



## *The Voyage of the Good Sloop Dolphin to Africa 1795-1796*

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AMERICAN merchants trading with West African commercial entrepôts at the end of the eighteenth century encountered many dangers and difficulties during the course of a single voyage. Dr. Ware and Bennett and Brooks have recorded the uncertainty of markets, the probability of contracting unknown diseases and fevers, and the precarious nature of dealing with Africa-based traders who occasionally absconded with cargoes or held ships and crews captive for seemingly obscure reasons.<sup>1</sup> Less recorded are those voyages which met with disaster or where the vessel failed to return at all. One explanation for the sparsity of reports for the latter category is that few ship logs of such voyages survive.

The following 'Contraction of a Journal' is an account of a Warren, Rhode Island, sloop which failed to return from the West African coast. The Good Sloop *Dolphin* departed Warren on 23 June 1795, sailing first to St. Thomas in the Caribbean, and thence to the Windward Coast of Africa where she arrived on 9 October 1795, after a voyage of fifty-six days. Unfortunately for *Dolphin* and her captain, the 1795-1796 trading season was detrimental to Americans trading in West Africa. Instead of the high prices for American merchandise which characterized the 1794-1795 trading season, an inundation of American goods in search of high profits increased supply and the bar value of American products plum-

<sup>1</sup> E. Richmond Ware, M.D., 'Health Hazards of the African Trader,' *THE AMERICAN NEPTUNE*, XXVII, 81-97; 'Enoch Richmond Ware's Voyage to West Africa,' in *New England Merchants in Africa*, ed. by Norman R. Bennett and George E. Brooks, Jr. (Boston, 1965), pp. 283-93, 314-17. For a more recent treatment of dangers in the African market, especially as it relates to the pre-nineteenth-century period, see Tommy T. Hamm, 'The American Slave Trade With Africa, 1620-1807' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1975), Chapter III. I am grateful to the University of Wisconsin for grant support to conduct this and related research, to Jan Larkin for typing the several drafts, and to George Brooks, Jr., A. Peter Kup and colleagues at La Crosse for their helpful suggestions and contributions.

meted in 1795-1796.<sup>2</sup> *Dolphin* had the additional misfortune of succumbing to physical deterioration after eleven months in African waters.

This journal is one of the few surviving records, however abbreviated, of a voyage to Africa in which a ship was lost in the process. The record traces the frustrations and observations of a captain who returned the ship's log to the sloop's owners to prove the correctness of his action on the African coast. The original of this journal is found in the Rhode Island Historical Society Library, Providence, Rhode Island. Slight corrections in punctuation, and capitalization at the beginning of sentences are made to insure clarity.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

#### A Contraction of a Journal,

Kept on board the Good Sloop Dolphin, from Warren to St. Thomas; from thence to the coast of Africa.

Wednesday  
June 17th  
1795      This day ship'd on board the Sloop Dolphin; nothing remarkable this day.

Thursday  
18th and      Employ'd in taking in the Cargo. Took on board 14 hd. lard.<sup>4</sup>  
Friday 19th      Employ'd bending the sails.

Saturday  
20th      Employ'd in taking in the cargo, took on board 29 hd., 3 teirse's and 5 barrels. The Amount of the cargo in all, 69 hd., 4 teirse's, and 5 half barrels of rum, 6 hd. of tobacco, 39 bundles of shingles, 1/2 ton of cordage, 12 boxes of sope, 3000 feet of lumber, 1/2 thousand of hoops.

<sup>2</sup> George E. Brooks, Jr., *Yankee Traders, Old Coasters, and African Middlemen* (Boston, 1970), pp. 55-56, notes that Americans trading in West Africa in the 1794-95 season benefited by a French attack upon Sierra Leone in September 1794 and by a resulting scarcity of goods from Europe. Hamm, 'American Slave Trade,' p. 88, counted nineteen slavers outfitted for the African market in 1795, with twenty-four in 1796, during years when the United States was neutral in the war between England and France.

<sup>3</sup> The captain of *Dolphin*, from this contraction, is noted only as Captain Eddy. The manuscript does not identify owner or supercargo, nor is there indication of the author of the log. Hamm noted, pp. 128-29, that among all the voyages studied for his dissertation, only one owner had sent a vessel to the West Indies on her way to Africa. Yet *Dolphin* first sailed to St. Thomas Island before heading eastward. Hamm also observed, pp. 139-41, that the average time for a trading venture in West Africa was six to seven months, from time of departure to return, and that owners planned voyages to coincide with the end of the rainy season on the African coast. *Dolphin* took fifty-six days to cross from St. Thomas, yet arrived during the month of October. Such a long period for crossing may suggest an old and foul-bottomed vessel to begin with.

<sup>4</sup> The measures used in stocking the cargo have the following equivalences:

Hogshead equals 63 old wine gallons or 52 1/2 Imperial gallons.

Tierce equals 42 old wine gallons or 1/3 pipe.

