



Margoza's Buried Treasure Sites

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found very little information online about the 17th century country parson from Devonshire, England, the Reverend Ben Margoza, but he did leave us with a legend concerning various cache sites in Florida where this man-of-God turned pirate is said to have buried his plunder.

The story goes that Margoza remained a royalist when Oliver Cromwell and his "Roundheads" seized control of the British government in 1645.

Charles II, successor to the throne was exiled to France and the new government branded Margoza a criminal and banished him with other royalists to the Virginia colony.

Margoza, dismayed at being branded a criminal, gathered a crew of experienced seamen, stole a ship, sailed southward and engaged in piracy.

Reports state Margoza had early success at sea. It was a strange divi-

nation of religion and piracy.

On land or on the high seas every Sunday all hands attended Sunday's religious service. Any man who refused to attend was flogged.

Margoza also ordered no piracy on Sundays, and even if attacked no weapons were to be used in self-defense.

Margoza must've had God on his side, for a novice his pirating foray went well and he soon founded Gulf City on the shore of the Manatee River at the outlet to Florida's Tampa Bay, where he erected a fort to protect the village.

One Sunday Margoza's fort was laid siege to by three Spanish warships that bombarded the bastion without mercy.

All day Sunday not a single shot was returned against the Spanish warships, but at midnight Margoza's pirates unleashed a barrage of fire that left two of Spain's ships smashed and at the bottom of the bay, while the third fled out to sea.

Though Margoza had been driven out of England, he never forgot his loyalty to Charles II, who waited in France for Cromwell's government to be overthrown.

Interestingly enough, Margoza remained in contact with Charles II and every year sent him a chest of gold specie to help the king's efforts to put Cromwell down.

Sometime after 1660, a British warship flying the Union Jack dropped anchor off shore from Margoza's headquarters.

After coming ashore, the British captain presented Margoza a letter from Charles II informing him he had regained the British throne.

The king invited Margoza and his men to return home to England as free men.

Assembling his men, Margoza read them the letter and instructed them to dig up the loot and divide it up accordingly.

He said that any man who wanted to return to England could join him, or remain in Florida if they wished.

Upon Margoza's return to England he was welcomed by the king and knighted. He resumed his duties as a now wealthy country parson.

Tales have persisted over the centuries of other buried caches Margoza and his men kept.

In modern times two boys found two gold statues in Bullfrog Creek which have been attributed to the Rev. Ben Margoza.

Stories state Margoza used islands in Tampa Bay as cache sites as well as higher ground up the Little Manatee River.

Persistent tales also claim Margoza may have buried caches in Charlotte Harbor and the Florida Panhandle.

One story states some of Margoza's crew buried a quantity of silver bars on Big Cockroach Island where gold specie has been found previously at its southern end.