

The Locke Family Newsletter

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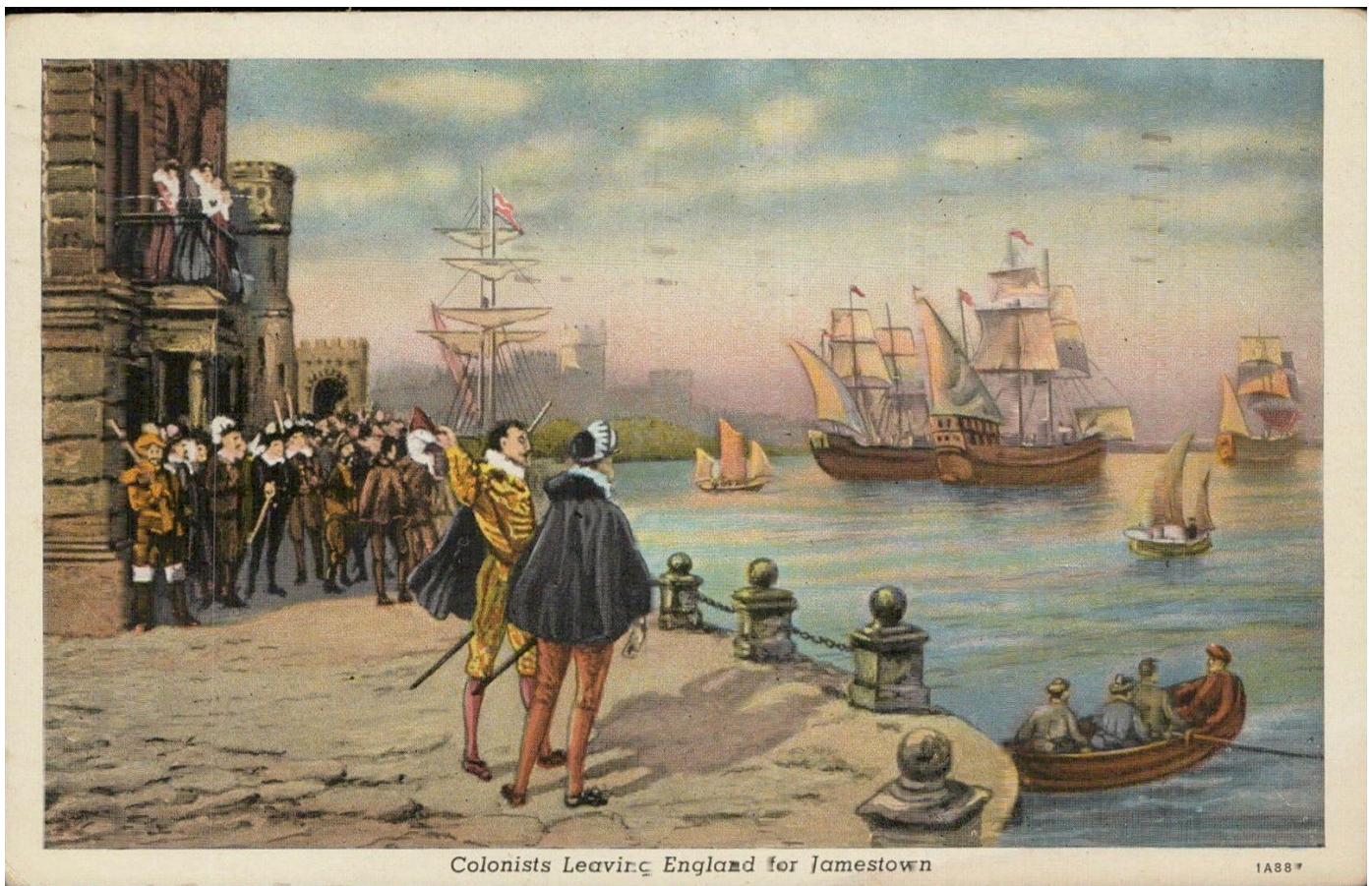


An Atlantic Voyage in the 17th Century

We Lockes would never have been in America if our ancestors had not made the dangerous voyage from England to Maryland over three hundred years ago aboard small wooden ships. Those crossings took three to five months, and many ships never made it to the Colonies. An account of these voyages appeared in the *Maryland Historical Magazine* in 1907, written by Henry F. Thompson. You'll find his complete account beginning on page 2.