Barrel equals 36 gallons of beer, 32 gallons of ale, or 31-40 gallons of liquor.

Pipe equals 126 old wine gallons, 2 hogsheads, 4 barrels of 31 1/2 gallons of rum each, or 1/2 tun.

Tun equals 252 old wine gallons.

A league equals about three nautical miles at 6,080 feet each or 18,440 feet.

- Sunday 21 Employ'd at Church.
- Tuesday 23 At 2 P.M. got under way at Warren and sail'd for N[ew]port. At 10 do. came too at pine hill.
- Wednesday 24th At 4 A.M. got under way. At 3 P.M. came too at New Port. So ends this day, rainy wind at South.
- Friday 26th First part. Clear w[eath]r. Wind at W.N.W. Got under way at N. [ew]port and stood for sea. Block Island bore SW by W, Distance 3 leagues. Caught 3 codfish.
- Remarks on Saturday June 27th 1795 First part. Clear W<sup>r</sup>. At 2 P.M. unbent the cables and stoe'd them away. At 4 P.M. Block Island bore NW by W, Distance 6 or 7 Leagues, from Which wee take our Departure being in Latt. 41 15N and Long 71 37W. Employ'd in making a top gallant sail.
- Munday 29th Clear weather. At 9 P.M. saw a ship standing to th Norward and Eastward.  
Sat up top mast shrod.
- Wednesday July 1st Clear weather. At 4 P.M. the Ship Sally's boat of Baltimore from Lamernk. Capt. John Hutchison came on board for a supply of water and provisions.<sup>5</sup> We let them have 1 hogsh.d of water, 15G.<sup>8</sup> of rum, 3 Gall of Molasses, 1 bushel of meal, 1 bucket of bread, 1 Shane of twine. She was full of fresh passengers and Short of provisions; parted with the ship at half past 2 A.M.
- Monday July 6th At 1 P.M. saw the land, the S.W. part. Bore S.E. distance 5 leagues which we find to be Burmudas. At 4 do the SW part N.E. distance 4 leagues from from which we take a new departer.
- Tuesday 14 8 days out Small breezes. Saw a sail to windard. Standing to Northard at 10 A.M. spoke a brig from Suranam Commanded by Allen Jacobs bound to Rhodeisland.<sup>6</sup> So end this day.
- Friday 17th At 10 A.M. saw the land bareing from SSE to SW distance 5 leagues. Sound. 21 days out.
- Saturday 18 We found the land we saw yesterday to be Porto Rico and hauled on a wind to beat up. St. Johns bareing SW by W Distance 4 leagues. At 12 saw a sail.
- July 20th At half past 9 A.M. spoke a brig from St. Thomas who inform'd us St. Thomas bore SE by S distance 2 leagues. Bent the cables at 9 P.M. Sprung the jib boom.
- July 21st At 8 A.M. came too with our best bow anchor in St. Thomas harbour. At 9 do out boat and Capt Eddy went on shoare with Capt Usher.<sup>7</sup> A passage of 25 day.

<sup>5</sup> Unidentified.<sup>6</sup> Unidentified.<sup>7</sup> Usher, captain of the sloop *Cato* of Bristol, was in Providence harbor on 22 May 1795. *The Providence Gazette*, 23 May 1795. Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, *Bristol, Rhode Island* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), pp. 44-45, calls Samuel Usher a slaver.

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- July 25th This day we sent home some letters to our friends by Capt. Jackson.<sup>8</sup>
- 26th All hands went up to Black beards castle.
- July 30th 1795 This day all hands was ship'd on board the Sloop Rising-Sun.<sup>9</sup> Nothing more remarkable.
- Remarks on board the Sloop Rising Sun.
- Friday August 14th 1795 First part. Clear weather. At 7 A.M. waid anchor and stood for sea. At 11 do spoke a French Ship of 18 guns.<sup>10</sup> St. Thomas bore SE and sail rock South. Got the top sail yard athwart. So end these 24 hours. Wind calm.
- Saturday August 15th At 1 P.M. St. Thomas bore ESE Distance 6 leagues from which we take our departure in Lattitude 18 22, Long. 64 46. At 6 do saw a ship to the westward. She fire'd 4 shot and we hove too. She stood to the Southard and we sill'd away. Again at 10 do we saw the Ship under our lee. She fire'd several shot which whitle'd among our riging and order'd us to heave too unde[r] his lee. He sent his boat on board after Capt Eddy and his papers. Aftere examoning and searching the Chests and Vesel and Theatning to carry him into Martinics, they brought him on board and let us go.<sup>11</sup> Nothing more remarkable. 1 day out.
- Tuesday August 25 Clear weather. At 6 A.M. saw 3 sail to the Northward and Eastward standing to the Southward and Eastward. So ends this day. 11 days out.
- Remarks on Wensday Leading gales and pleasant Weather. At 4 P.M. spoke a Brig from St. Thomas bound to Glasco in Long 60 30.<sup>12</sup>
- August 26th At 5 A.M. saw 2 sail standing to the Eastward. So ends 12 days out.
- Remarks on Sunday August 30th Slight breezes. At 3 P.M. got out the Small boat and try'd the current and found it setting NNE 1 knot per hour and then took in the boat and stood on. At 6 A.M. struck a devil fish and lost the harpoon. Nothing more remarkable. 16 Days out.

