, 51 tons of Chinese goods were unloaded in Manila a year.



A similar chain to the Maravillas' in a painting by A. de Pereda, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



Gold chains on citizens of Manila

DID YOU KNOW?

The vast majority of ships wrecked off the northern Bahamas did not carry treasure, but transported goods needed for everyday life and comfort. And the vast majority no longer survives underwater. Lost cargoes ranged from apples and bananas to bread and butter, candles, coffee, cotton, fish and ham. Especially delicate cargoes we only know about from written accounts include ice, mail, Panama hats, pickles cigars and tea. In harsh marine environments like off the Little Bahama Bank, all these types of cargo quickly deteriorated. You can only learn about them from written accounts hidden in newspapers and archives.

Spanish Manila galleons sailing from the Philippines to Acapulco in Mexico were officially allowed to carry goods valued at 300,000 pesos in the early 18th century. Throughout the 140 years of the Manila galleon trade, however, none set out with cargoes of less than a million pesos in value, triple the authorized limit. An important part of those dubious exports were fancy gold chains and jewelry sold at Acapulco and finally shipped to Cadiz as personal wealth owned by merchants and passengers.

On land, the stunning artistic output that connected China, the Philippines, Mexico and Spain has faded from memory. At the end of the consumer line, you can still see gold chains proudly worn in finely painted portraits of nobility and royalty from Spain to the Netherlands and Germany. The same elaborate chain has pride of place in a 1630s painting by Antonio de Pereda on display today in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

But if you want to see and handle the real thing, you'll have to go diving on a treasure shipwreck like the *Maravillas* off the northern Bahamas, explore the deep and hope to get lucky. The chain is now on display in The Bahamas Maritime Museum in Freeport, Grand Bahama.

THIS TIME IN HISTORY

By a royal proclamation signed by King George III in September 1783, the English Crown decided to buy the strategic Bahamas from the Lords Proprietors. The island's governor was authorized to offer 40 acres of unoccupied land to the heads of families, and 20 acres to every white or Black man, wife and child in a family in return for a rent of 2 shillings for every 100 acres.

MEET THE TEAM

Adam Treco

AllenX core dive team member Adam Treco, born and raised in Freeport on Grand Bahama Island, has lived around the ocean all his 24 years. He started snorkeling aged five, has always spearfished and got his open-water Scuba certificate at ten years old when he was already diving 100 feet down.

Inspired by the adventures of Mel Fisher on the 1622 Spanish fleet off Key West, aged 15 he asked his mother for an underwater metal detector. He never got it but knew there was plenty of interesting finds off The Bahamas. His father, a local fisherman who runs the *Lil B* local fishing charter, knew of wreckage and kept some old pottery in the family house. "So, it wasn't foreign for me to hear about sunken treasure," says Adam.

With a captain's license from the age of 17, Adam's first job out of high school was straight onto the ocean as a harbor captain. After working in



Adam lands a silver coin



Adam (left) & Ronaldo Carey with silver coins from the Maravillas



Freeport harbor for years, Hurricane Dorian swept in and then Covid shut life down. Everyone was stuck at home. Then Adam heard that AllenX was looking for talented divers. His instant answer when asked if he wanted to go wreck hunting was yes. Adam met AllenX's Kenton Dickerson at Freeport dock the next day and was told the *Sea Trepid* was leaving in an hour. "Can you make it?" he was asked. Adam grabbed a bag and was off to the Little Bahama Bank.

The newcomer was itching to get going, ready to be thrown in at the deep end. "Funnily enough they wouldn't let us dive for three or four days. We were begging to get in the water," Adam explains. But Kenton insisted on properly showing the new arrivals the ropes before being let loose on sunken wreckage.

Eventually, after a long day of crystal-clear seas watching Carl and Gigi Allen diving and restricted to helping move the boats, Adam begged Kenton to let him take a quick dive. It was a safe place to start out, a sterile area where nothing had been found all day. "We started diving around the seabed, looking at the sand berms that Kenton had tipped us off about checking. It was so cool and fascinating," Adam remembers.

It didn't take long for Adam to come across a small piece of green glass. "Nobody had even mentioned emeralds to us," Adam says. There was something about the find, so he held it tight in his fingers for the rest of the 15-minute dive. When he met up with his dive buddy Tom, who'd started with AllenX on the same day, he'd found an historical clay smoking pipe too. "We were freaking out about the pipe but topside, when I asked Kenton about the glass, he roared in delight. At that moment I was heavily hooked. This is it, I told myself."

It wasn't beginner's luck. On another day, when the weather was murky and the sea a bit rough, AllenX was working about a quarter of a mile southeast of the *Maravillas'* main ballast pile finding a whole lot of nothing. "Towards the end of the day, my buddy, Ronaldo Carey, popped in and landed right on top of two gold coins," Adam says.

