

## HOW TO FIND

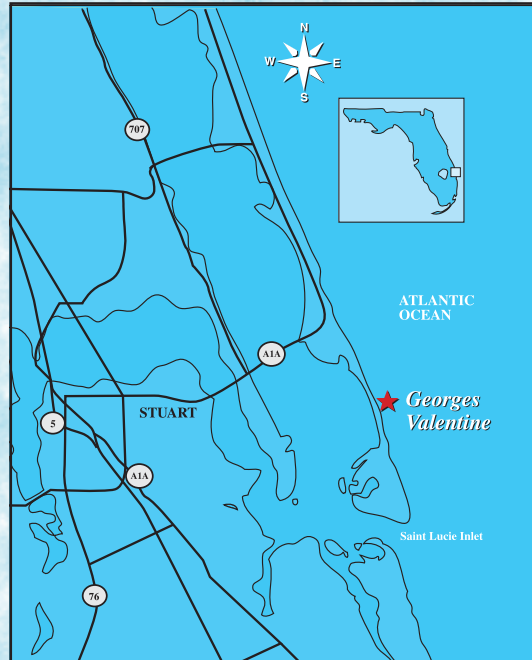
# Georges Valentine

The wreck of *Georges Valentine* is situated approximately 100 yards south of the south wall of Gilbert's Bar House of Refuge and 100 yards directly offshore in Stuart, Florida, at latitude 27° 11.93' N and longitude 80° 09.787' W. The site is in 22 feet of water and sand movement around the wreckage is dramatic.

Please anchor in the sand to avoid fouling your anchor or damaging the shipwreck. Remember to display a "divers down" flag when diving or snorkeling.

As with all other historical and archaeological sites on public uplands and submerged bottomlands, *Georges Valentine* is protected by Florida laws prohibiting unauthorized disturbance, excavation, or removal of artifacts. Please help keep the site intact for others.

"Take only photos and leave only bubbles."



## Georges Valentine State Underwater Archaeological Preserve

The 767-ton steel-hulled Italian bark, loaded with a cargo of lumber, sank in a violent storm off Stuart on October 16, 1904. The remains of *Georges Valentine* lie scattered in a large debris field approximately 270 feet long and 280 feet wide. The wreckage is partially buried in the sand and is broken into five prominent sections.

Marine life abounds on the wreck of *Georges Valentine*, including snook, sheepshead, margate, angelfish, moray eels, stingrays, lobsters, stone crabs, hermit crabs, pufferfish, triggerfish, parrotfish, kingfish, wrasses, snappers, sea turtles, and various species of soft corals. Because of the shallow water and migrating sand, the sea life changes from season to season as dramatically as the wrecksite. This change in conditions is a common occurrence and allows divers to enjoy a new adventure with every visit to the shipwreck.



Aerial photograph courtesy: Martin County Sheriff's Office



*Georges Valentine wrecked on the beach at Stuart*  
Photo courtesy: Historical Society of Martin County

For more information call

850.245.6444

Or visit

[museumsinthesea.com](http://museumsinthesea.com)



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Historical Resources  
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## Georges Valentine

### UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRESERVE Stuart, Florida



Painting Courtesy  
The Historical Society  
of Martin County



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Historical Resources  
Bureau of Archaeological Research

HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MARTIN COUNTY

MARTIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
Search & Recovery Dive Team

FRIENDS OF GEORGES VALENTINE



# Georges Valentine

*Georges Valentine* was built in 1869 by Bowdler Chaffer & Company of Liverpool, England, for S. Myers & Company. The 767-ton iron-hulled ship originally was registered as *Cape Clear* with Lloyd's of London in 1870. She was a screw steamer with auxiliary sails and was stationed on the Liverpool to Australia run carrying passengers and general cargo.

*Cape Clear* remained on the Lloyd's register until 1889 when she was sold to a French firm in Bordeaux. The vessel was stripped of all steam machinery except the boiler and was rigged as a three-masted barkentine. Re-christened *Georges Valentine*, the ship remained in French hands but was sold to new owners in Dunkirk. In 1895 *Georges Valentine* was sold to the Italian firm of Mortolo and Simonetti in Genoa, Italy. Based in Camagoli, Italy, the ship primarily was used to transport lumber, sailing regularly from Pensacola, Florida, to South America.

In October 1904 *Georges Valentine* sailed from Pensacola to Buenos Aires with a load of milled mahogany. She was crewed by twelve men of different nationalities under the command of Captain Prospero Martolo. The ship made good time through the Gulf of Mexico and, on October 13, 1904, the captain sighted the lights of Havana, Cuba. Shortly



Cargo of lumber strewn on the beach. Photograph courtesy: Historical Society of Martin County

after, while working her way northward through the Straits of Florida, the ship was struck by gale-force winds.

With no break in the storm after a day and a half, Captain Martolo became apprehensive for the safety of his crew and ship and ordered the deck load thrown overboard with the hope of improving the ship's stability.

Conditions became worse on the third day. High wind, turbulent seas, and torrents of rain knocked the vessel broadside to the sea, where she wallowed helplessly as waves washed completely over her.

