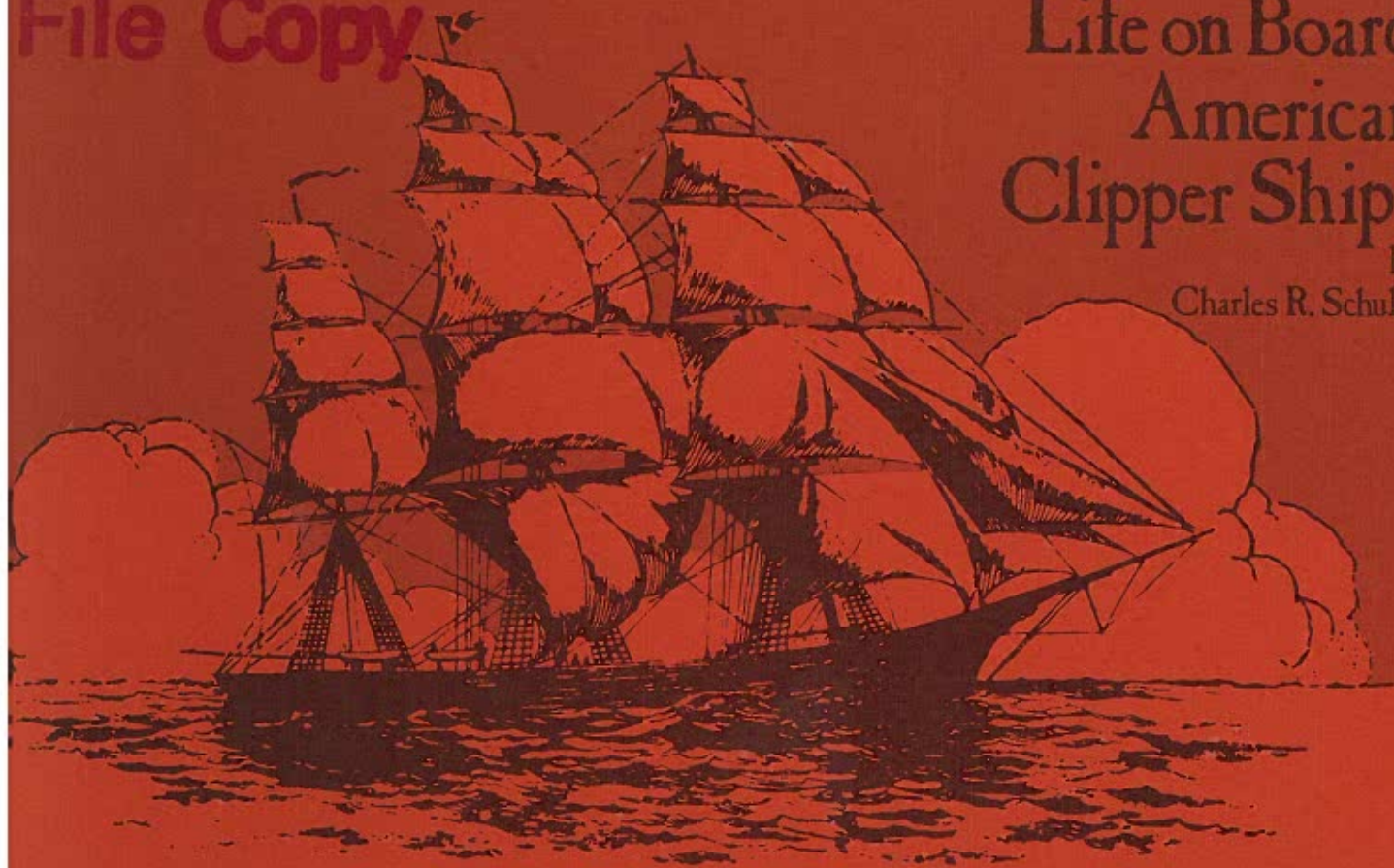
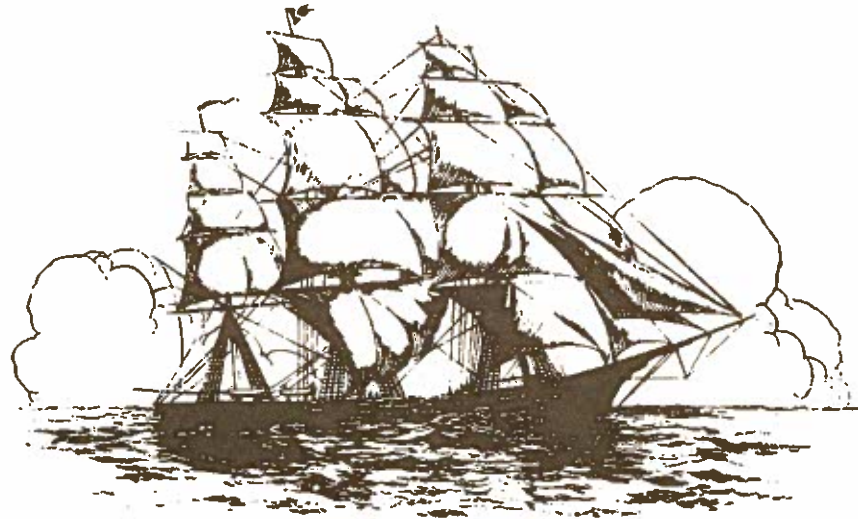


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Life on Board
American
Clipper Ships

by
Charles R. Schultz





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Dr. Charles R. Schultz, whose interest in maritime history has been the impetus for considerable research in this field, was Keeper of Manuscripts and Librarian at Mystic Seaport in Connecticut for eight years before he was appointed University Archivist at Texas A&M University in 1971.



Virtually from the beginning of shipbuilding in America, American ship builders have been able to construct fast sailing vessels. American craftsmen have consistently demonstrated the ability to learn from each other, as well as their foreign counterparts. They have done remarkably well in choosing only the best design attributes of those from whom they have copied. The development of the famous clipper ships during the 1850's exemplifies the apex of such developments.

During the colonial period of U.S. history, American merchants and their ships were legally barred from most of the lucrative trades. The only way they could operate in some geographical areas or trade in some types of commodities was to engage in illegal smuggling. To be a successful smuggler, one had to have ships that could outsail those of any other nation. No one knows exactly how much smuggling was done by colonial Americans, but it is certainly safe to say that they did a lot of it. Baltimore, Maryland, was one of the leading smuggling ports in America. It was also in Baltimore that some of the earliest fast sailing vessels were built. Early in the 19th Century fast sailing vessels built in Baltimore began

to be referred to as "Baltimore clippers."

By the mid 19th Century a number of things had happened that made the famous American clipper ships possible. When the Black Ball Line was established in 1818 and set a regular schedule for packet ships sailing between New York and Europe, it quickly took over the profitable passenger traffic and much of the most lucrative freight business on the North Atlantic. It quickly became clear that the fastest ships would attract the most passengers as well as the freight which paid the highest rates. This created a demand for ships which could sail faster than those which had been built in previous decades.

In 1848 the British government abrogated the remaining provisions of the Navigation Acts, which had originally been passed during the colonial period of American history. This action by Great Britain opened the way for American ships to carry commodities, especially tea, from China directly to England in competition with British ships. The earliest tea brought to England each year commanded higher prices than that delivered later. Hence, fast ships were very important in this trade and

American builders were able to supply them to American shipowners.

The discovery of gold in California in 1849 and somewhat later in Australia created additional demands for fast sailing ships to carry supplies from the East Coast to the gold fields. Ships that proved to sail very fast could, and did, command higher freight rates than their slower sisters. Higher freight rates usually meant greater profits to the owners.

A ship's speed was determined by three factors: hull design, square footage of sail, and the captain and crew. The shape of the hull, particularly the shape of the bow, and the ratio of length to breadth of the hull had a definite bearing on sailing speed. It also had some bearing on carrying capacity. A ship with taller masts and longer yardarms could carry more square feet of sail than could another one of equal size and hull shape. The more sail, the more area there was to catch wind and drive the ship. The captain and crew also played an important role in ship speed. Some captains were known as "drivers," that is they used more sail in heavy weather than did some less adventurous ship masters. Such driving captains tended to select junior officers and crew members with similar traces of daring.