<sup>8</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>9</sup> The sloop *Rising Sun*, owned by Hammett of Baltimore, arrived at Providence on 21 August 1795. *The Providence Gazette*, 22 August 1795.

<sup>10</sup> By August 1795, France and Britain were at war, and American vessels were liable for boarding. French policy relative to American neutrality, however, was uncertain in mid-1795, and this may account for the fact that *Dolphin* was not boarded. See Anna C. Clauder, *American Commerce as affected by the Wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon* (Philadelphia, 1932), pp. 34-44.

<sup>11</sup> The Jay-Grenville Treaty of November 1794, also known as the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, averted war between the United States and Great Britain. In Article VII of the treaty, Britain agreed to compensate for losses and damages due to illegal captures and seizures. See Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), pp. 463-64. Perhaps in consequence of this treaty, British men-of-war left American shipping free of seizure for some years. Even so, there was growing concern that French ship owners carried forged American papers and, therefore, claimed protection under the Jay Treaty. British war vessels, consequently, continued to inspect papers of American vessels. See Clauder, *American Commerce*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>12</sup> Unidentified.

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- Remarks on Monday September 7th Cloudy with rain. At 1 P.M. picked up a large stump of Spanish Cedar. At 9 A.M. saw a sail to the Southward. Standing to the Eastward. 24 days out.
- Remarks on Friday October 2nd Fresh gales and thick weather. At 4 P.M. saw the land bareing E $\frac{1}{2}$ N Distance 10 leagues which we suppose to be Ferro one of the Canary Islands, from which we take our new departure, it being in Latt 27 48 N, Long 17 45W. So ends 49 days out, all well.
- Thursday October 8th At 2 P.M. saw the land bareing from SSE to Eas[t]. Jibe'd Ship and got the anchors on the bows and bent the cables. At 5 A.M. saw cape De Verd bareing ESE. 55 days out from St. Thomas.
- Friday 9 Tornados At 6 P.M. came too withe the small bower at Goree. At 7 do, Capt Eddy went on Shore.
- Sunday 11th Light winds and clear. At 7 P.M. waid anchor and sat all sail. Lost 1 rig. 58 days Out.
- Wensday Oct 14th Clear weather. At 2 P.M. saw a turtle, hove out the Small boat. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2 the boat return'd without any.  
At 11 A.M. saw a number of turtle. Got out the boat and caught two. So ends this 24th with cathing a fish which gave us all a fine dinner. 61 Days out.
- Thursday Oct. 15th At 2 P.M. caught another turtle at 5 in boat and turn'd up the long boat to put in the turtle. Squally with rain. Killed 1 turtle.
- Wensday October 21st At 7 A.M. saw the land which we suppose'd to be the Royal Pungas. At 12 Spoke a boat from Royal Unus bound to the Isles Delos.<sup>13</sup> So ends this 24 hours with a number of whale in sight. 68 Days out from St. Thomas.
- Remarks on Thursday Oct. 22 1795 At 2 A.M. hove out the small boat and Capt Eddy went onboard the Schoner for information. At 3 return'd. At 4 saw the Isles Delos as we suppose'd but the weather makes the land appear odd. There being no people on board the Shoner but blacks except one molattor. We like'd not there company. At 6 we loaded our guns not knowing what they might do.<sup>14</sup> So ends 69 days out. All well on board.

<sup>13</sup> In 1797 Joseph Hawkins 'of New York' published an account of a voyage to this section of the coast, made in 1795. Hawkins claimed to have visited the Iles de Los, and the rivers Pongo and Nunez. Details regarding coastal groups, however, vary significantly with other sources; this weakens the reliability of this account as it relates to African peoples. His description of trading practiced by Europeans is corroborated by other sources. Hawkins described a vibrant merchant community of French and English merchants on the Iles de Los. Hawkins noted that these islands were ideal for slave trading, for slaves were permitted to roam freely with no avenue of escape to the coast. He claimed that ships could anchor with safety at the islands, protected against storms. The latter observation was in error. During storms, captains took their vessels outside the ring of islands, where they could better weather storms should they lose their mooring. Joseph Hawkins, *A History of a Voyage to the Coast of Africa* (Troy: Luther Pratt, 1797), pp. 14-15. For development of the commercial communities in the Nunez and Pongo rivers, see the author's 'Trade, Coasters, and Conflict in the Rio Pongo from 1790 to 1808,' *Journal of African History*, XIV, 45-64.

<sup>14</sup> This circumstance was common along the coast. Coasters, those with trading establishments among the rivers, often were Africans or Africans of mixed descent. Crews were composed of local seamen.