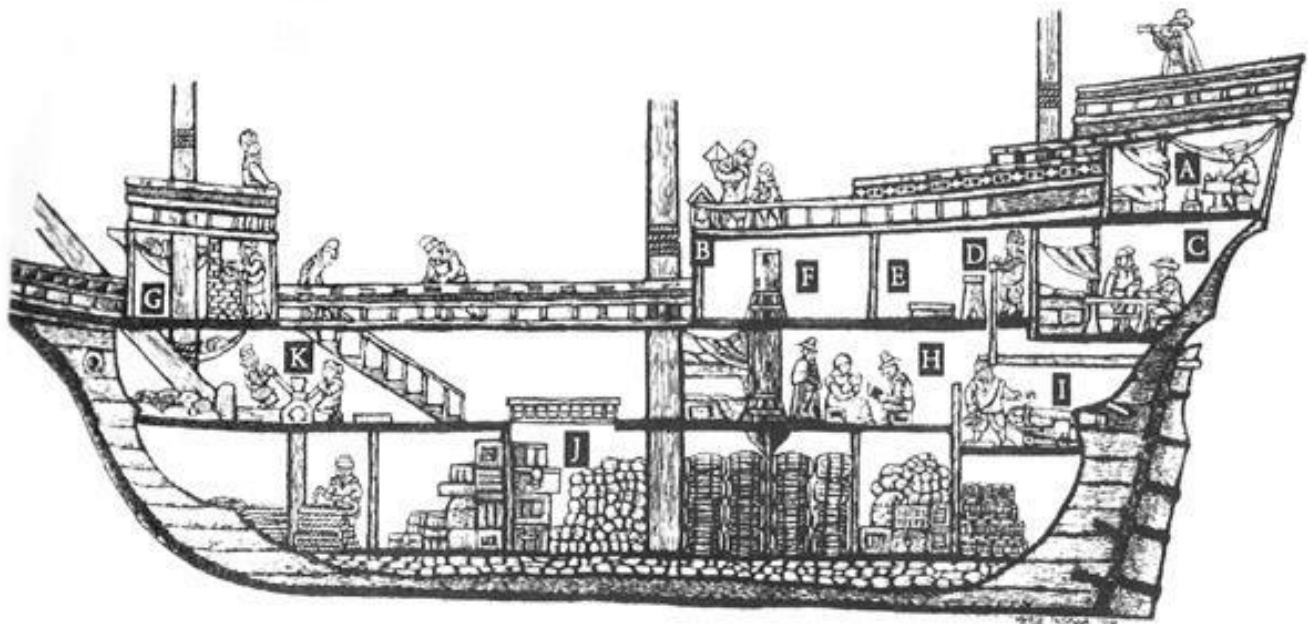
Merry Christmas from my home to yours....



Among the manuscripts in the library of the University of Oxford, generally known as the Bodleian Library, are many documents relating to the marine affairs of Great Britain and her colonies, and the log-books of vessels trading to all parts of the world. Of these log-books, eleven relate to voyages from London to the Chesapeake Bay, and of these eleven two are "Journals," as they are termed, of voyages which are especially interesting to Marylanders, being, as they are, "Journals of the Outward and Homeward-bound passages" of the ships *Constant Friendship* and *Baltimore*, which were in Maryland in the years 1671 and 1673. The vessels which were in use in the seventeenth century were small, when judged by the ideas of sea-going ships of the present day, for there were few over two hundred tons, as an inspection of the few returns (which are extant) of the naval officers of the Patuxent and Potomac Rivers will show.



Although a few ships were from three hundred to five hundred tons , the greater number of them were from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty , and more were under one hundred and fifty tons.