In many instances a single individual can be identified as the principal person responsible for an important in-

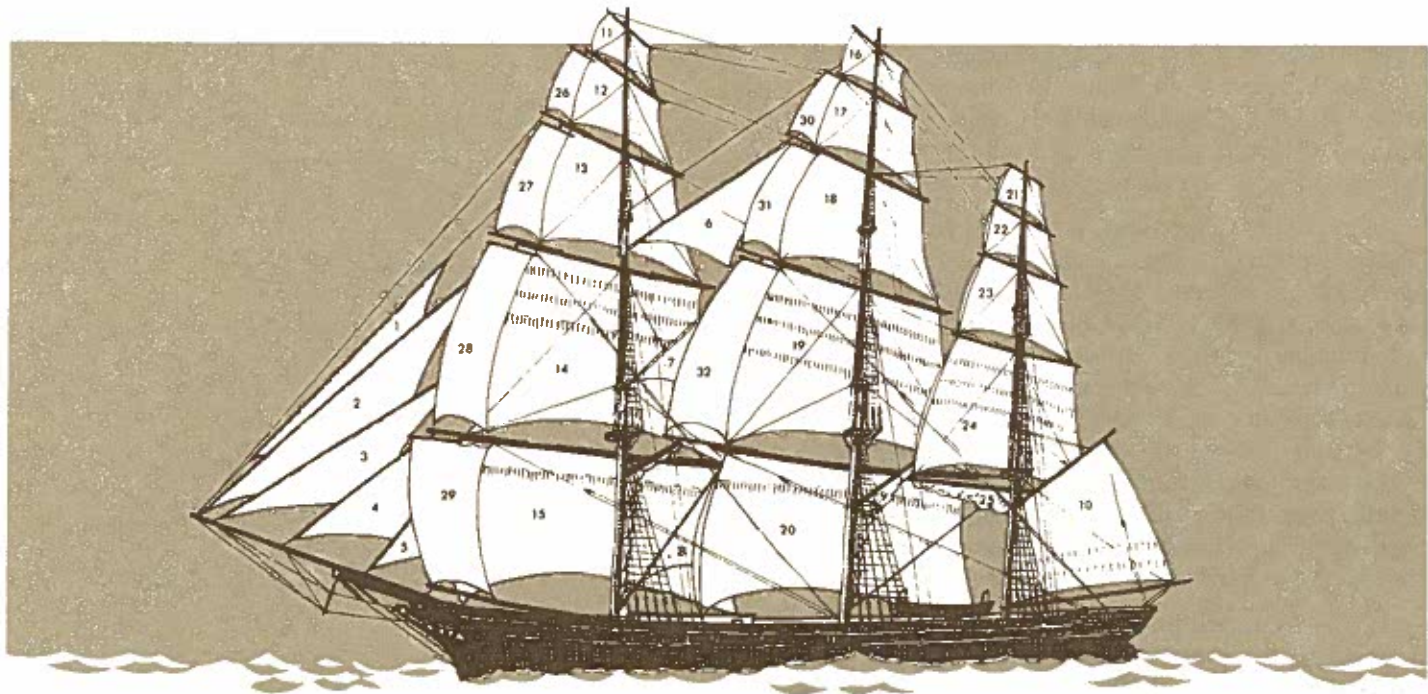
vention, discovery or development. Examples are the Wright Brothers and airplanes, Louis Pasteur and the sterilization or pasteurization of milk, and Dr. Michael De-Bakey with human organ transplants. This is not true with clipper ships. No one person has ever been given credit for inventing or developing them. Rather, hundreds of shipbuilders up and down the New England coast learned from each other. These builders seem to have been able to look at a series of models or complete ships and select the best features of each one to incorporate into the newest ship they were building for a New York or Boston merchant who wanted a ship which would out sail any other ships in the oceans.

While no single person can be identified as the inventor or developer of clipper ships, some individual builders did achieve considerable fame because of the number of fast ships they built. Donald McKay of Boston was among the best known builders. He built many fast sailing clippers, including the *Flying Cloud*, which recorded two of the three fastest voyages between New York and San Francisco, and the *Great Republic*, whose 4,555 tons made her the largest clipper ever built. William H. Webb also built a number of clipper ships at his shipyard in New York. Others were built in small cities and towns all over the New England coast. The *Andrew Jackson*, which recorded one of the three fastest

voyages between New York and San Francisco, was built in Mystic, Connecticut, by Irons and Grinnell. Charles Mallory and George Greenman and Company both built clippers in Mystic, at or near what is now Mystic Seaport, the maritime museum known around the world.

The era of the clipper ships was one of very short duration. Economic conditions played a major role in ending the era just as they did in starting it. The tremendous ship building activities in the early 1850's created an overabundance of ships. This caused freight rates to decline drastically. In 1850 the charge was \$60 a ton to ship materials to California. By 1857 the rate had fallen to only \$10 per ton. A major economic slump in 1857 depressed business throughout the world and hit American shipbuilding especially hard. Not only were the freight rates pushed even lower, but also there was less freight to be carried by the overabundant number of ships.

The Civil War, 1861 to 1865, interrupted commercial shipbuilding due to the heavy demand for military vessels. At this same time, there were rapid shifts from sail to steam as a method of propulsion and from wood to iron for construction material. All of these factors caused the clipper ship era to end about 1860 as quickly as it had begun only a decade earlier.



**Sails carried
by clipper ship
*Sea Serpent***

1. Flying jib
2. Jib topsail
3. Outer jib
4. Inner jib

5. Fore-topmast staysail
6. Main-royal staysail
7. Main-topgallant staysail
8. Main-topmast staysail
9. Spencer (brailed)
10. Spanker
11. Fore-skysail

12. Fore-royal
13. Fore-topgallant sail
14. Fore-topsail
15. Foresail, or forecourse
16. Main skysail
17. Main royal
18. Main-topgallant sail

19. Main topsail
20. Mainsail, or main course
21. Mizzen skysail
22. Mizzen royal
23. Mizzen-topgallant sail
24. Mizzen topsail
25. Crossjack (furl'd), or mizzen course

26. Port fore-royal studding sail
27. Port fore-topgallant studding sail
28. Port fore-topmast studding sail
29. Port fore-lower studding sail
30. Port main-royal studding sail
31. Port main-topgallant studding sail
32. Port main-topmast studding sail



Without doubt, the most romanticized aspect of American maritime history has been that brief period of the mid-19th Century known as the clipper ship era. Writers of the past have devoted numerous books and articles to the beauty of the ships themselves as they glided swiftly over the oceans at incredible speed, to building the ships and to biographies of the ships as well as their builders and captains.¹ Generally, the activities and living conditions of the men who sailed the ships have been ignored except for an occasional article dealing with the unsavory crimps who preyed upon sailors in port and some of the harshest captains who drove their men and their ships mercilessly in all kinds of weather. Consequently information on routine daily tasks, frustrations of loneliness, tedium of endless oceans, monotony of the lousy food and the vexing problems faced by sailors has never been systematically accumulated. Even the seafarers of the 19th Century were caught up in the romanticism of clipper ships. One of them recalled late in his life

As we grew in years, the sea became more and more a vast fairy world of adventure. We boys imagined ourselves undergoing incredi-

ble hardships which somehow were more pleasant than otherwise. We dreamed of sailing triumphantly through terrific gales, in which we were always warm and comfortable, or performed, in fancy, remarkable feats of strength and courage in ship wrecks, with none of the inconveniences of reality.

All ships attracted, and every corner of the world invited us, but no ships had quite the appeal of the clippers and no lands quite the lure of the east.²

Others became romantic over the beauties of nature they saw, especially sunrises. One sailor described a sunrise thusly:

This morning the sunrise was magnificent. Long before the sun rose, the eastern horizon was tinged with a red, almost blood red sky, while the sky above was a delicate pink. Soon these shades began to give way to a purple dazzling to look at, which as day dawned the pink gave way to a delicate blue. One solitary

star alone shone, Venus, large and brilliant, so large indeed that one could but compare it, in his mind, with the star the shepherds so welcomed at Bethlehem. When the sun finally rose, his orb looked like a ball of fire, red, and then the effect was magnificent. Everything seemed bathed in a flood of red and purple.³

6 The excitement of sailing day comes out very strongly in the words of one young sailor who wrote "Hurrah & away we go. . . . Loosed the topsails & as they swung about our Ship is bound away to New York Bay. It sent the blood tingling through my veins faster than usual."⁴ The hectic activity was noted by another sailor who wrote "There is not rest for anyone on sailing day. We worked like beavers until late afternoon."⁵ Among the duties to be carried out were stowing away the gangways, hawsers, fenders, mooring chains and any other gear used only in port; coiling down the rigging; hoisting the anchors on board and lashing them to the catheads; plugging up the hawse-pipes to keep out heavy seas; and washing the deck. This was followed by choosing the watches by the first and second mates taking turns selecting men to serve under them. The captain and second mate had charge of the starboard watch while the first and third mates had the port or larboard.⁶

In some instances, the captain made a brief speech to the crew after the watches had been chosen. One sailor reported that his captain told them

Now, my men, you have shipped on a good tight ship. You're to have watch and watch, good grub and good treatment as long as you behave yourselves. Answer promptly when you are spoken to and jump quickly when you receive an order. If you don't behave and don't jump quickly when ordered, and growl at your food this ship will be a merry hell and I'll be the head devil. That's all. Now you can go forward to your proper forecandle for ten minutes to shift your dunnage, after which the starboard watch will take the deck while the port watch goes below.⁷

For the greenhand on his first voyage there was a special educational responsibility that had to be completed as quickly as possible. He had to learn the location and function of about 130 different halyards, clewlines, buntlines, and braces located along the bulwarks and at the life rail. He had to be able to haul on or let go any one during daylight or darkness, in fair weather or foul, to carry out a given order instantly. To select the wrong one could cause serious problems.⁸

6 Holders of certain positions had special responsibili-

ties while some tasks were assigned to specific sailors. For example, the carpenter had to sound the pumps daily to see if any water had leaked into the ship. In addition, he had to check the casks containing fresh water, pork, beef and other provisions; keep care of the paint; make, or supervise the making of, repairs to the ship; and in general "Know all about the Condition of the masts, Spars, Iron work, in fact Everything Essential for the Preservation of the Ship."⁹ Most ships carried some livestock for fresh meat. The person charged with feeding and care of the livestock was dubbed "Jimmy Ducks." One sailor reported that he did not relish this job but noted that it did offer one "emolument . . . the privilege of hooking fresh water enough to wash in, providing the mate doesn't catch you."¹⁰

Very soon after the ship departed from port, life on board developed into a regular routine. Each day began about 4:30 when the cook and steward started breakfast. The watch off duty was served first and then began the task of washing down the decks and wiping all the paint work. One sailor reported this practice was followed "even during a howling gale when heavy seas were breaking over the ship's rail." While the crew was thus engaged, the mate made a thorough inspection of every part of the ship "examining every rope, spar, iron band, bolt and sail, giving particular attention to the jack-stays,

foot-ropes, beackets and life-lines of each yard." He then determined what particular work needed to be done and made the necessary assignments.¹¹

