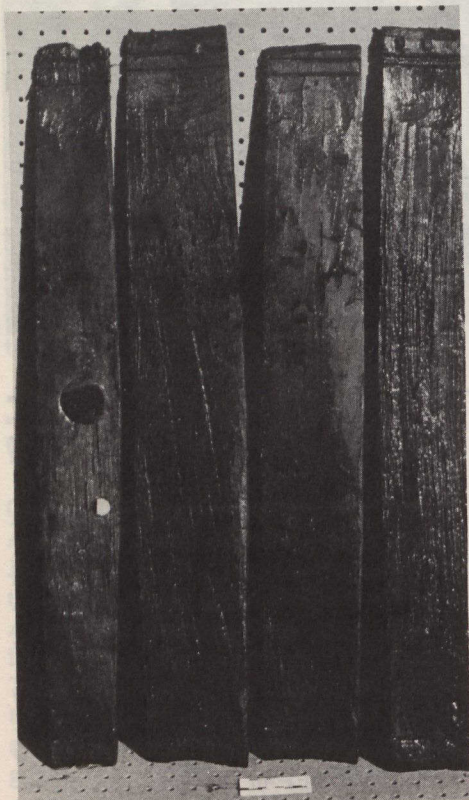


Spanish galleon found off Labrador

A sixteenth-century Basque shipwreck found recently on the floor of the harbour in Red Bay, Labrador, has been hailed as a major underwater archaeological discovery. It is the earliest known in Canadian waters.

A team from Parks Canada, three men and a woman, led by archaeologist Robert Grenier, discovered the vessel in 10 m of water about 550 km northwest of St. John's Newfoundland on the Strait of Belle Isle.



Oak staves found at site are mounted.

Research in Spanish archives over the past six years for the Public Archives of Canada had identified archaeological sites of Basque whaling establishments in Labrador. Selma Barkham, a Parks Canada archivist, doing research in Spain for a microfilming project, had found evidence of probable shipwrecks in the area, including the sinking of a whaling galleon in 1565, with a cargo of whale oil used for lamps in Europe.

The *San Juan*, found in September, was a 300-ton ship that had belonged to Ramos de Borda of Pasajes de Fuenterrabia in the province of Guipuzcoa. There is no indication of hidden treasure aboard.

"It was a strange feeling," said Grenier



The main excavation trench shows tips of floor timbers. At right is a makeshift water dredge (underwater vacuum cleaner) made from a stove pipe.

at a recent news conference, "almost too good to be true. We asked all the time if we were fooling ourselves, but all the while we had a suspicion that it was there." The ship is almost intact, which is unusual for one that old. Although a crew of 75 were believed to be aboard, no casualties were recorded.

The team first discovered oak staves from the shattered barrels that had carried the whale oil. Then the divers found the ship itself.

Dominion archivist Wilfred I. Smith is very enthusiastic about the find, stating that "it fills a significant gap in Canadian history", since the period from the late 1400s to 1534 was not too well known. "This will certainly help," he said.

Near the underwater site, a land archaeological dig of the Basque settlements at Red Bay is being carried out by a team from Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, led by Dr. James Tuck, under a permit from the Ministry



Remains of a whale oil barrel found on board in the spot where it was placed in 1565.