◆ MAYFLOWER CROSS-SECTION KEY ◆

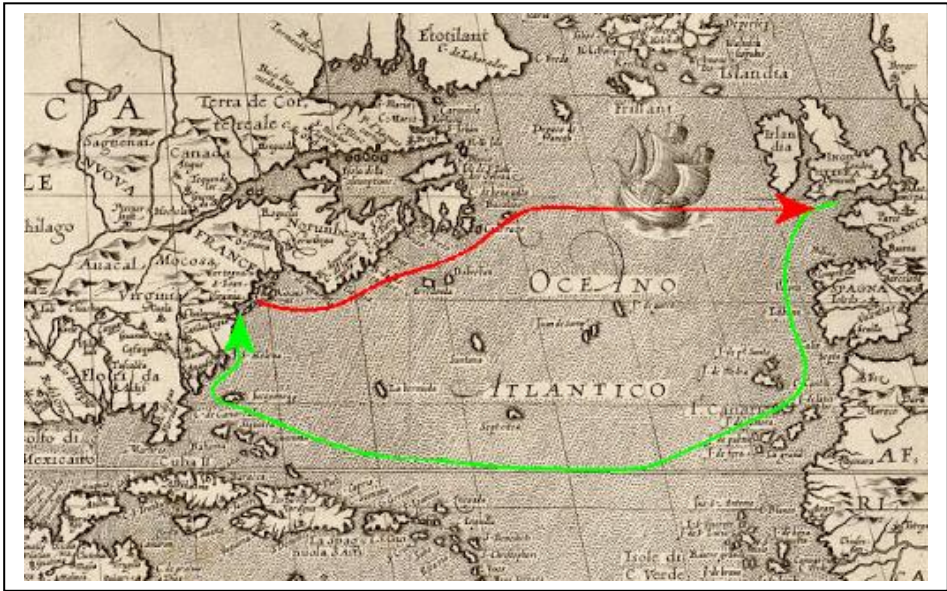
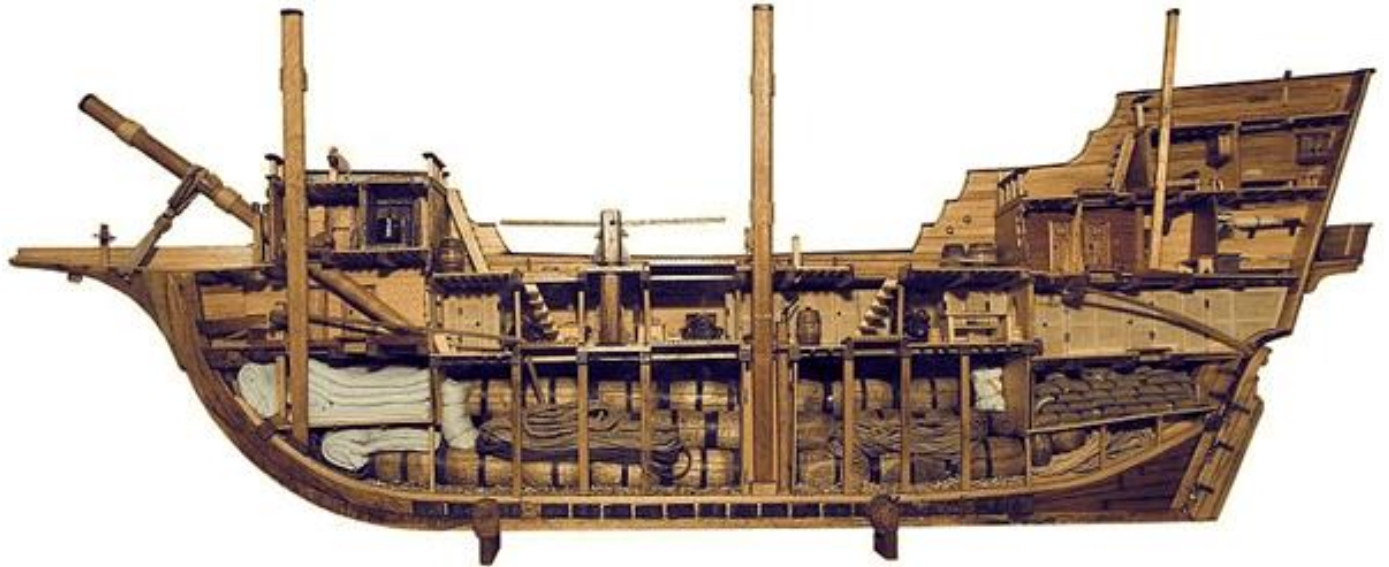
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|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| A ◆ Round House | G ◆ Forecastle |
| B ◆ Ship's Bell | H ◆ Lower Deck or 'Tween Decks |
| C ◆ Great Cabin | I ◆ Gunroom or Cannon |
| D ◆ Whipstaff | J ◆ Hold |
| E ◆ Steerage | K ◆ Windlass |
| F ◆ Capstan | |