"I started looking at a ledge running across the seabed, hoping to find something snagged there. Before long, there was a big gold pendant with an elaborate design on its back," Adam adds. "I didn't think it was real. It took my breath away. I shot up to the surface as fast as I could, thinking about the last person to touch it when the *Maravillas* went down in 1656." The pendant turned out to be a rare piece of jewelry once owned by a knight of the Order of Santiago (St James).



Another of Adam's favorite finds couldn't be more different. It turned up a few miles east of the *Maravillas*, and 40 miles from land, when the team was checking magnetometer targets. Adam remembers diving on the hit and being stunned to find "a tree stump, big enough to put your arms round, growing out of the bedrock. It's one of the coolest finds I like to see because it really makes you wonder how long ago there was a forest growing out there. I think about it



Silver Maravillas coins before & after conservation.

a lot and have a theory that the entire Little Bahama Bank was once land from here to Abaco."

As for the future, Adam's desperate to get back to Gorda Cay where AllenX has found ballast, silver coins, a gold coin and a silver ingot lost on the *Madama de Brasil* salvage ship that sank in 1657 while recovering treasure from the *Maravillas*. With little traffic and well sheltered, its perfect clear waters are "one of the coolest places I've ever dived," Adam says.

"I love the AllenX vision," Adam ends. He went to government school on Grand Bahama Island where

nothing about the sea and its history was taught. When Adam told his friends what he did for a living, they didn't believe him because they couldn't

fact check his stories. "You have no proof," they'd say.

"What's really sad is that a lot of Bahamians are raised to be afraid of the water," Adam knows from experience. "They go to the beach and are scared of seaweed, stingrays, barracudas. It terrifies them. AllenX is helping them be more comfortable with the sea.



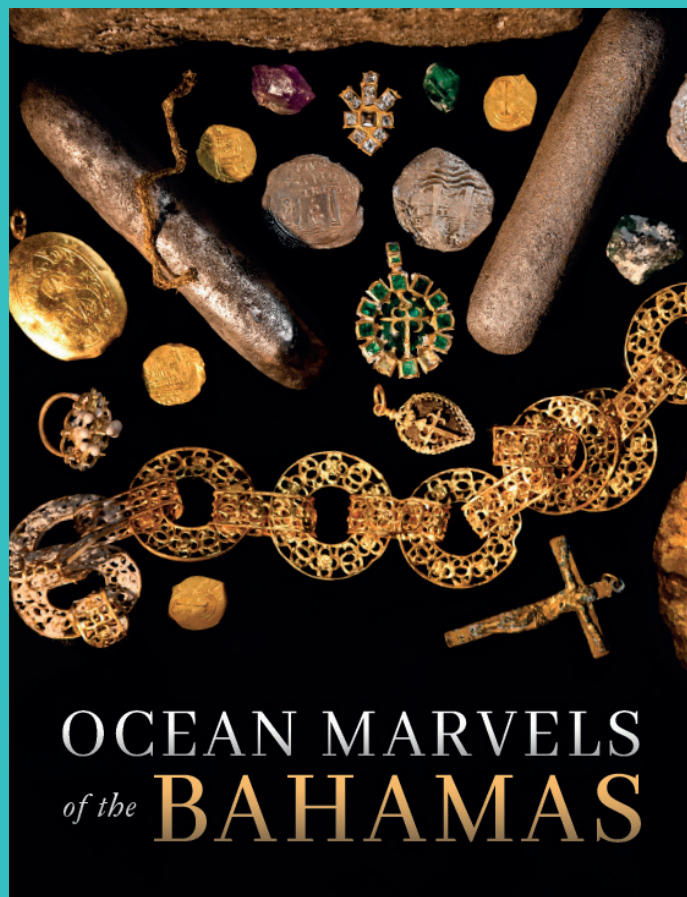
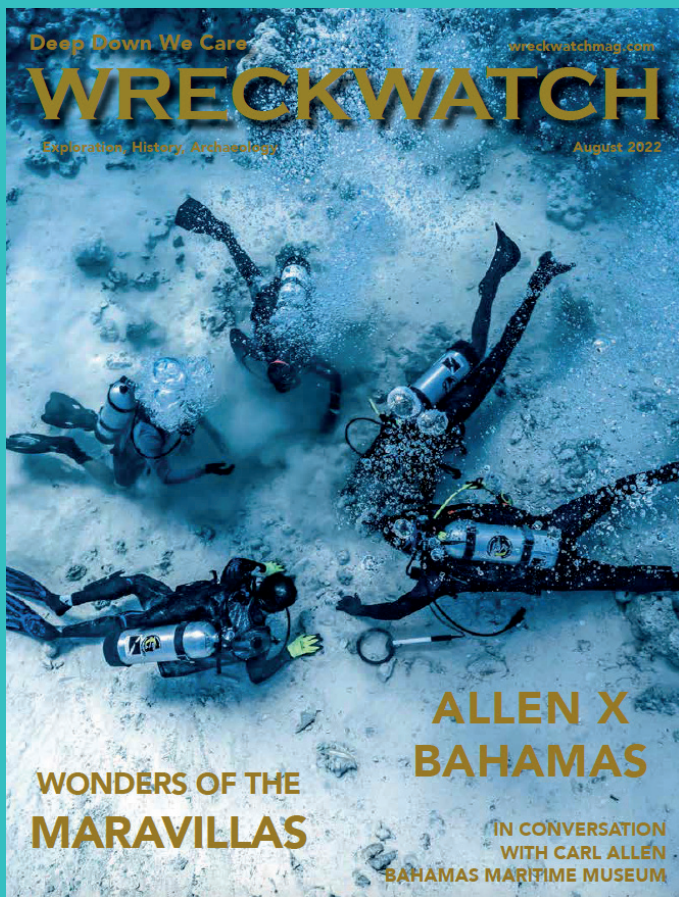
I've taught a lot of my friends how to swim. When I was in primary school, 80% of the class couldn't. And we live on an island."