Besides any repairs the mate might have noted during his inspections, there were routine preventive tasks which occupied the sailors' time and kept the ship in top condition. Two particularly onerous ones were slushing the masts and tarring the rigging. Slush, refuse grease from the galley, was applied regularly to the masts to make the yards hoist easily and to the lines to keep them pliant. One sailor reported slush was "truly a vile compound," and slushing was "the dirtiest job we have and one most destructive on clothes."¹² Tarring down, coating all parts of the rigging with tar or a mixture containing tar, was also a dirty job. It could take a full week to tar down the entire ship. The mixture helped preserve the rigging by keeping out moisture.¹³

As the ship approached its destination on a long voyage, a whole new set of duties fell upon the crew. Seemingly every captain wanted his ship to appear in perfect condition when it arrived in port. Thus the crew spent much of the last three or four weeks cleaning, scraping, painting and varnishing all parts of the ship and holystoning the decks. The final bit of preparation involved getting up the mooring chain, hawsers and whatever other gear was used in port.¹⁴

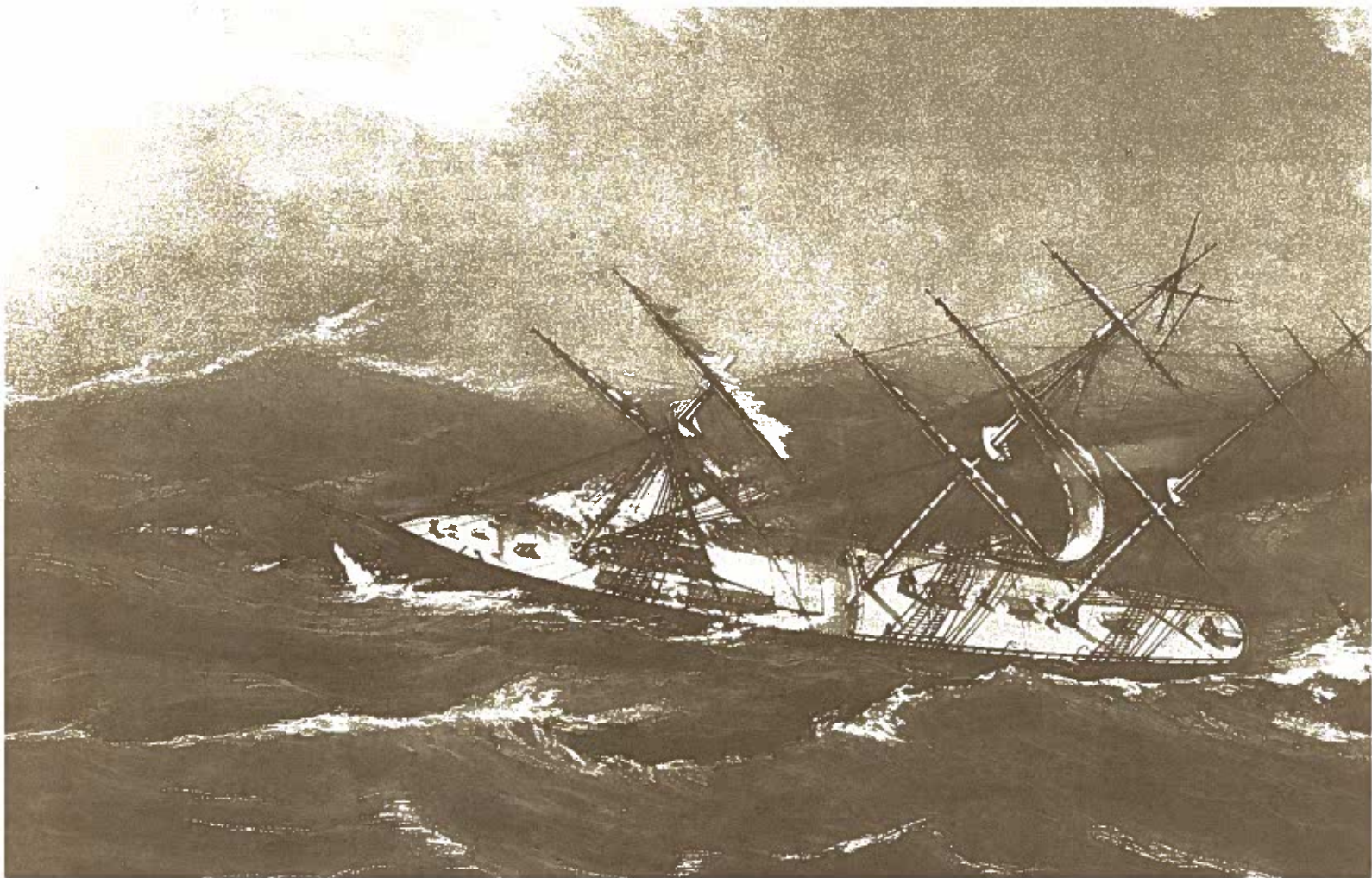
With the wide variety of canned and frozen foods and multitudes of prepared meals that need only to be heated momentarily in a microwave oven available today, it might be enlightening to look briefly at the food consumed by seafarers of the clipper ship era. A sailor in the *Sea Serpent* recorded their weekly menu as follows: Sunday—scouse and duff, Monday—mush and spuds, Tuesday—scouse and beans, Wednesday—scouse and rice, Thursday—mush and duff, Friday—scouse and rice, Saturday—scouse and Cape Cod turkey. Bread and beef were also served every day. The monotony itself is enough to turn most people against it, but apparently the quality and even the quantity left a great deal to be desired. The sailor noted “the scouse is a libel on pig fodder, the mush is never cooked, the beans are awful and the Cape Cod turkey, or in plain English, codfish, is the meanest mess of all. The coffee and tea, which we have morning and night, is a muddy compound not fit for any civilized man to drink.” Then he concluded in typical sailor fashion, “however I am always so hungry I can eat what is set before me without a second bidding.”¹⁵ There came a point later in the voyage when he reported he was unable to eat the bread because of the big worms in it. He wondered “what they would say ashore to see their bread alive.” The next day he reported a new cask of bread was opened and that never before had he witnessed “such a rush . . . to see bread,

fresh and clean.”¹⁶ Note that there were no cocktails before dinner and no cream and sugar for the coffee and tea. Only officers were permitted to have liquor with meals on sailing ships. Sailors drank only ashore. Molasses was the principal sweetener available to sailors.

A young seaman in the *Mary Whitridge* reported their food “was very good and unlimited in quantity,” but admitted it “was very limited in variety.” It consisted of salt beef, salt pork, salt fish, beans, hard bread, potatoes, coffee and tea, with bean or pea soup four days per week; and “the great sailor luxury, plum duff, on Sunday.” They also had “fresh bread or gingerbread nearly every day.”¹⁷

From time to time, the monotony was broken by making use of some of the rich resources of the sea, by killing some of the livestock carried on board, or by purchasing provisions during a brief visit in some distant port. The carpenter of the *Roman* reported gleefully that “the chief mate caught a Splended Dolphin this afternoon. . . . We ate some for supper. It tasted to me like Shad.” Sometimes they purchased or caught large turtles to make soup and pot pie.¹⁸ Another seaman reported catching bonitos which they had fried for “a most agreeable change.”¹⁹ The daughter of the captain of the *National Eagle* reported that the albatross which the steward caught and roasted “was very palatable—a pleasant change of diet.”²⁰

The livestock carried on board was most often pigs



and chickens, but sheep, ducks, turkeys, geese, goats and pigeons were sometimes also taken along to add variety to the meals.²¹ While this fresh meat was primarily for the officers, the crew did usually get a portion, especially of the larger animals. The carpenter of the *Roman* reported that

Every Saturday afternoon a Pig is Killed and after the Steward takes what he wishes for the Cabin, the Remains are made up by the cook into a Sort of Pot Pie or what they call a Sea Pie & to Crown all they are to Have a Duff & Sauce for Desert. (The Sauce Consists of Sugar and Water Boiled and makes a Sort of Starch). But Jack is Quite Happy with it although I think some Shore folks would Stick up their noses at Such a Dose.

He then went on to explain that “Their **Plum** Duff Consists of Flour mixed with Salt Water with Some **Dried Apples** thrown in it & so is Boiled in a Huge Bag tied up tight to Keep it from Swelling. After it is done, it make(s) a very **Solid** food and Sticks to a man’s Ribs like wax.²²

For ships returning home from China, Angier was a favorite place to stop for provisions, pets and souvenirs. Upon departing from Angier, one sailor noted

Our Ship looks like a farm yard: Chickens, geese, Ducks, monkeys, Goats, minoes, Para-

quetes, Cockatoes, Java Sparrows, Doves. The lower rigging is all full of fruits looking like a forest and Jib Guys are all full of Bananas. It looks fine & no mistake. I have some Oranges, Mangusteers &c. Our little room is full. One birth (ed. note—berth) is stored full of Coconuts. We will live High all the way Home.²³

Mealtime in clipper ships was unlike anything familiar to 20th Century landlubbers. Not only was there class segregation, but the style of eating was much different than what current etiquette books recommend. The officers were served in shifts at the table in the cabin by the steward. The steward ate in his pantry, the cook in his galley. The crew ate on deck or in the forecabin depending upon weather conditions. One sailor described mealtime thusly:

There Sat the Boys in our Room. Dick had his pan between his Knees using His clasp Knife to carve with & a Small Bone for a Fork. Bob had his sheath Knife & his fingers for a fork. Charley used a Razor with a Spoon for his fork, Whilst I used a Small Saw for a Knife & a piece of Bamboo for my fork. Sometimes I used my fingers, but only in cases of Emergency. I formerly used a Chisel for a fork.²⁴