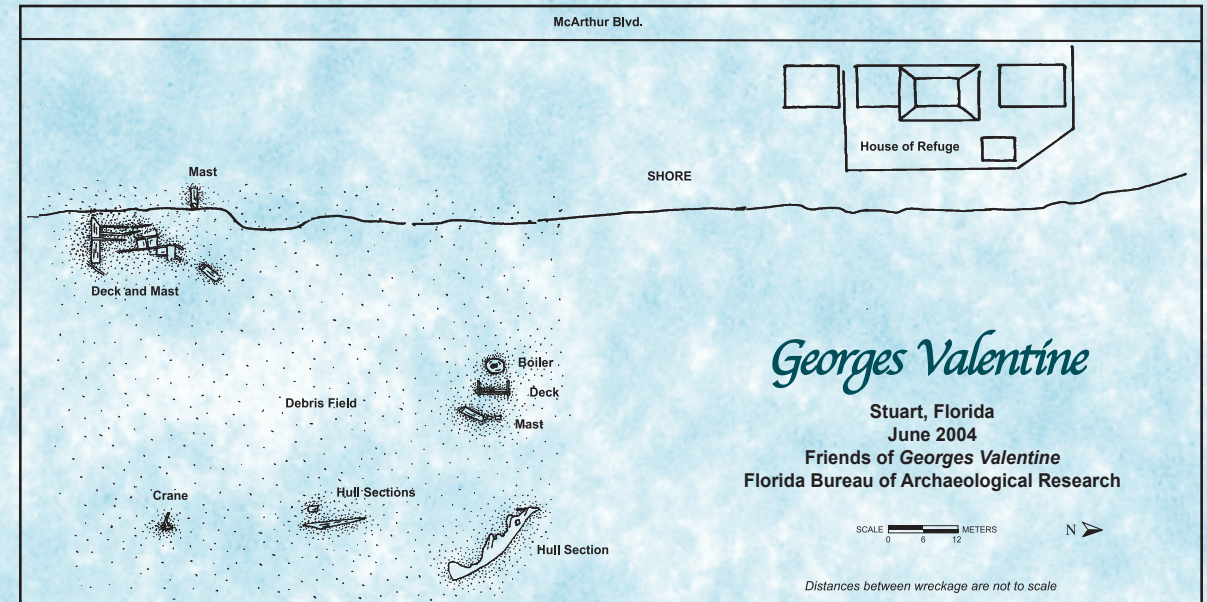
Captain Martolo, knowing he was being driven onto a lee shore, attempted to keep *Georges Valentine* in deep water but was unable to control the ship. At about 8:00 P.M., the roar of breaking waves sounded near-by. The ship's stern grounded in shoal water, her bow swung off, and she was driven toward shore. The three steel masts fell, killing one crewman. The rest of the crew sought shelter, but could find none as the hull broke apart and the deck house and lifeboats were washed away. Five of the men were never seen again.

Victor Erickson of Sweden, after a difficult struggle, was the first man ashore, bearing helpless shipmate Ernst "Shorty" Bruce. They made it up the dangerous rocky coastline, naked, injured, tired, and cold, to the House of Refuge at Gilbert's Shoal (Bar) where they roused Captain William E. Rea, Keeper of the House of Refuge.

Captain Rea immediately rendered aid to the men, then set out to look for other survivors. Erickson sat high on the rocks with a lantern to help guide other crewmen to safety, and to watch over Captain Rea, all the while dodging lumber flying in the wind. Throughout the night they looked for survivors and



Wreckage being broken apart by the surf. Photograph courtesy: Historical Society of Martin County



finally located five more of the twelve, bringing the total saved to seven men. All of them had injuries, lacerations, and damaged joints and limbs. None of the five sailors who died were recovered; *Georges Valentine* became their grave. The storm continued for two more days. If not for the ship wrecking near the House of Refuge, and the Keeper's hard work, all of *Georges Valentine's* crew would have perished. The storm continued to break the ship apart until she finally was swallowed by the sea.

On October 17, 1904, during the same storm, the Spanish ship *Cosme Calzado* ran aground three miles north of *Georges Valentine*. Of the sixteen sailors on board, one was drowned after becoming tangled in the rigging. The remainder of the men made their way to a hut on shore, then eventually to the House of Refuge where they stayed with the Keeper and the crew of *Georges Valentine*. Captain Rea and his wife, along with help from local residents, cared for all of the men for several weeks until they could travel homeward. Captain Rea stated of the men, "In these two crews we had a Scotch, Russian, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish and they were all as nice a lot of men as ever came ashore. When I finally got them off to Jacksonville the men stood up and the Captain put his arms around me and said, 'Master, good-bye, we no more see you.'"

The ship, valued at \$18,000, was a total loss; the \$7,000 cargo of lumber was sold at auction for only \$200. Much of the lumber was used to build homes in the Stuart area. The surviving crewmembers returned home, except for Edward Sarkenglov who changed his name to Ed "Big Ed" Smith and became a local fisherman. Captain Rea and his wife stayed at the House of Refuge until May 1907. Gilbert's Shoal (Bar) House of Refuge is the only remaining House of Refuge and stands today as testament to the dramatic events on that lonely stretch of beach more than 100 years ago.

In 2003, *Georges Valentine* was nominated to become Florida's eleventh Underwater Archaeological Preserve by the Martin County Sheriff's Office Search & Recovery Dive Team. The site was recorded and the ship's history researched by State archaeologists and the Historical Society of Martin County. The *Georges Valentine* Preserve was dedicated, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in 2006.



House of Refuge at Gilbert's Shoal (Bar) Photograph courtesy: Historical Society of Martin County