- Friday  
Oct. 23rd Light winds. At 8 P.M. came to anchor at the Isles Delos, where there was two English Ships lying.<sup>15</sup> I scent her boat on board after Capt Eddy. At 9 hove out the small boat and carried them the log book. So ends 70 days out. Baugh 21 slaves at the Isles Delos and got some water. Nothing Remarkable, 12 days at here.
- Wensday  
November  
4th Employ'd clearing decks. At 4 P.M. in boats. At 5 waid and stood out S by E. At 8 SSE, the Isleunds bearing N by W and the Main Land SE.
- Monday  
9th  
Tornados Light winds. At P.M. came too in 6 fathoms of water at the Bonnas [Bananas] Island. Got out the Yaul. At 8 A.M. Capt Eddy went on shore.
- Thursday  
12th Clear weather. Employ'd in landing the cargo and ventures.
- Friday  
20th Squaly. At 2 A.M. we had a heavy trinado which caused us to drag our anchor, and let go the big one.
- Saturday  
21  
Tornados At 6 A.M. we hove up an anchor of 600 weight on the bight of our big cable. We hear this day from the Ship Liberty Lying at Surilona belonging to Providence.<sup>16</sup> She had made some trade at Goree, and on her passage down from thence the Slave killed Capt Potter who commanded the Ship and cut 1 man very bad.<sup>17</sup> But the rest, with killing one Slave, drove the rest overboard which was but 6 in number. They took the Ship again.
- Thursday  
26th Haul'd on shore and graved one side of the Sloop, and mended the Sheathing.
- 27th Graved the othe side and hauld of in the road and came too. Bought some pumkins.
- Saturday  
28 Employ'd in mooring the vessel. Cetch some fish. So ends with all hands well on board.  
Nothing happend remarkable.
- December  
8th Tuesday Good weather. This day Wm Cleveland went for the river Sher-  
borouh and is to return so that we shall be ready to sail the first day  
1795 of January.<sup>18</sup> We are to have our Slaves at 120 barrs per head with

<sup>15</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>16</sup> The ship *Liberty* entered Savannah harbor in April 1796 after a reported venture at Sierra Leone. The master was Thom Prentis, with Amasa Smith and Abijah Potter listed as owners. Hamm, 'American Slave Trade,' p. 401.

<sup>17</sup> There is no other reference to this event. The Potters of Bristol, Rhode Island, had traded along the African coast for many years, and Howe, *Bristol*, p. 31, a distant relative, called the patriarch, Simeon Potter, a rogue, slaver, and privateer. Simeon Potter died, however, in the 1780's. Whether the Captain Potter mentioned as killed in this account is the same as Abijah Potter, owner of *Liberty*, is uncertain.

<sup>18</sup> William Cleveland was the son of John Cleveland and successor to his uncle's business on Bananas Island after his uncle's death in 1791. William had received an education abroad in England. Lieutenant J. Matthews described the Cleveland operation at Bananas in glowing terms. C. B. Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization* (London, 1796), paragraphs 454 and 455, noted that

our wood water cask and fresh provision all found; and a demurage of 20 barrs per day if detain'd after the first day of January.<sup>19</sup>

- Friday  
11 Went over to the Main and got a boat load of Oysters. Had a heavy tanador with rain and thunder, lightning.<sup>20</sup> Return'd the next day with a boat load of fine oysters.
- Monday  
14 Captain Eddy went on board a brig from New York. The Capt inform'd him of the sickness in that Citty which rage'd to a great height.<sup>21</sup>
- Friday  
25 Good weather. This day being Christmas no work done on board. Had a quarter of a goat from sent us from the Doctor on Isle.<sup>22</sup>  
Drouth So ends.
- Thursday  
January 14  
1796 The boat went over to the main after Oysters and returnd the next day with a load. Capt Eddy went on board of a Ship from Providence Commanded by Capt Sterry who informed him of some verry meloncholy deaths.<sup>23</sup> Got some onions and potatoes.
- Sunday  
24 Capt Cook<sup>24</sup> arived here from Rhodisland from which we got information of Capt Edward Gardner at Goree.<sup>25</sup>

Cleveland advanced goods freely but demanded payment on time. Those who failed to pay fast enough were seized by an army raised by Cleveland and sold to American slavers visiting the coast. According to M. Knutsford, *Life and Letters of Zachary Macaulay* (London: Edward Arnold, 1900), pp. 33-34, Cleveland's center of operation in the Sherbro area was at Jenkins, a town on the north shore of Sherbro island, protected by Chief William Ado. William Cleveland died in 1797.

<sup>19</sup> The 'bar trade' was a system of commerce used for centuries on the African coast. Originally copper or iron bars were sought by Africans in exchange for African products. Over the years, however, all goods acquired a 'bar' value, vis-a-vis supply and demand of African and European products. For example, if Americans flooded the coast with trade merchandise, such goods would have low bar value and therefore it would require more such goods to purchase African slaves. Even so, 120 bars per slave does seem expensive for late 1795. See Lars Ljunstrom, *The Trade of Guinea* (Uppsala, 1965), pp. 70-75, and Brooks, *Yankee Traders*, pp. 53-55, for conditions of the period.