Most 20th Century Americans take for granted electric water coolers, ice water with meals, and plenty of hot and cold running water for daily baths and frequent washing of hands as well as regular laundering of clothes. This definitely was not the case in the clipper ships. One sailor lamented "Many a time have I wished that I had but a swallow of water that I have thrown away at home because it wasn't cool enough. Sometimes our water is almost lukewarm, and it always has that peculiar taste which water will have that has stood for any length of time in a wooden receptacle."²⁵

No ship had water casks of sufficient size to provide adequate water for a lengthy voyage. Thus, they had to depend upon catching rain water to replenish their supply. Sometimes, as was the case with the *Continental*, they did not have time to catch any water. As a precaution, the captain ordered a ration of "three pints of water per day, one pint of which was allotted to the cook for coffee and tea."²⁶ Over the next few days the crew of the *Continental* witnessed storms all around them and prepared to catch water, but unfortunately the storms all passed them by. The water shortage weighed heavily on everyone's minds, and the chief topic of every conversation was "water, water and more water." The location and weather conditions compounded their problem. One of the sailors noted that "the hot tropical sun poured down upon us, at times with such intensity as to cause heat blisters to

appear in the pitch of our deck seams." Then came the disheartening announcement that the water allowance was to be cut to two pints per day. One of the sailors noted that it was

with sad faces and thirsty, parched throats we all lined up at the life rail at water time and sorrowfully surrendered our treasured quart pickle bottles to the steward, each receiving in return a nice clean little pint bottle. Gracious, how small the bottles looked! A quart was little enough on which to pull through a long hot day, but how were we ever to exist upon a pint. . . . It was a rather pathetic sight each evening, to watch us all gather solemnly around the pump, each with his little pickle bottle, waiting for the Old man to come through the cabin door, pump in hand, and walk to the tank with stately tread. He solemnly withdrew the key from his pocket, unscrewed the cap and attached the pump to the suction pump.²⁷

After several weeks of such short rations, the sailor noted again "Our chief subject of conversation now was, as usual, water, water and more water." He then added a commentary upon his fellow seafarers.

Every man Jack aboard had time and again

sworn a solemn oath that the first thing he would do when he got his two feet firmly planted on God's green earth once more would be to put his mouth under the first water faucet he could find and fill his own water tank from his toes to the top of his head. But he would not do this; he would do exactly as he had done from time immemorial—He would plant his feet on the rail of the first saloon he could find and, anchoring his elbows on the bar, would proceed to fill his skin from his toes to the top of his head with whiskey, whiskey, and more whiskey.²⁸

12 Eventually the *Continental* arrived safely in port and the thirsty seamen were able to "fill their tanks" with the liquid of their choice.

Lavish meals on holidays such as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas and parades and fireworks on July 4th have become customary throughout the nation. Such was generally not the case for men in clipper ships although some celebrations were held and some special meals were prepared. A seaman in the *Sea Serpent* reported that "the old year was seen out and the new year in by both watches of boys in a most original way." The two watches had formed clubs named Brass Heads and Snatch Block Guards, the latter named for the third mate who was known as Theodosius Snatch Block

because of his frequent order to the boys to get a snatch block. The sailor reported that

at midnight the S.B.s had a procession round the ship, carrying their namesake aloft and repeating an extempore poem which, tho' not written by Shakespeare, still answered for the occasion. "O ye S.B.s look ferocious, Were the last dying words of Theodosius," after which Somnus engaged their attention the remainder of the watch.²⁹

Ships at sea generally ignored Independence Day although keepers of journals and writers of recollections frequently noted the day with statements such as "very different Fourth from any I ever spent before" or "This is the 'Glorious Fourth.'"³⁰ On the other hand, a crew in port could have a grand celebration such as that reported by the carpenter of the *Roman*.

We had a sort of a spree. We decorated the Forcastle with flags. We then made a table of the Bread Barge on which we placed some 18 em[p]ty Bottles & one full one. After the Performances had commenced the third mate kicked over our table & so spoilt all our fun. We told him it was Liquer & made him Shell out for damages. We took up a Tarrpolin muster & I was deputised to go ashore & procure refreshments. . . . I bought some Pineapples,

mangoes, & other fruits & then started off to see the procession. Some 50 Sailors Headed by an American Flag & Band consisting of 2 Chinese Gongs, Accordion, Drum & Flute Playing Yankee Doodle. They had just come from the Consuls residence. He had given each a Bottle of Brandy & they was now drunk & making a great noise. Hundreds of Chinese was following them Quite pleased at the antics of the sailors. But at night they all fetched up in the Calaboose for Tearing down the British Flag, Rioting &c. . . . Finally I went on Board. . . . We commenced by giving three cheers for ourselves, 3 for the flag and then went in.³¹

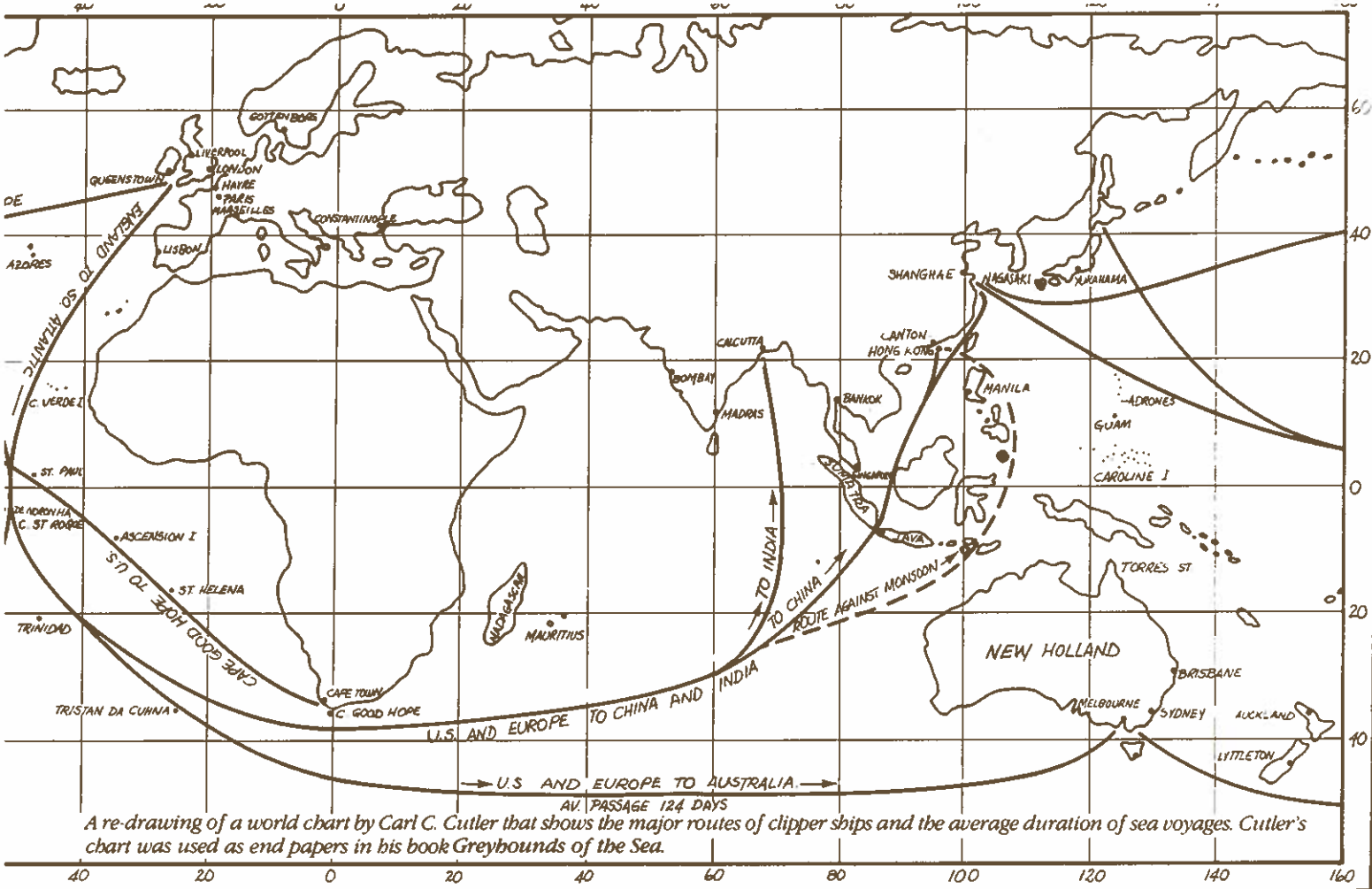
Thanksgiving meant special food for the cabin but not necessarily for the crew. The father of the captain of the *Golden Fleece* reported their meal consisted of oyster soup, boiled salmon, scalloped oysters, roast fowl, huckleberry pudding and apple pies. The daughter of the captain of the *National Eagle* noted their dinner included roast duck, meat pie, boiled yams, apple sauce, pickles, plum pudding, and mince and squash pies.³² A sailor in the *Mary Whitridge* noted that it was "Thanksgiving day at home, but for me it is the same as all the rest, with the same ship's work." He added "I did not find roast turkey and mince pie when I went for my dinner, but we caught

a dolphin, and had a fish chowder for supper, for which I was thankful."³³

In the 19th Century, Christmas was not as much of a commercial celebration as it has become in the 20th. At sea, it was sometimes recognized as a holiday with only the necessary work of steering the ship and tending the sails being done. On the other hand, some ships worked as usual on the day. Some had special meals or at least special treats such as cake or pumpkin pie while others seemingly served the ordinary fair for the day of the week.³⁴

Practicing of religion and observing the sabbath seems to have varied from ship to ship and to have depended upon the circumstances at hand. Generally Sunday was considered a day off from regular work. Thus sailors often spent the greater part of the day performing personal tasks such as washing and mending clothes, shaving, getting haircuts, airing out bedding, reading and bathing.³⁵ The ship *Golden Fleece* may well have been unique in that they held weekly church services and bible classes. The captain's father, a minister who was taking the voyage for his health, conducted the services and taught the classes.³⁶

As bad as inferior food in inadequate quantities, shortages of water, and being denied holidays and Sundays off were, they were minor compared to some of the other problems faced by sailors. Homesickness was a common



A re-drawing of a world chart by Carl C. Cutler that shows the major routes of clipper ships and the average duration of sea voyages. Cutler's chart was used as end papers in his book *Greyboudns of the Sea*.