They were broad in the bow, the forecastle and the poop were raised high above the main deck , the mainmast was placed in the middle of the ship , the foremast as near the bow as possible and the mizzen where the builder thought fit . The books on navigation and shipbuilding , all speak of top gallant masts and sails but in no one of the log - books is there any mention of a sail above the topsail , although , of course , they speak of making and taking in the sails as well of sending down topmasts and yards . They were but slow sailors and although instances occur of as much as eight miles an hour being made , it was when there was a fair wind and plenty of it , and with a smooth sea , but at no time was that rate kept up for twenty - four hours . When the wind was ahead , but slow progress was made , for no ship could sail “ close to the wind , ” and often four or five miles was all there was to show for a whole day , and there were even times when they were further from their destination at the end of twenty - four hours than they were at the beginning . Rather than

keep on against a head wind they would “ heave to ” or “ try ” as they said in those days . The Bristow arrived in York River on the 8th March , 1701 , having left London on the 22nd October, and her Master writes “ *a more terrible passage has hardly been known by man . I have been on this coast near twelve weeks within forty or fifty leagues by all estimation .* ” He had become separated from the fleet , for although the Gloster did not arrive until the day after the Bristow , the latter found on her arrival several vessels which left London with her , but which had been in port eight or nine weeks .

Indeed, there is nothing in which a voyage , two hundred years ago , differed more from one to - day , than in the great uncertainty as to the time which was to be spent in going from one port to the other . When a passenger started from London , he could not say within many weeks , how long he was to be on board the ship which was to take him to Maryland or Virginia , for , of the eleven voyages of which we have the records , they were from forty - seven to one hundred and thirty - eight days from London to the Capes , and from thirty - two days to one hundred and thirteen on their way home . The same vessel varied from forty - seven days to one hundred and two days, in coming from London , and from thirty - two to fifty - two in returning home . A ship would often be three or four weeks from London before she took her departure from the Lizard , detained in the Downs or some port by head winds or storms , and it must have been an inspiring sight , after a storm , to see the numerous vessels getting under way from the Downs ; for there would be hundreds of vessels starting out for all parts of the world , the vessels bound for the Chesapeake Bay often numbering forty or fifty , and as the captain of one of them says , “ We Virginians keeping together , ” the name Virginian being often applied to all the vessels bound in the Capes . When the fleet was clear of the land , they steered for the Azores , and one or more ships generally sighted Flores and Corves , the most westerly of the islands . Then they steered for Cape Henry , and deviated as little as possible from a straight course , for their latitude they could find every day at noon , by means of their quadrants , but their longitude they could only estimate by calculating the distance run and the course steered , making allowances for currents , leeway or a heavy sea knocking them off their course . Notwithstanding this rather uncertain calculation they were not far out of the way when they began sounding to find out if they were near land . Although a large fleet of fifty or sixty vessels might leave England , they soon became more or less scattered , although there were some vessels always in sight of each other , and frequently in calm weather there were visits between the officers and passengers of the different vessels , who dined or spent whole days , of which custom the following extract from the log - book of the Johanna gives an example : “ Mr . Baker hoisted out his boat and came on board of us . We spared them some tobacco to pipe , for it was very scarce with them . About 5 o’clock they went aboard again : the master of her was sufficiently in drink before he went . ” It may be supposed that the great uncertainty as to the duration of the voyage would have caused some trouble in providing sufficient food and water for so many persons , but the food was composed principally of bread or **ship - biscuit** , salt meat , peas and cheese , all which would keep well for many months , and therefore it

was only the space required for enough food and water that gave any trouble, and when it is recollected that it would be necessary to carry food and water for one hundred persons (including passengers and crew) for a voyage lasting perhaps five months it is evident that the provisions which were necessary would occupy a great deal of space.



