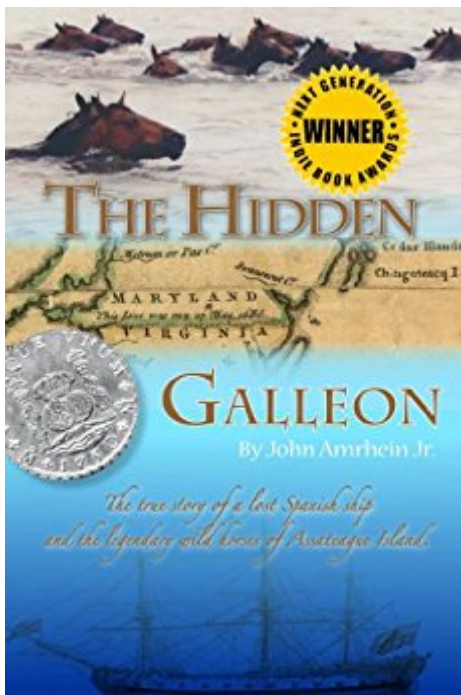


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The Hidden Galleon



Synopsis

On the island of Assateague, along the seacoast of Maryland and Virginia, there is a breed of horses that has run wild for centuries. Legend says they originated from a long lost Spanish galleon. This centuries-old tradition is remembered every year when 50,000 tourists descend on the island of Chincoteague to witness the annual pony swim and auction. On September 5, 1750, a Spanish warship named La Galga drove ashore on Assateague and came to rest close to shore and partially submerged. Her captain described her location as within two ship lengths of the Maryland and Virginia boundary. These precise directions seduced many in the future who would choose to seek her remains. In 1947, Marguerite Henry, wrote *Misty of Chincoteague*, a fictional account of real people of Chincoteague and a beautiful young pony named Misty. Her story documents the shipwreck legend that she was told of during her stay on the island. In 1961, 20th Century Fox released the movie based on this book. In 1980, the author was convinced like others that he could easily locate the wreck of La Galga after researching American and Spanish archives. He made no connection with the legend of the wild horses and La Galga as they had been attributed to another ship called the San Lorenzo. But that ship was the invention of a convincing con man. Soon, the author found himself in a federal courthouse where the State of Maryland had laid claim to the fictitious wreck. Maryland's attorney general fought to keep the author's evidence of the fraud out of the public record. The make-believe ship was awarded to the state based solely on a fraudulent affidavit. Now, armed with knowledge of the shipwreck legend obtained from a descendant of an Assateague Indian and great nephew of a real life character in *Misty of Chincoteague*, the author's search for La Galga resumes, not in the ocean, but on the sands and marshes of Assateague where he discovers that the ship's remains are hidden in a forgotten inlet. After discovery, the author informed the public and the federal government about the wreck's location. Federal officials declined his offer to demonstrate the discovery made in the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. In 1998, a treasure hunter claimed he had located La Galga in 20 feet of water just off the deserted beaches of Assateague. But at the end of the litigation, all parties had to admit that they did not know where the wreck really was. In spite of this, and at the insistence of the federal government, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia awarded La Galga to the Kingdom of Spain. Today, that case is being cited as precedent by the Kingdom of Spain in its attempt to lay claim to treasure from other Spanish shipwrecks. *The Hidden Galleon* at last documents nearly three decades of dramatic and bizarre events related to the real story of a lost Spanish warship and the wild ponies of Assateague Island. Named Finalist in the History/Historical Non-Fiction category AND *The Hidden Galleon*, was named a WINNER in the Regional Non-Fiction category of the 2008 Next Generation

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