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malady, especially for the younger seamen and for married officers with children at home. The letters of one captain are filled with references to missing his family and wishing he could be with them or at least hear from them. On one occasion he reported having been to a "mesmeric meeting" during which a young girl in a hypnotic state gave him information about his wife. On another occasion he reported his delight in receiving a letter written only thirteen days previously and noted that it had been a year and three months since he had last heard from home. The length of time seamen were occasionally away from home tended to magnify the problem. Captain Moses R. Colman left Scituate, Massachusetts, on September 19, 1859, to take the *Asa Eldridge* to San Francisco. He did not return home until the middle of October 1864, a few days too late to witness the marriage of his daughter Amelia.³⁷

Every imaginable type of pest existed to bother sailors. Flies, mosquitoes, ants, roaches and rats were among the worst. Captain Colman wrote his wife "The flies are eating me up. I have killed about twenty in my ears since I began writing you so you can see that I have something to torment me."³⁸ Carpenter Stanley of the *Roman* wrote "Mosquitoes are very thick. One old Chap I have in Charge. I am learning him Oh! Susanah dont You Cry. . . . Often while he is practicing he wakes me up to repeat the first word for him Oh!" A few days later he noted "My

friend the Pet Mosquito awoke me this morning Early. I got up & found my feet very sore. Upon examination I found his friends had used them for a Promenade Ground."³⁹ Seaman Frederick Perry noted that rats were "the greatest source of annoyance" on his voyage from Valparaiso to Ireland with guano. The fumes of the cargo forced rats out of the holds into the living quarters. The crew tried poison with some success, but the odor of decaying carcasses between the cabin partitions forced them to abandon this approach. They next used a variety of traps with

little success, as the rats seemed to increase in numbers and boldness every day. They ate holes over-night through the hardwood cabin partitions, stole socks out of our shoes while we slept, also balls of twine and beeswax used in sail-making, and dragged them into their nests between the partitions where they seemed to produce a fresh family over-night. It was no trick at all when you turned out in the morning to find one or two drowned in your water pitcher, and to be awakened in the night by their running over your face. But the climax came one night when they attacked the captain's baby, who was sleeping with her mother.

After they arrived in port and discharged the cargo, the

officers hired a professional rat catcher to “clear out” the ship. In a week, he caught 624 rats.⁴⁰

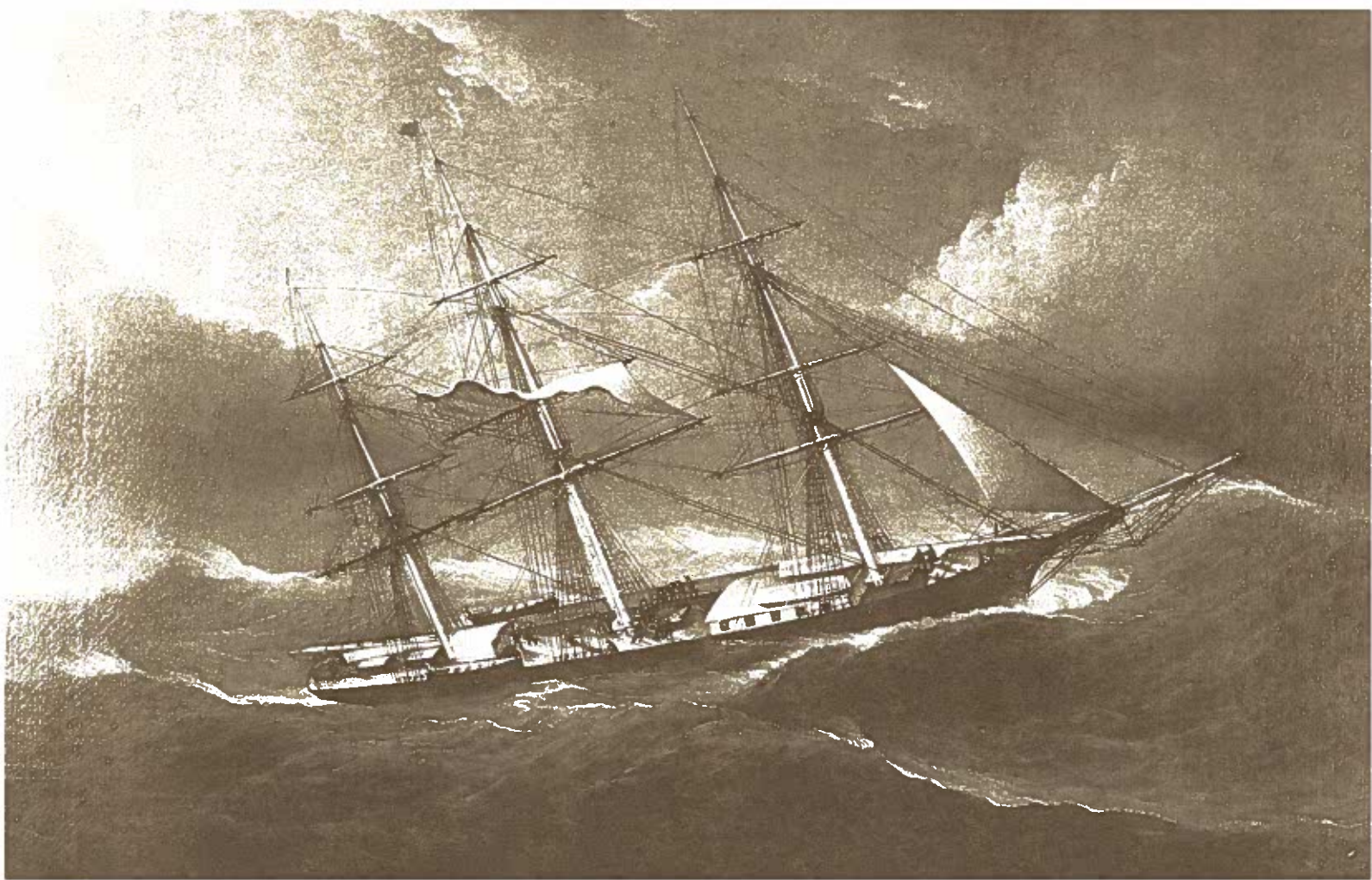
The father of the captain of the *Golden Fleece* asked “What shall I say of the cockroaches, red ants, trantulas and mice?” His reply was

One thing can be said in favor of all of them. They were not mosquitoes. This was a nightly consolation; but it was the only good thing which could be said of them all. The ants would cover every vessel in which they could find anything to drink. Fresh water seemed to be their chief delight. . . . But at sea we found the cockroaches most destructive. It is not pleasant to find several of them on your pillow when you go into your stateroom at night. They are harmless to the person, but the covers of books, and everything which has been pasted or glued, all lacker work, and paper generally suffers from them.⁴¹

Without doubt, the worst problems faced by sailors were caused by the weather. Since the normal route for clipper ships was from an east coast port to California, then to China and Europe before returning home, they not infrequently rounded both Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope. The cold weather at those latitudes as well as the heat of the tropics caused a great deal of discomfort and difficulty for sailors. This was compounded

by the fact that sailors passed from one extreme to another in a matter of days as they sailed from the tropics toward Cape Horn and from the Cape to the tropics again. Only two weeks after complaining of “bitter cold” a seaman in the *Mary Whitridge* reported it was so hot “the pitch has been melting in the deck seams.”⁴² Carpenter Stanley of the *Roman* noted several times that it was too hot to write his journal or that it was so hot that even writing made him sweat. One day he wrote “Horrible! no air, not a breath hardly. . . . never in my life have I felt such a hot day. It is perfectly awful.” Another time he reported “Horrible calm & we [are] nearly all Dead from the effects of the Heat.”⁴³

Cape Horn gales were worse than the heat, however. The *Continental* spent three miserable weeks tacking back and forth off the Cape in terrible weather only to find that they had not gained a single mile. Her sailors enjoyed one privilege not generally available on sailing ships. The captain installed a stove in the sail locker to dry clothes. Most sailors simply had to keep wearing their wet ones.⁴⁴ Sailor Gregory described one gale the *Sea Serpent* encountered off Cape Horn as being worse than it had ever been before. Squall after squall accompanied by sleet and snow passed over us in rapid succession. Several heavy seas struck and washed the whole poop, while forward and amidships all was



flooded. Sometimes I could see a huge wave with its white crest coming down upon us and just have time to dodge when it would board us. . . . Several times we rolled so that we shipped an enormous amount of water to leeward, which poured over the side like a waterfall washing the decks fore and aft. . . . It was a fearful sight to see huge waves coming down upon us, some of which I am sure must have exceeded 20 feet in height, and then see her roll so that water would pour over her lee side. Forward was so covered at times with spray that you could hardly see the foremast.⁴⁵