Water, wine, beer, and food was packed tightly into the lowest decks of the ship. Passengers were crammed into the next higher deck, which had no windows, and very poor ventilation. The captain and shipmates were housed in the rear poop deck compartments.

In a contract made with the owners of the ship Nassau, of five hundred tons, to carry one hundred and fifty or more passengers to Virginia, the following stipulations were made in regard to food. The passengers to have the same allowance of food as the sailors, that is to say: "they were to have their allowance of bread, butter and cheese weekly, and the rest of the provisions were to be distributed daily: each passenger, over six years of age, was to have seven pounds of bread every week, each mess of eight to have two pieces of pork (each piece to be two pounds) with pease five days in the week, and on the other two days four pounds of beef with peas each day, or four pounds of beef with a pudding, with peas for the two days, and in case the kettle could not be boiled, each passenger was to have one pound of cheese every day. Children under six years of age to have such allowance in flour, oatmeal, fruit, sugar and butter as the overseers of them shall judge fit."

There were in this ship one hundred and ninety - one passengers, of whom twenty - five were under twelve years of age, and although there were some of all ranks in life, there seems to have been no difference made between them as to diet and lodging. Among them were the Rev. Mr. Latané, with his wife and child, whose descendants are still to be found in Virginia, as probably are the descendants of many others of these French refugees. The ordinary price of a passage to Maryland or Virginia was six pounds, but for this large party the price was five pounds, for each person over twelve years of age, and half price for children under that age. The ship Johanna was on her way from London to Virginia in March, 1674, when the following incident occurred: "About 12 o'clock last night some of our people saw something walk in the shape of a dog and after that it was heard betwixt dex cry like a child and sometimes knocking without bord and the dog that belonged to the ship run whineing up and down and crept in among the passengers I pray God dyliver us from all evil." Nothing happened to them on the voyage, and they arrived in Virginia after a quick passage, and without any accident, but two years later on the same ship something happened which caused the death of two men, but what it was, is not very clear. "One of our servants was missing, judged he fell overboard and drowned: and another had his other leg cut ofe, his other being cut of some time before — they were boath Cap. Beales servants." If the vessels were a long time in crossing the ocean, they were also sometime in port, before they were ready to return home. The Constant Friendship arrived in the Saint Mary's river on the 20th December 1671, and the next day, the Master went ashore and entered the ship at the Custom House. They lay there 10 days, landing passengers and goods, and then sailed for the Patuxent "to do some business there," and while there they buried a passenger, the 2nd mate, and one of the seamen. At the end of the week they sailed for the "Seavorne" which they reached at 2 a. m., sailing in boldly, "there being moonlight and fair weather." For two months and a half, they were delivering goods and taking in tobacco. Some of the English goods were consigned to different persons, and some were sold from the ship, payment being made in tobacco. The ship lay at anchor in the river, and the tobacco was brought off in shallops from the landings to which it had been rolled from the plantations. By the 25th March, they had on board about five hundred and fifty hogsheads, and they