<sup>20</sup> Rain and tornadoes at this time of year would have been most unusual.

<sup>21</sup> Bayrd Still, *Mirror for Gotham* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), pp. 57-58, noted that in the mid-1790's, the cleanliness of New York began to decline. Cows and pigs roamed freely, and foreign visitors complained that no one bothered to remove dead cats, dogs, and rats from the streets. In the 1790's, yellow fever periodically ravaged the city's population.

<sup>22</sup> Dr. Everson. See footnote number 30 below.

<sup>23</sup> Cyprian Sterry of Providence owned many ships which transported slaves to North America. In 1796-97 four of his vessels entered Savannah harbor alone. *General Greene* (Captain John Stanton) brought eighty-eight slaves from the Iles de Los on 8 May 1796; *James* (Edward Boss) arrived with ninety-eight on 12 August 1796; *Polly* (Joshua Smith), forty, on 14 September 1796; and *Louisa* (Elijah Briggs) with ninety-two on 9 May 1797. Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), IV, 633. Afzelius, *Journal*, pp. 44-50, noted that the ship *Mary* of Providence, Captain Steady, landed at Freetown on 11 January 1796. Steady claimed to be an old hand on the coast, having shipped there twice before. On 16 January Afzelius claimed that he purchased a slave. Both accounts are confused, however, because an abbreviated log of *Mary*, Captain Nathan Henry, shows anchoring at Freetown on 11 January 1796. That both Afzelius and the author of *Dolphin's* log mistook the captain for Sterry may represent an attempt to cover slaving activities, for some reason. See Donnan, *Documents*, III, 360-78.

<sup>24</sup> Donnan, *Documents*, III, 363, Log of Ship *Mary*, observed that the brig *Captain Cooke* had left Goree for the Leeward Coast of Africa on 31 December 1795.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 362. On 29 December 1795, Captain Gardner of the schooner *Captain Greene* arrived at Goree.

- Drouth We in this early youthful age,  
Can ease our minds to think of home;  
It often makes us for to rage  
To think we are abliege to roam.<sup>26</sup>
- Thursday Sold Capt Walker the anchor that we caught for 1 barrel of beef,  
February 1 barrel of pork, 2 Gall of rum, 16 lb of tobacco.<sup>27</sup> At night Capt Eddy  
18th with 4 hands went in the long boat for the river Sherborough to see  
Drouth Wm Cleavland.
- Tuesday These 24 hours good weather. At 10 A.M. Capt Harris arived her  
23rd from Warren and brings news of our relation.<sup>28</sup>
- Wensday At 5 P.M. the long boat returned from the river and left Capt. Eddy  
24th in the river.
- Friday 26th At 6 A.M. Capt Harris sail'd from here to the leeward. William  
Sunday Cole taken very ill and Ezekiel Layton 3 days afterwards with a  
March 6 fever.<sup>29</sup>
- Sunday At 10 oclock this day Dr. Everson was buried who had been on this  
13th Isleand 7 years and was agoing off passenger with us.<sup>30</sup>
- Friday Arived here a Schooner from Providence the Captain of which died  
April 1st in the river Gambia.<sup>31</sup>
- Saturday 9th At 6 A.M. Capt Eddy came on board sick from the river In a Bents  
Tornados [Bance] Island Schoner where he had been sick 10 or 12 days with a  
Rains fever.

<sup>26</sup> It was and is customary practice to begin a new year with verse inserted into the ship's log.

<sup>27</sup> Two Walkers along this coast could have purchased the anchor. Dr. Walker, a European trader located near Kacundy on the Rio Nunez, had been active on the Windward Coast since mid-century. Before settling on the coast, he had served as a surgeon aboard a slaver and had had dealings with John Ormond of the Rio Pongo. After settling in the Nunez, Walker quickly rose in the river trade and became a supporter of the Mandiale branch of the Landuman royal family which ruled from Kacundy. Walker employed African assistants in the distant hinterland where they directed trade coastward to his commercial establishment. He owned several seaworthy vessels and traded frequently with merchantmen at the Iles de Los, Bissau, and Sierra Leone. Walker died in December 1795. Since the journal entry for the sale of the anchor is dated 18 February 1796, it is possible that Walker's successor, John Pearce (c. 1775-1818) a Eurafrican, purchased the anchor. James Watt, 'Journal of Mr. James Watt, in his Expedition to and from Teembo in the Year 1794' (Rhodes House Library, Oxford, MSS. Africa S. 22), pp. 5-6, 9; Carl Bernhard Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization* (London, 1794), p. 379; Colonial Office 270/2, pp. 123-25, Public Record Office, London; Afzelius, *Journal*, p. 47. The more likely buyer, however, was Captain Beau Walker, observed passing Freetown on 19 June 1796. Macaulay claimed that Walker had arrived on the coast with several slavers assigned to him and that he had already filled cargoes for some for the Atlantic Passage. Slaves on one of his vessels were reported to have rebelled, killed the captain and escaped ashore. A year later, in October 1797, Captain Walker was killed near the Iles de Los by a member of his crew. Knutsford, *Life and Letters*, pp. 141, 176-77.