The *Mary Whitridge* encountered a severe storm near the Cape of Good Hope about which one of her seamen wrote

It commenced to blow hard yesterday and we began to shorten sail. . . . When I went below at 4 this morning, I thought it could not blow harder. . . . I was roused just at seven bells by a terrible crashing sound, and the sound of rushing water over the deck; my room was afloat. I was out in a hurry, and found that a heavy sea had boarded us, crashing through carpenter shop and galley. The bulwarks were

smashed in places, and everything on deck was afloat. . . . There was no breakfast; the gale was shrieking through the rigging; the waves seemed like small mountains, and the white spume was blowing across like snow in a blizzard, at times obscuring the view. The ship was scudding like a frightened horse. It must have been five hundred feet from one wave crest to another, and when we raced down the slope, the top of the following wave was so high that it broke the wind and the sails would drop back loose, but when the ship would struggle up to the crest again, it seemed as if they would blow from the bolt ropes. The seas seemed to grow worse every minute. We were running before it and the danger of one coming aboard from aft was great. . . . About this time another tremendous sea came roaring over the port rail, filling the decks to the top of the bulwarks; for a long moment it looked as though the ship would not climb the next crest. She was almost on her beam ends, with the water roaring over the lee rail, like Niagra. . . . The wind seemed to increase all the forenoon; the great seas would come roaring and foaming down on us, looming up higher than the main yard,

but just as they seemed about to overwhelm us, the ship would struggle up, creaking and groaning and we would breathe again. All hands kept on deck, and I think most of them feared that our finish was just ahead. . . . This evening the captain said he was very anxious all the forenoon, fearing the ship would broach to; then all would have been over, and another ship missing.⁴⁶

20 While sailing across the Atlantic off the coast of North Carolina, the *Sea Serpent* encountered a gale which seaman Gregory noted was "the worst gale we have had since we left New York." Perhaps the most frightening thing about it was the bolt of lightning which broke over the ship with a report "like a cannon." Gregory reported the shock knocked the mate and nearly all the hands down. For himself, he said the effect "was precisely as if a heavy electric battery had discharged its full force upon my system, racking every nerve from my shoulder down and leaving my back as sore as if it had been struck a heavy blow and very weak for some time after."⁴⁷

The *Roman* also encountered gales in the Atlantic which compounded the problem of a leaking ship to such an extent that the crew pumped the ship around the clock, but the water in the hold gradually rose. Carpenter Stanley described the final moments as follows:

Thank God we are all safe, But Oh! Such a Scene I have passed through, I hope never to witness again. Last night All Hands was at the Pumps. No one was allowed to go Below If I may Except one poor fellow who had his fingers Smashed in the pumps. It was evident to all that the Ship was settling fast. Still we strove on. It was indeed a fearful Night. All I believe had given over all Hopes of being saved. All was talking of Home & Loved ones. Thus passed the night as we toiled at the Pumps Giving but poor Encouragement to Each other. At Length Daylight Came Showing more Plainly our Situation. A consultation was held by the officers. I examined the Boats & Reported two of them Sea worthy & one of no use (the long Boat). It was finally decided to throw overboard the Cargo between Decks Leaving one Gang of men at the pumps. . . . We had been at it some ten minutes when Capt. Harding (a passenger) Took a glass & went aloft to see if He could discern anything. After Scanning the Horizon a few moments He sung out Sail Ho! Never Shall I forget the Sound. All was Bewildered. Such a God Send. Every one Stopt Instantly. The mate tried to Keep Order but it was of little

avail. All Hands make Sail brought them to their senses. We set the Foresail, Main Topsail, & Fore Topmast Staysail & Bore down towards Her She heading NW. The Colours was set Union Down. As we neared her they discovered us & backed their main Topsail. She proved to be the Clipper Ship *R.B. Forbes*. . . . They could not render us any assistance But offered to take us off the wreck. . . . The Capt. asked who was willing to stay by the ship in her present condition. The Sailors held a consultation and concluded to leave the Ship as there was no Hopes of ever getting in Safe. Now came the word to clear the two remaining Boats & Leave. . . . Another Sail was now in Sight. . . . She was the Brig *Wm Price*. . . . They Kindly offered to take part of our crew which was finally accepted. . . . It was hard to leave the Old Ship where I had made my Home for the last Seven months & worked so hard to make her look fine, But twas all for the best. . . . Soon came the word Fire the Ship & Leave Her. We placed Fire Cracker[s] in the Cabin & Forecastle. The third mate Set Fire Forrard, the Chief mate aft. I . . . sounded the Pumps for the last time & found 7 feet water in Her. She would not

Steer & was Rolling fearfully. The forecastle was now in a Blaze but the Cabin did not ignite as Speedily. So I ran Forard at the Risk of my Life from the Rolling water Casks & broke open the Paint Locker & seized a can of Turpentine & Hurried aft on the Quarter Deck with it. I then tore off the Bell & with it Dashed in the Skylights & poured the Turpentine down in the Cabin. In an instant it was all in a Blaze. All was now accomplished. . . . With sad Hearts we left our Noble Bark to her Fate.⁴⁸

In order not to leave the impression that it was all work and no play for Jack, perhaps it is appropriate to mention the form of amusement and entertainment on board the sailing ships. One of the most common was the ceremony held when a ship crossed the line. Greenhands on their first voyage were inducted into the brotherhood of King Neptune by having various pranks pulled on them. The most common were an elaborate mock shaving and dunking. One sailor reported that on his first voyage "the sailors did nothing to us, which is general the case when there are no passengers." Another noted that his captain "bought his majesty off with tobacco. . . . to spare our one passenger. . . .so we boys also escaped to our joy."⁴⁹ Pranks of other types also amused sailors. Two mariners in the *Sea Serpent* found two other crew

members asleep on deck, lashed them together, and tied one to a belaying pin and the other to the mainsail. Then they released all twenty pigs on deck. Immediately "the boatswain began to curse and swear at them and sung out for the boys. Such a scrabbling I never saw before." The two bound sailors "went head over heels. . . . A long chase was it before we got the 'critters' in but a merry one was it. I thought I should die of laughter."⁵⁰

Speaking and/or visiting other ships was another welcome break in routine. Speaking consisted merely of exchanging a series of signals with each ship using an elaborate but universally adopted code book in which four digit numbers identified ships and ports or transmitted a variety of messages.⁵¹ Visiting, also called gamming, took more time, but it was generally more meaningful. When two ships met at sea, the captain and a boat crew from one ship visited the other while the first mate and a boat crew from the second ship went on board the first. These visits provided opportunities to catch up on news; exchange newspapers, magazines or books; and to send letters home. One seaman reported that his ship sent off fifty letters by a homeward bound whaler they visited. The officers also sometimes exchanged food, tobacco and a variety of delicacies.⁵³

Reading, singing and spinning yarns were especially popular forms of entertainment during the dog watches and on Sundays. Occasionally one or more of the sailors

could play an instrument to accompany the singing. One observer noted that the most popular songs "were those known as 'sob songs,' melodies of mothers and sweet-hearts and angels watching over them at sea." He thought it quite peculiar that the second most popular songs were "the grog and fighting songs," since the two types were so different.

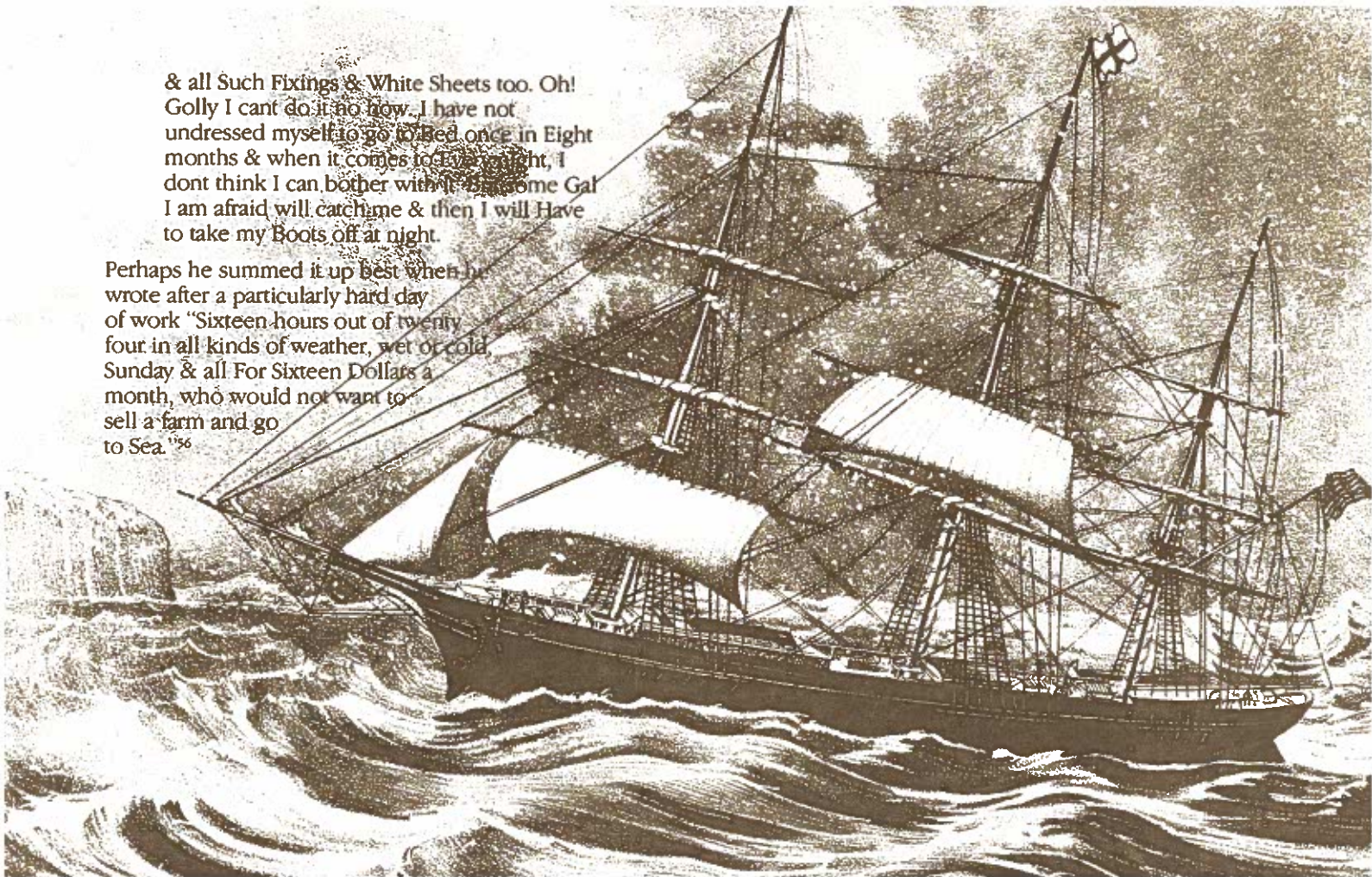
Forming clubs seems also to have been popular. The Brass Heads and Snatch Block Guards of the *Sea Serpent* have been mentioned before. There was also a club on the *Roman*. The members met on a regular basis and argued about "Religion, Politics, Ships, Captains, Sailors, Women, in fact, Everything we can think of."⁵⁴