sailed for the Patuxent , where they took in more tobacco , and then went to St . Mary ' s where by the end of April , they finished their loading , having seven hundred and eight hogsheads on board , and cleared the ship , when they were ready to sail . The ships generally spent three or four months in the rivers , delivering their goods and taking in tobacco , which was taken on freight , or obtained by “ trucking ” as it was called , that is to say , bartering the English goods for the tobacco , or sometimes the skins of wild animals , of which a goodly number were exported in the early days of the Colony . When the loading was finished , and the ship was cleared and ready for sea , they went to Lynn Haven Bay , where the fleet for England was made up , and received their sailing orders . One of the fleet was named as the Flag ship , and her commander was appointed Admiral with a certain authority over the Masters of the other ships , subject of course to the orders of the Commander of the Men of War who conveyed the fleet off the coast or at times all the way to England . A Man of War lay in the Chesapeake , whose duty among other things was to convoy the ships 25 or 30 leagues off the coast , for there was great danger of an attack by Pirates who hovered about the coast , and sometimes ran into the bays and harbours to make a capture , but seldom , if ever , roamed over the ocean in search of their prey . The Governor of Virginia , at times , went out in the Man of War to see the fleet safely on their way , and when he arrived on board , most of the ships fired a salute , for they all had guns , and a gunner was a member of every ship ' s company as surely as a carpenter or sailmaker . A “ fleet ” frequently numbered fifty vessels , or more and on the 31st July 1702 one hundred and forty vessels sailed out of the Capes convoyed by four Men of War , on one of which , the Warwick , were Col . Blackistone , Governor of Maryland , and his lady , who were on their way home .

Even when there was war between Great Britain and some other country , there was not much danger of capture on the high seas , but when they got near the land the privateers , or “ Capers , ” as Dutch privateers were called , were cruising about , watching for the incoming ships , and sometimes capturing and carrying them off . One such incident is told in the log - book of the Johanna , under the date of July , 1676 _ “ *When Twart of Beachy Head saw severall shallops French Privateers come up with us and commanded our boat out and us by the lee but I would not being able to Deale with them : we saw them clap several Vessels aboard and plunder them and caryed two away at 10 o ' clock in the night two came up with us together which command us to strick and by the lee which I would not they fired 3 gunnes at us but hitt us not the shot fell by the ships side , then they came close up and said they would clap us aboard both together I bid them keep ofe or else we would fire att them we gott two of or guns upon the forecassell and poynted them aft at them for they intended to come aboard upon the quarter we could not bring a gun to beare upon them with [until ?] we had done so : the french seeing us in preparation to defend ourselves bid us good night and left us after many bad words which passed between us . We fired not at them . ” The encounter with the privateers ended happily enough , nothing worse than an exchange of “ bad words ” having happened , but owing to the preparations for defence , one of the men on the Johanna lost his life , as the log - book tells in the following words : “ Att 3 of Clock this*

morning the Carpenters mate being laid down to sleep upon the forehatch by the windlass and one of the guns upon the forecassel standing upon a pease and my mate going up on the for Cassell tooke holde of the mussell of the gun which oversett it it not being lashed Dumbled doune upon the deck and bruised the head of the Carpenters mate and broke his scull very much he dyed presently which was a very sad accident . We kept him until he was could and stiff and buryd him in the sea of the South forland which I pray God have mercy upon his soule for he was suddenly taken out of this world : " There were other dangers that menaced the ships , even when they were thought to be past all the perils of the sea ; and there is one more extract which tells of the end of the Baltimore , which had made many voyages to Maryland , and was considered a strong , well built ship . In 1673 she had made the passage home in very good time , and with the rest of the London Fleet had gone into Plymouth harbour — on the 18th September , all thinking , no doubt , that they would soon land their tobacco in London . They lay there for three days , and then started to go on to London but as all the ships could not get out in time a signal was made , for those that were outside to return . When the Baltimore got back the log - book says :

“ it was darke we run in behind the Island and ankored in 6 fad the wind abt SS E and blowed hard and rained we struck our topmasts and yards and rod about 2 hours fast but the wind blowing harder and harder we let go the sheet ankor and in vering away upon the best bower started the best bower ankor and nether that nor the sheet ankor wold take hold againe but we drove ashore upon the rockes about 3 ships lengths to the westward of milebay and being a high water and falling we presently sued and stuck fast and bilged upon the rocks the next tide the water ranne over part of the gun deck : we saved about 60 hhds dry and all the ships materialls as guns cables ankors and rigging and sayles : and could not save the shipp although it wass indevoured by the plymouth men : but she stove all to peeses . ffinis I pray God send me better fortune the next voyage . ”