<sup>28</sup> Captain Charles Harris of the ship *Charleston* was observed in West Africa in mid-1797, trading at Goree and in the Gambia.

<sup>29</sup> Cole and Layton were members of the crew.

<sup>30</sup> According to Afzelius, *Journal*, pp. 9, 146, Dr. Everson lived on Bananas Island with William Cleveland, and he died sometime before 23 April 1796. See Knutsford, *Life and Letters*, p. 80, for Evesson of Bananas.

<sup>31</sup> Unidentified. Note that *Dolphin* has been on the coast approximately six months.

- Sunday  
10th            This morning we had a little girl died who had been sick a long time, which we buried on the Island.
- Wensday  
13th            Arived here a Liverpool Ship.<sup>82</sup>
- 14              Parted the small cable and lost the anchor.  
Monday        Mended the yawl and sold her to Capt Croutson for 1 barrel of  
May 16th      beef.<sup>83</sup> So ends this day rainy.
- Wensday  
May 18th      Capt Eddy, having got much better, sets out for the river Sherborough in one of the craft to see Wm Cleveland.
- Monday 30     At 6 A.M. parted the Small cable and the next day swep cetch the  
Rains         anchor and bent the main sail in order to get the North Side of the  
31              Island. Went round and moored in 7 fathoms of water.
- Friday  
June 3rd      Got some hoops of a Sloop Belonging to Holy and Blew of Providence, Capt Peters.<sup>84</sup>
- Friday  
10th            Imploy sweeping for a fine Liverpool Sloop's anchor and caught a small anchor of 200 Lb with no ring.<sup>85</sup>
- Saturday 11    Had a heavy tornados which caused us to drag and in heaveing up  
Gales and     we parted our small cable.<sup>86</sup> We swep and cetch it again with much  
rain            trouble.
- Sunday  
July 3rd       Parted the small cable and the next day by sweeping we cetch it again with a small kedg.
- Tuesday  
5th             Bent the small cable and hove on the big one to weigh it, and parted the cable. Swep and caught the big anchor. Cut off 10 fathoms and bent the cable.
- Thursday  
7th             Throughout these 24 hours hard gales and rainy attened with heavy thunder. At 8 A.M. parted the small cable. At 2 P.M. parted the big cable. Made sail and stood to the Northward and Westward with the wind WSW. Under two reef mains and Jib.
- Friday  
8th             The wind still continuing to blow a gale with rain and our vessel's bottom being so fowl that she will not work to windward and the sea runing bad. We run under the lee of the Island and lay off and

<sup>82</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>83</sup> Captain Croutson, alias Croutsen, Crowthen, and Crowtsen, was a slaver who traded at Freetown in 1795-96 and who was reprimanded for selling slaves to Captain Steady (Sterry). Alexander Peter Kup, in his notes to the Afzelius text, identified Croutson as a Nova Scotian Methodist. Afzelius, *Journal*, pp. 47, 50, 95n.

<sup>84</sup> On 28 April 1796, the sloop *Betsy*, commanded by Captain James Peters arrived at Freetown harbor. Zachary Macaulay, in Knutsford, *Life and Letters*, pp. 133-34, called Peters, 'one of the worst and most profligate wretches I have ever seen in this country.' Afzelius, *Journal*, p. 153, reported that Peters was anchored so near to Freetown that some feared that he might raid that city for slaves. *The Providence Gazette* reported that *Betsy* cleared port on 27 November 1795, bound for Africa.

<sup>85</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>86</sup> June and July are the height of the rainy season. Tornadoes are quite common in this area.

on until the tide made aganst us. Then we stood to Northward. At 9 calm, and we are closet under the main. We came too with a small anchor [to] which we had fixt a hook of a ring.

Saturday 9th Next morning a small breese from Cost. We run over to the Ban[n]a[na]s and came too. The kedg as that was all that save us from going a shore. At 9 swept and caught the big anchor. At 5 swept and caught the small anchor. So ends this day rainy.

Monday July 11th At 8 A.M. waid and run round to the SE part of the Island and came too. Got a mooring chain from the shore and bent it to the best bow anchor and rove the small cable through the ring of the chain and took both ends of the cable a board and moored with the small anchor in 4 fathoms of water. So ends.

We have heard of a brig from New York, last from St. Croix, as she was at Sheebar not far from Capt Mount. There came on board three canoes on pretence that they were after rum to trade for him. They seize[d] the Captain whose name was Moor and lash'd him to a 40 lb. gun and hove him overboard and masacred the whole crew.<sup>87</sup>

Thursday 28 This day it being calm and smooth. We hove up to the chain and found the cable in good order, let it go again. We lay here in suspence of getting our slaves which is very discourageing. As for the weather, it rains almost constantly. The wind from South to West. No tornados. Our living is nice: beef and water with some that we geth. We still have some hopes.