"AllenX is showing Bahamians that there's much more history and wonders out there than you'd think," Adam says. "There are wrecks everywhere. I go spear fishing and see wreckage off every island. Now, because the locals can see what we do is so cool, they're getting into the sea, starting to ask questions. It's such a fascinating project, you can't not be enthralled. The experience has been fantastic."

THIS TIME IN HISTORY

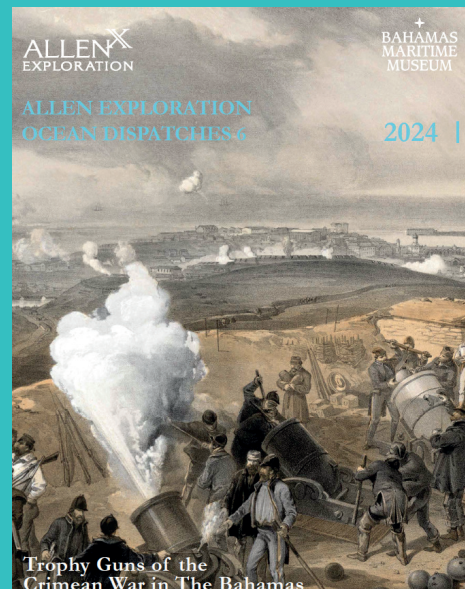
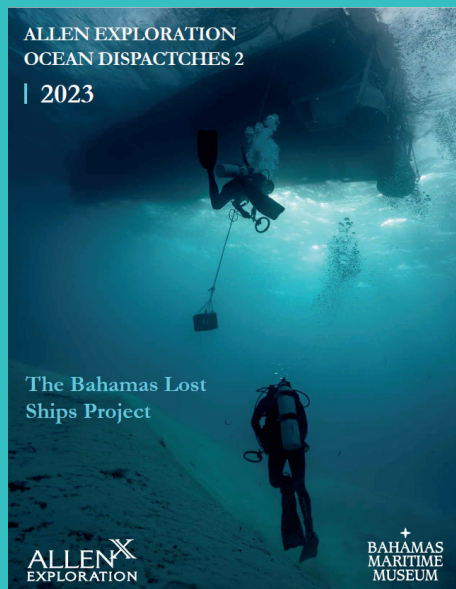
very handy Young Girl fir waiting at table, and several Boys, who have been accustomed to boats and fishing, &c. All the above Negroes are undoubtedly property, and may be sent to any part of America." After the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, the Royal Navy sent out a squadron to suppress illegal trafficking. From 1830, enslaved Africans seized on the high seas were freed absolutely – but not returned to their homelands. The first 'liberated' human cargoes caught at sea reached Nassau in September 1832, when 370 Africans were re-settled on Highborne Cay, 514 at Carmichael and 134 at Adelaide in the south-west of New Province.

On September 28, 1785, Sterling and Mackenzie offered for public auction at Nassau in New Providence, "Carpenters, a Copper, House Wenches, who are good cooks and washers,



To find out more about AllenX's adventures, don't miss *Wreckwatch* magazine's special issue on the wonders of the *Maravillas* (wreckwatchmag.com). And hot off the press, AllenX's new book, *Ocean Marvels of the Bahamas*. Available from bahamasmaritimemuseum.com & shopwalkerscay.com.

To dive deeper into AllenX's historical and archaeological research, *Ocean Dispatches* is available from The Bahamas Maritime Museum: bahamasmaritimemuseum.com.



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