

cross of the Order of St. Louis. A gold coin dated 1723, bearing the image of Louis XIV and minted in Troyes, brought \$1,000. A Louis XIV silver tablespoon sold for \$140. The emerald ring, however, brought the best price in the three-day auction of \$4,750. "It was the one thing I was sad to part with," said Storm, "it was beautiful."

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

For the wiry and tough-minded Louisbourg treasure-seeker the New York sale was a happy ending to a rigorous and thrilling adventure that began for him 11 years ago, east of his historical town, on the rugged Atlantic coast of Cape Breton. On a skin-diving expedition in the summer of 1961 near Chameau Rock, Storm recovered a large silver coin dated 1724, a cannon and some cannon balls. It was his first sign of the treasure of *Le Chameau*.

The French armed transport of 48 guns, under command of Jean-Charles Percheron de St. James, was carrying 316 passengers and crew, including some French-Canadian dignitaries; and chests containing 268,696 *livres* (over \$1 million in present values) for the colonial government in Quebec. After a six-week crossing, she was caught in a violent storm on the night of August 5, 1725, and 12 miles east of Louisbourg was torn apart on jagged reefs less than a mile offshore. There were no survivors. Next day, fishermen found bits of the wreckage scattered over a mile of beach. French salvage attempts the next year recovered only 6,000 *livres*, and *Le Chameau*, like so many other shipwrecks on the Nova Scotia coast, was soon forgotten.

SYSTEM THAT PAID OFF

With the silver coin in hand, Storm's approach to seeking the Chameau treasure was highly systematic. He developed a system of 100-foot grids to search meticulously in water 75 to 100 feet deep, over three million square feet of sea bottom around Chameau Rock. Then, because of problems with his first partnership and lack of a seaworthy boat, the hunt was postponed and precious time lost.



Gold coin from the wreck of the Chameau, magnified to show markings.



In his Nova Scotia home, treasure-hunter Alex Storm enthalls his three-year-old son, Jason, with a personal tale of lost treasure and high adventure — the recovery of the gold of *Le Chameau*.

In 1965 the determined Dutch-born Canadian formed his present partnership, bought a diving boat, the *Marilyn B II* and resumed the treasure hunt. By this time he also had more information. As a draftsman on the current reconstruction of historical Fortress Louisbourg, he had ready access to the techniques of historians and archeologists. From the Musée de la Marine in Paris he obtained new data.

Storm had believed the wreck was located where the first cannons were found, but two elements were missing — the rest of the cannons and the ship's stone ballast, which would be reliable markers of *Le Chameau's* last resting place. On September 19, he found them, just beyond the boundary of his grid. For nine days, Storm and MacEachern scooped up bags of gold and silver coins, and at night sorted out their treasure on the living room floor in Storm's house.

As it happened, recovering the treasure was only half the battle. Members of Storm's previous partnership laid claim, and a five-year court battle held up disposal of the Chameau treasure until the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in June of last year that the previous partners get 25 per cent.

In the intervening years Storm continued treasure-hunting on other wrecks around the Cape Breton coast. He recovered Spanish pieces of eight, and French, Dutch and English coins from the wreck of the British man-o-war *Faversham*, sunk in 1711; and from the *Colombo*, sunk in 1828, cannon and other artifacts. Today, Canada's top treasure-hunter is calmly planning new expeditions, this time to the coast of Africa for lost Spanish galleons.

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