Sunday August 7th 17th This morning Capt Eddy arived here from the river. Brings no Slaves. Mr. Cleveland informs him that he Shall sail in September. So ends this day, being clear.

Wensday This day Mr. Ormsbee set out for Seralon in one of the craft to get some riging and other nesssiary things for the Slopes use. And no signs of our sailing soon. Employ'd calking.

Sunday 21st Mr. Ormsbee return'd from Seralon with Some provision but could get no riging nor cable.

Thursday 25th Employ'd at taring down the riging and calking the decks and waist.

September 1st This day haul'd the Sloop on shore to grave, but we find her very much eat by the worms.<sup>88</sup> Put the small Slaves on shore.

Friday 2nd This day we had a jury upon her of all the white men upon the Island and condem her, being unfit for sea.

<sup>87</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>88</sup> Hamm, 'American Slave Trade,' pp. 63, 143, notes that hull damage of this type was relatively common on the African coast. Vessels had to be caulked with pitch and tar, with special attention given to vessels during the hamattan season when wood might dry out and open fissures. To retard hull damage caused by marine borers, owners sheathed bottoms with copper, especially those liable for extended ventures to Africa. There is no evidence from this log that *Dolphin* was outfitted with a copper bottom.

- Saturday 3rd Striped the runing riging and got it into the hold and then move'd our chests and beds up into a house and take that for our occopation.
- Sunday 4 This morning we brought our man Slave from the Sloope and [his wife], being on the Island, came to visits him and along with her fetch some poison. Theire intention was to put it into some rice that was on the fire. Whether they perform'd it or not it is uncertain but was over heard by some that was in the house who infrom'd us of it. We then chain them both up. Whipt them severly.<sup>39</sup>
- September 27th Mr. Ormsbee taken sick with a fever.
- Wensday October 5 This day Samuel Hill and myself put our chests and beds on board a Seralon Sloop and set of for Seralong.<sup>40</sup> Wind W.N.W. A light breeze.
- October 6 Thursday Arived at Seralon this night and the next morning went on board the Sloop Fame, Capt Benson, and agreed to work our passage to Boston.<sup>41</sup> Saturday night we got under way with the Sloop and Sunday we arrived at Bense [Bance] Island.
- Friday 14th Haul'd on shore and grave'd 1 side. Saturday graved the other and haul'd off on the road. Imploy'd at painting and taring down the riging: taking in ballast and camwood.
- Friday 21st This night we got under way at Bense Island and the next morning we arrived at the settlement at Seralon. Come too and moord.
- Tuesday 25 Wrote a letter to William Cole at the Bannans and put it on board a Bense Island Cutter bound to the Bannanes.<sup>42</sup>
- Sunday October 30th 1796 This morning after having filled all our water and made all preparations for sea we got under way and tode out to the Cape and then we had a breeze; and at 4 P.M. Cape Sierralona bore E.S.E. Distance 10 leagues, from which we take our departure.
- Sunday November 6 Calms and light winds throughout this last week.

<sup>39</sup> Every slaver told a tale of mutiny, rebellion, and treachery by slaves. Perhaps such stories were necessary to guarantee vigilance on the part of the slaver and his crew. To be sure, the more successful rebellions would occur closest to the African coast.

<sup>40</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>41</sup> Captain Martin Benson sailed for the firm of Brown, Benson, and Ives. Benson had spent several weeks in February 1795 at Freetown and although Afzelius, p. 73, called him 'our old friend,' he noted, p. 76, that Benson had been in partnership with John Ormond in the Rio Pongo. Macaulay, in Knutsford, *Life and Letters*, p. 152, recorded his presence at Freetown on 8 September 1796. See Brooks, *Yankee Traders*, pp. 28-29, 54-55, and 'The Providence African Society's Sierra Leone Emigration Scheme, 1794-1795: Prologue to the African Colonization Movement,' *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, VII, 192-95, for reports of Benson's trade in West Africa.

<sup>42</sup> See footnote 29 above. Cole was a member of *Dolphin's* crew. Perhaps he became a clerk at Cleveland's factory. See Hawkins for an attempt by local merchants to recruit his services.