Given all of the hard and unpleasant work as well as the discomforts and dangers involved, one might legitimately wonder why anyone ever went to sea. One observer felt being at sea enabled one to avoid such things as "the noises of cats at night, the barking of dogs, the scream of locomotives, the painfully regular puffing of stationary engines, the roar of wheels, the annoyances of mischievous boys."⁵⁵ Carpenter Stanley of the *Roman* addressed this subject several times. At one point he noted that "at Sea you can see something new Every day" but at home "you see no change." On another occasion he recorded

When I get Home there is one thing that will
Pall me, that is to Sleep in a Bed with Pillows

& all Such Fixings & White Sheets too. Oh!
Golly I cant do it no how. I have not
undressed myself to go to Bed once in Eight
months & when it comes to the night, I
dont think I can bother with it. But some Gal
I am afraid will catch me & then I will Have
to take my Boots off at night.

Perhaps he summed it up best when he
wrote after a particularly hard day
of work "Sixteen hours out of twenty
four in all kinds of weather, wet or cold,
Sunday & all For Sixteen Dollars a
month, who would not want to
sell a farm and go
to Sea."¹³⁶





Footnotes

¹The most complete list of works on the subject is probably my **Annotated Bibliography of American and British Clipper Ships**, G.W. Blunt White Library Information Bulletin 69-2. Additional articles may be found in my series of works entitled **Bibliography of Maritime and Naval History: Periodical Articles Published 1970-1979**, available through the Texas A&M University Sea Grant College Program.

²Edward E. Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge* of Baltimore," **Log of Mystic Seaport**, Fall, 1979, p. 79.

³Hugh McCulloch Gregory, **The Sea Serpent Journal: Hugh McCulloch Gregory's Voyage Around the World in a Clipper Ship 1854-55**, edited by Robert H. Burgess, Charlottesville, Va., 1975, p. 24. See also p. 16.

⁴Journal of Samuel G. Stanley on board the Clipper Ship *Roman*, August 2, 1853, in the collections of the G.W. Blunt White Library of Mystic Seaport in Mystic, Ct. Hereinafter this source is cited as Stanley, *Roman* Journal.

⁵Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 81.

⁶*Ibid.*; Frederick Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul: A Narrative of Daily Life Aboard an American Clipper Ship**, London, 1925, pp. 23-24. (Reprinted, Stanfordville, NY, 1979).

⁷Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul**, pp. 24-25.

⁸Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 85.

⁹Stanley, *Roman* Journal, August 7 and 28, 1853.

¹⁰Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 29.

¹¹Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul**, p. 28-29.

¹²Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, pp. 9 and 47.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 50-52.

¹⁴Stanley, *Roman* Journal, October 18 - November 24, 1853; Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul**, pp. 72-73; Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, pp. 56-59.

¹⁵Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 24.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁷Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 82.

¹⁸Stanley, *Roman* Journal, June 13 and September 11, 1853.

¹⁹Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, pp. 50-51.

²⁰Mary Matthews Bray, **A Sea Trip in Clipper Ship Days**, Boston, 1920, p. 71.

²¹Stanley, *Roman Journal*, September 11, 1853; Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 92; Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 82.

²²Stanley, *Roman Journal*, October 9, 1853.

²³*Ibid.*, September 11, 1853.

²⁴*Ibid.*, October 30, 1853; Bray, **A Sea Trip in Clipper Ship Days**, p. 15.

²⁵Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 30.

²⁶Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul**, p. 72.

²⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

²⁹Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 111.

³⁰Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 64; Bray, **A Sea Trip in Clipper Ship Days**, p. 76.

³¹Stanley, *Roman Journal*, July 5, 1853.

³²N. Adams, **A Voyage Around the World**, Boston 1871, pp. 35-36; Bray, **A Sea Trip in Clipper Ship Days**, pp. 140-141.

³³Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 69.

³⁴Bray, **A Sea Trip in Clipper Ship Days**, pp. 142-143 and 156-157; Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, pp. 108-109; Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary*

Whitridge," p. 90.

³⁵Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 47; Perry **Fair Winds & Foul**, pp. 85-86; Stanley, *Roman Journal*, May 22, May 29, June 4, August 28, October 2 and October 30, 1853.

³⁶Adams, **A Voyage Around the World**, pp. 142-145.

³⁷Addie Cushing Colman, **Captain Moses Rich Colman, Master Mariner, Scituate, Massachusetts, 1807-1872: Letters of a Yankee Clipper Ship Captain**, Dorchester, Mass., 1949, pp. 59-60, 70, 71, 75, 78, 85 and 97.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 77

³⁹Stanley, *Roman Journal*, July 10 and 15, 1853.

⁴⁰Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul**, pp. 185-186 and 192-193.

⁴¹Adams, **A Voyage Around the World**, pp. 133-134.

⁴²Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 89.

⁴³Stanley, *Roman Journal*, June 20, June 22, August 19 and November 14, 1853.

⁴⁴Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul**, pp. 59 and 66-67.

⁴⁵Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁶Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," pp. 87-88.

⁴⁷Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 120.

⁴⁸Stanley, *Roman Journal*, November 26-December 1, 1853.

⁴⁹Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 14; Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 86.

⁵⁰Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, pp. 11-12.

⁵¹Adams, **A Voyage Around the World**, pp. 18-20.

⁵²Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, p. 26; Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 90.

⁵³Perry, **Fair Winds & Foul**, p. 26; Gregory, **Sea Serpent Journal**, pp. 5-6; Bray, **A Sea Trip in Clipper Ship Days**, p. 71; Bradley, "Before the Mast on the Clipper Ship *Mary Whitridge*," p. 89-90.

⁵⁴Stanley, *Roman Journal*, October 14, 1853.

⁵⁵Adams, **A Voyage Around the World**, pp. 136-137.

⁵⁶Stanley, *Roman Journal*, July 28, September 25 and October 17, 1853.



Suggestions for Further Reading

Over the past century hundreds of books and articles have been written about clipper ships and the people who built and sailed them. Some of the books contain accounts of a single voyage of a particular ship and were usually written by one of the sailors or a passenger. Other books contain descriptions of the entire clipper ship era. A few others deal with individual vessels or builders. Many of the books listed below can be found in most large public or university libraries. A few might be available only in special libraries devoted to maritime history. A few others probably should be in most public junior high or senior high school libraries.

Abbey, Charles Augustus. **Before the Mast in the Clippers: Composed in Large Part of the Diaries of Charles A. Abbey Kept While at Sea in the Years 1856 to 1860.** New York: The Derrydale Press, 1937.

Abbey went to sea at the age of 14 and sailed in the ships *Surprise*, *Charmer*, *Henry Brigham*, *Intrepid* and *Keystone*, and the bark *Francis Palmer*, mainly to San Francisco and China. During his five-year seafaring career, he rose from the position of cabin boy to that of ordinary seaman.

Bray, Mary Matthews. **A Sea Trip in Clipper Ship Days.** Boston: Richard G. Badger, The Gorham Press, 1920.

The author was the daughter of Captain George Bray, master of the clipper ship *National Eagle*. In this book, she described the voyage of her father's ship from Boston to New Orleans to Liverpool to India and return to Boston December 1858 to February 1860.

Chase, Mary Ellen. **Donald McKay and the Clipper Ships.** Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959.

This short biography of the famous designer and builder of clipper ships in East Boston, Massachusetts, was written for junior high school students. It contains chapters on some of McKay's most famous ships such as *Stag Hound*, *Flying Cloud*, *Sovereign of the Seas* and *Great Republic*.

Clark, Arthur Hamilton. **The Clipper Ship Era: An Epitome of Famous American and British Clipper Ships, Their Owners, Builders, Commanders and Crews, 1843-1869.** New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910; reprinted Riverside, Connecticut: 7 C's Press, Inc., 1970.

This is one of the earliest works on the sub-

ject of clipper ships. The author commanded several clipper ships after 1863 and thus knew personally many of the people about whom he wrote. He included a partial list of clipper ships built between 1850 and 1860.

Cutler, Carl C. **Greyhounds of the Sea: The Story of the American Clipper Ship.** New York: Halcyon House of G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930; reprinted Annapolis, Maryland: United States Naval Institute, 1961.