- Friday 11 Had a very strong wind from the N.E. which cause'd us to carry a two reef mainsail and bonnet off the job.
- Saturday 12th The wind still continuing to blow hard, and we find we are to the leeward of the Cape de verd Islands, and can not well get up. We keep away West.
- Sunday 20th A pleasant breze from N.E. but squaly. We sail 7 and 8 knots.
- Monday December 5th This 4 days past. Calm and light variable brezes. This morning a leading gale from N.E. saw 3 Sail standing to the Northward.
- Sunday 18th Almost a continual gale of wind from S.W. to N.W. which has obleige'd us to lay too the gratest part of the week past. We now shall make our way to the first port that we can on account of bad weather and contarary winds and Shortness of provision.
- Sunday 25 This day being Christmast and we are not far from Bermudas. Making the best of our way to Charlston.
- Saturday 31 January Pleasant weather. Spoke a Hamburg Brig from Charlston in Longitude 68 24.<sup>43</sup> Saw a ship to the Southward. Standing to the westward.
- Wensday 11 1797 A calm or a gale of wind for this week past. We suppose ourselves to be not far from the land and tryed for soundings and found none. Parted the lead line and lost it with the lead.
- Thursday 12 Got the log line and small lead and sounded in 20 fathom of water.
- Friday 13 At 12 made the land to the southward of Charlstown. At 8 P.M. made the Charlstown light house. Hove too. At 12 come to anchor.
- Saturday 14 At 6 A.M. got under way and lay off and on for a w[h]ile. At 4 P.M. a pilot come on board. Very foggy. Come too.
- January Sunday 15th Got under way this morning with a small bre[eze] and at 4 P.M. arrived at the town after a passage of 11 weeks from Serralon on the Coast of Africa and living upon red rice and salt beef only during the whole passage.
- Sunday 22 This day walk'd about the town. Wensday and Thursday worked on board a Schooner.
- Sunday 29 No imployment.
- Friday February 3rd This day work'd and engaged on board the Schooner William of Boston bound to Boston.<sup>44</sup>
- Sunday 5th Walked up to the race ground and saw the race horses.
- Saturday 11 Got under way with the Schooner and came too at Sulvans Island.


<sup>43</sup> Unidentified.<sup>44</sup> Unidentified.

VOYAGE OF THE GOOD SLOOP DOLPHIN 261

- Sunday  
12 Got under way in the morning being calm at night. Came too.  
Got under way in the morning an[d] at 12 arrived at Georgetown.  
Discarg'd the ballast.
- Thursday  
16 Took in 140 cask of rice and next morning hove on our Sheet cable  
and parted it. Got a kidge from the town. Bent it to the cable.
- Friday  
24 This day we have completed in loading the Schooner having the  
hold full of rice and 100 barrel of pitch on deck. So ends this day.
- Saturday  
25 Got under way at Georgetown. Went down and came too just above  
the bar.
- Sunday  
26 Got under way and stood for sea, having on board a freight for  
New York.
- Tuesday  
28 Had a severe gale of wind which caused us [to] heave too under a  
sore sail, with the bonnet off, and lay untill friday.
- Sunday  
March 5 Had a gale of wind which caused us heave too and lay 3 days.  
Thursday made the land.  
Friday had a Pilot come on board.
- Saturday  
11 This eveing arrived at the town of New York and came a long side  
of the wharf after a passage of 16 day from Gorgetown.
- Wensday 15 Finished unloading and wash'd out the hold.  
Thursday lifted the riging on the Foremasthead.
- Saturday  
18 This day all hands was discharged from on board the Schooner  
William and paid off.
- Saturday  
25 This week worked on board the Schooner William. Saturday went  
on board a Sloop bound to Newport.

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## *The Early Florida Salvage Industry*

BY MICHAEL G. SCHENE

COINCIDENT with the Spanish exploration of Florida in the sixteenth century was the discovery of a more efficacious route between the New World and Europe. The most treacherous part of this passage was the area around the Straits of Florida—a narrow corridor lined by a chain of keys and a number of slightly submerged reefs. Mariners also had to confront numerous sandbars, shoals, and barrier rocks which were rendered even more impassable by swirling currents and unpredictable winds. So it is not surprising that many ships came to grief off the coast of Florida and were often rescued by a 'wrecker' looking for a distressed vessel.

The first wreckers were aboriginal Indians who lived in small settlements throughout the keys. Most wrecked property was of little use to them, and it was only saved because it might be traded later for a more valuable item. While lost cargoes were naturally upsetting to the Spanish—who passed through the keys on their way home from New Spain with native gold—it was the Indian practice of torture and execution that they despised and feared the most. The Spanish repeatedly tried to end these practices, both by negotiation and threat of warfare, but only the slow decimation of the Indian population finally proved effective.<sup>1</sup>

After most of the remaining red men in the keys left with the departing Spanish in 1763, a number of Bahamians began to patrol the Florida reef—supplementing this work with considerable fishing and turtling. The Bahamians did not use East Florida courts and instead transported salvaged property back to Nassau. British maritime law was in force there and ensured that all interests would be protected.<sup>2</sup>

The Bahamians established stations or points of rendezvous on several of the keys. The location of these incipient communities was determined

<sup>1</sup> William N. Thurston, 'A Study of Maritime Activity in Florida in the Nineteenth Century' (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida State University, 1972), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> James W. Wright, 'The Wrecking System of the Bahama Islands,' *Political Science Quarterly*, XXX, 622-24, 636, 639-40.