This is probably the best general history of American clipper ships. It is written in an interesting and readable style by one of the founders of Mystic Seaport, the famous Connecticut maritime museum. It is based largely upon newspapers, custom house documents and logbooks of clipper ships, all primarily from the 1850's. In addition to its extensive narrative historical treatment of clipper ships, the book contains several appendices which provide information on the measurements, builders and original owners of more than 200 clipper ships built between 1850 and 1860; sailing and arrival dates and masters of ships sailing to California and China, 1850-1860; and hull lines and sail plans of several clipper ships. The author also included a small number of footnotes and a brief bibliography.

Gregory, Hugh McCulloch. **The Sea Serpent Journal: Hugh McCulloch Gregory's Voyage Around the World in a Clipper Ship 1854-55.** Edited by Robert H. Burgess. Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1975.

Gregory was 22 when he sailed from New York in the *Sea Serpent* for a voyage to San Francisco, Hong Kong and Shanghai before returning to New York. His father was a distinguished naval officer and friend of William Howland, captain of the *Sea Serpent*. This book contains the complete day-to-day diary Gregory kept during the voyage. The editor has also provided a helpful glossary of nautical terms to help readers unfamiliar with 19th Century sailing ship terminology understand the journal.

Howe, Octavius Thorndike and Fredrick C. Matthews. **American Clipper Ships.** 2 vols. Salem, Massachusetts: The Marine Reaserch Society, 1926-27.

This is the best single source of information about individual clipper ships. It is actually a biographical dictionary of clipper ships and is based largely on contemporary records and ships registers. The quantity of information about individual ships varies greatly, but whatever is included is usually accurate.

Jennings, John Edward. **Clipper Ship Days: The**

Golden Age of American Sailing Ships. New York: Random House, 1952.

This is a very general book written for junior high level students. The author did not include either footnotes or a bibliography.

Judson, Clara Ingram. **Donald McKay, Designer of Clipper Ships.** New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.

This is a short general biography of the famous designer and builder of clipper ships written for junior high level students.

Laing, Alexander Kinman. **Clipper Ship Men.** New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944.

———. **Clipper Ships and Their Makers.** New York: Putnam, 1966.

These are both very general works and are written much like novels without either footnotes or bibliographies. The first deals with men who built, owned and sailed clipper ships while the second is devoted largely to designers and builders of clippers.

Lyon, Jane D. **Clipper Ships and Captains.** New York: American Heritage Publishing Company, 1962.

This is a very general history written for junior high school level students and has numerous illustrations, many of which are in color.

McKay, Richard Cornelius. **Some Famous Sailing Ships and Their Builder, Donald McKay.** New York: G. P.

Putnam's Sons, 1928; reprinted Riverside, Connecticut: 7 C's Press, Inc., 1970.

This is probably the most detailed study of one of the best known builders of clipper ships. It contains a complete list of ships he built and much detailed information about some of the most famous ones.

Mjelde, Michael Jay. **Glory of the Seas.** Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1970.

The *Glory of the Seas* was the last clipper built by Donald McKay. This is undoubtedly the most detailed study of any clipper ship.

Northrop, Everett H. **Florence Nightingale of the Ocean.** Kings Point, New York: United States Merchant Marine Academy, 1959.

This small pamphlet contains the story of how Mary A. Patten took charge of the clipper ship *Neptune's Car* in 1857 when her husband, Joshua Patten, became too ill to command the ship and the first mate was under arrest for insubordination. Mary Patten was only 19 when she assumed command of the ship and sailed it around Cape Horn to San Francisco.



Glossary

Abrogate, to abolish by official action or to do away with.

Aft, toward the stern or rear.

Amidships, usually in line with the keel, but sometimes midway between bow and stern.

Becket, a small piece of rope made into a circle for various uses; the term is often applied to any simple eye which receives the hook of a block.

30

Belaying pin, a device of brass, iron or wood which is set in the pin or fife rails to secure the running rigging (sail ropes).

Bonito, any of various medium-sized tunas intermediate between the smaller mackerels and the larger tunas.

Broach to, to swing to the wind when running free, through bad steering or by the force of a heavy sea. This dangerous situation is a frequent cause of foundering, or loss of spars at least.

Bow, the forward part of a vessel.

Bulwarks, a vessel's frames extend three or four feet above the weather deck and are planked, forming a solid "rail." It serves the crew's safety, helps secure deck cargo and keeps out a certain amount of water in rough weather.

Buntlines, lines attached to the foot of a square sail to gather a sail up to its yard or to spill it.

Caboose, a cookhouse or deck, or, in the 1850's, also meant stove.

Cask, a barrel-shaped container.

Cathead, a heavy timber projecting horizontally from the bow through which the cat tackle moves. This tackle heaves the ring of the anchor to the cat head. This process is called *Catting the anchor*.

Clew, a lower corner of a square sail or after corner of a fore-and-aft sail; to haul (a sail) up or down by ropes through the clews.

Coiling down the rigging, to lay a rope down in circular turns; if the rope is laid up righthanded, it is coiled from left to right; if lefthanded, from right to left; hemp rope is always coiled from left to right.

Crimp, a despicable person who preys upon seamen, getting their advance and other money from them by various underhanded and contemptible practices.

Cross-jack, the lowest yard on the mizzen-mast of a sailing ship.

Crossing the line, crossing the equator (*see Line*)

Duff, a mixture of flour and water, with raisins added is Plum Duff. It is a sea tradition to serve this dish on Thursdays, perhaps to compensate for the no-meat ration that day.

Dunnage, all kinds of wooden blocking used in the holds of vessels to raise the cargo above the floors and sides, preserving it from sweat and leakage, and to serve as wedges to prevent it from shifting.

Fender, a buffer of wood or braided rope hung over a ship's sides to prevent injury to her hull.

Fife rail, a pin rail in a semi-circle around the mast.

Forecastle, the compartment set aside for living quarters of seamen (usually pronounced fo'c'sul).

Founder, to fill with water and sink at sea.

Forward, toward the bow; pronounced "forrard."

Gaff, the spar upon which the head of a fore-and-aft sail is extended.

Galley, the cooking compartment.

Grease down, to apply a lubricant, or "slush," to a mast as a preservative, or along the course of a yard parrel to prevent friction.

Guano, a substance composed chiefly of seafowl excrement, used as fertilizer.

Halyard, a rope to hoist and lower yards, gaffs and sails.

Hawse pipes, the iron castings in the bow through which the anchor chains run.

Hawser, a large rope for towing, mooring or securing a ship.

Hold, a large lower compartment of a vessel used for cargo.

Holystone, a brick of sandstone used to clean decks by hauling it back and forth; small ones used around corners are called prayer books. Pieces of stone from a church were used to scrub decks in the British Royal Navy, hence the term.

Hull, the main structure of a vessel.

Jackstays, an iron rod along the top of a yard to which the sails are fastened; also the rope running up a mast on which the parrel of a yard travels.

Larboard, an old term for the left, or port, side of a ship.

Lee, away from the wind.

Leeway, amount of drift a vessel is carried to leeward by force of the wind.

Line, the equator; it is tradition that a seaman be subjected to an initiation ritual the first time he crosses the line, thereby becoming a "shellback."

Main-mizzen, the third mast of a four-masted vessel.

Mainsail, the square sail set from the main yard; the large fore-and-aft sail set from the mainmast.

Malady, illness or disorder.

Mangusteers, probably "Mangosteen," an East Indian fruit with a flavor suggestive of both peaches and pineapple.

Mast, vertical spars (or poles) set in ship primarily to set sail, but also used to support cargo booms and to set

signals.

Moorings, heavy anchors and chains permanently in position; the chains are attached to mooring buoys which have a large ring in the top to which the anchor chain is shackled.

Parrel, a ring which goes around a mast and holds a yard close to it; allows the yard to be hoisted and lowered.

Pitch, a byproduct of tar which is melted and poured into the deck seams.

Port, the left side of a vessel, formerly called the larboard side. Originally the word derived from the fact that 17th Century ships had their only loading port on the left side.

Quarter, the upper portion of the ship's sides near the stern.

Rigging, the ropes of a ship; the wire rope supporting the spars is called *standing rigging* and the hemp ropes used in setting and furling sail are known as *running rigging*.

Scouse, ship's biscuit, salt pork and molasses.

Scudding, to run before a gale or squall.

Slush down, *see Grease down*.

Snatch block, a block that can be opened on one side to receive a loop of a rope to save hauling the whole length through the block.

Spars, a term applied to all masts, yards, gaffs, booms, etc.

Spume, froth or fume.

Squall, a sudden and violent burst of wind; it may be just wind or a rain, snow or thunder squall.

Starboard, the right side of a vessel, looking forward. It dates back to the time when a steering board was used on the right side of a vessel and the words became corrupted into starboard.

Staysail, a triangular fore-and-aft sail set from the various stays and named accordingly, such as the foretopmast staysail.

Stern, the after part of a vessel.

Tack, the direction of a ship with respect to the trim of her sails; to change the direction (of a sailing ship) by turning the bow to the wind; the lower, forward corner of a fore-and-aft sail; the rope holding down the lower, forward corner of a course; the weather clew of a course.

Tar down, to coat standing rigging with tar, or with a mixture containing tar, as a preservative.

Tarpaulin muster, a term applied to the pooling of all the financial resources of a group of sailors.

Top sail, the square sail above the course or crossjack.

Yard, a long spar crossing a mast horizontally to support and spread the head of a square sail.

Yardarm, a yard is divided for easy designation into two parts, port and starboard; the outer quarter of each of these parts is the yardarm.