

## ATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

By J. R. McCleary



Editors Note: Due to its length, this article will be serialized in several issues.

Reason for This Research Project. The Mariners' Museum asked me to build a model of a slave ship for a forthcoming exhibition on the slave trade, "Against Human Dignity". Plans for slave ships are hard to find and I eventually decided to use Howard Chapelle's plans for the slaver DOS AMIGOS. However, Chapelle shows this ship as she appeared after she had been captured by the Royal Navy in 1831 and reconfigured to be an anti-slave trade patrol vessel. I needed to do considerable research to determine how she would have been configured in her previous life. I also wanted to be able to discuss the whole subject of the slave trade intelligently, as I was building the model partly while working as a volunteer at the museum.

I found that relevant information existed in large quantity, and, except in a few areas, scholars are generally in agreement on the facts and figures. As far back as 1897, the noted African American historian, W.E.B. DuBois, published a partial history of the slave trade titled, THE SUPPRESSION OF THE SLAVE TRADE TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 1638-1870. This book is still relevant 100 years later and provided part of the information for this paper.

Summary. In its hey day in the 17th and 18th centuries, the slave trade was a large, lucrative and entirely honorable business fueled mainly by sugar, cotton and other agricultural products. The trade was carried on by stock companies (frequently holding royal charters), share holders, insurers and the top levels of society, who would have thought of themselves as paragons of a moral community. These companies maintained extensive and detailed records which have been preserved. Between the middle of the 15th century and the latter part of the 19th century, about 12 million African slaves were transported to the new world; about 1.5 million died en route; another 12 million died within Africa itself while being marched to the coast after they had been captured. If 12 million slaves were transported over a period of 450 years, that works out to an average of 30K per year, but in some years much greater numbers were transported.

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## Mystery Photo



Welcome to Mystery Photo, *Logbook* No. 173. Is it coincidence or just our good luck that Bill selected a photograph that depicts a sailing vessel? Is Bill finally pandering to the 'other side' of 'his' modeling world or just teasing more of you into playing Mystery Photo? This image makes two photographs, to date, that depict sailing vessels--but neither is devoid of smokestacks!

Let me start by asking these questions: Did Bill really pick a photograph of a sailing vessel? Did anyone know that he had any? Maybe this photo is not of a pure sailing bark but a steam powered ship with an auxiliary sailing rig. Does the image present a curious juxtaposition of two vessels? Is there a twin-stack tug pushing this vessel, or is it a single stack tugboat? What about the location and background features, do they yield any clues? Can we ferret enough detail from this near-silhouette to answer these questions and make a reasonable assumption to the vessel's identity? Let's see...

I have to be honest, when I saw this photograph, I was inclined to believe that we were in trouble. I didn't think it was possible to identify the sleek low-hulled bark. And the arrangement of stacks really bothered me. I wasn't sure if they were part of the sailing vessel, or part of a tug tucked behind the ship's bulwark, or if one stack was for the bark and one was for a tug. I thought the dark quality of the reproduction would make identification impossible. In short, it looked like Clarke would win this round.

But it was not to be! Two intrepid members of this society were able to identify this vessel. Joe McCleary and I found this vessel and made a positive identification. Let me tell my story and then I will present Joe's case.

After studying this photograph for a while, I was able make a list of details to help me form a framework that would narrow my search window for identifying this vessel. I'll just list them for you in no specific order: 1.) The bark rig. 2.) The twin stacks, both issuing exhaust gasses. 3.) The white stripe along the top of the bulwark. 4.) The enclosed navigation bridge. 5.) The split main stay. 6.) The number and type of ship's boats. 7.) The fact that the vessel was moving in some

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protected waterway. 8.) The white-painted stern of another vessel in the background. And 9.) The ground clutter in the distance looks like the 'Jersey' Palisades!

My first impression of this photograph was of a sailing bark being pushed along by a twin stack tugboat in either the Hudson River, New York, or in San Francisco Bay, California. I thought the time frame was around the turn of the last century judging from the appearance of the white-painted stern of the vessel in the background—it looks like a US Navy ship of that vintage. But several things didn't add up. First, two stack tugboats were not all that common in America and those that were around generally presented a different profile. This tug profile looked European. So then I thought that Bill was using a photograph of a scene from Den Helder, The Netherlands, or something like that. If he was, then this photograph was probably showing a vessel so obscure that we Americans would never identify it.

I took another look at the photograph and noticed the main stay was split to allow space for the forward stack. Ok, this meant that the vessel carried steam propulsion and that the second stack could belong to a tugboat hiding behind the vessel. This idea worked because the amount of smoke coming from the respective stacks seemed reasonable. I could assign the enclosed bridge to the bark and things sort of fit in place. This left me with a plausible case and no way to identify the vessel.

Next try...I thought that if both stacks belonged to the bark, then we were looking at a government vessel of some sort. But, whose government? I don't remember reading of or hearing about any commercial vessels with combined motive power such as this. The stack arrangement indicates that boilers and engines occupy all of the prime hold space. Could I find a government or naval vessel with this number and arrangement of ship's boats and a white stripe at the bulwark? I pulled out my trusty copy of *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships 1860-1905* to see.

Tucked away, on page 198 of *Conway's*, was an interesting photograph of *Djigit*, a *Kreiser-class* iron-hulled sloop ('Clipper' in most Russian lists.) She has the white stripe at the top of the bulwark and a similar arrangement of ship's boats, the same bark rig, but only one stack. The similarity with her and our mystery vessel is amazing. She could be our mystery vessel if we accept my one-stack theory. This wetted my appetite, I knew I was close! I decided to page more carefully through the Russian section of *Conway's* for a better candidate.

I found, on page 193, under the section devoted to protected cruisers a nice photograph of *Kynda*, a *Vitiaz-class* protected cruiser. She was very similar to *Djigit*, except she carried two stacks. I found this month's mystery vessel!

Joe McCleary, has this to say.

John:

This month's mystery photo was a bit of a puzzler but I think it has finally yielded its secrets.

Without any great research, the photo itself reveals the following: First, it was most likely taken after 1880, when photography had developed to the point that film speed had progressed such that "stop action" photography was possible. In this photo we have a ship clearly underway and with a flag flying in the breeze yet everything is clearly visible. Second, the flag appears to be the old Imperial Russian ensign that would have disappeared after 1917. Third, the style of the ship would seem to indicate a vessel of the latter part of the 19th century, but one that would not be common in the 20th century except as a training ship.

A perusal of the 1898 edition of *Janes' Fighting Ships* would appear to identify this ship as a unit of the Imperial Russian Navy by the name of RYNDA. She was built in 1885, was 269 feet long and was capable of making 10 knots under steam power. RYNDA was the only Russian ship that I could identify that seemed to fit the right configuration of size, bark rig, boat and stack configuration, and bow? bow sprit design. So I will place my money on RYNDA. This ship does not appear in *Janes'* after the 1903 edition, so she must have been scrapped at that time as the Russian Navy rebuilt itself after the disastrous Russo-Japanese War.

Unfortunately, I could find no further information on this vessel. Local libraries are not overflowing with information on the Imperial Russian Navy.

Both Joe and I took a deductive approach to solving this mystery. We were lucky; we could just as easily hit a dead end and not solved the mystery. Bill, will you confirm our findings?

Merry Christmas to everyone,

John Cheevers

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## THE ANSWER TO MYSTERY PHOTO 173

Russian Ship *Rynda* in New York City April, 1893  
NH 72158

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The average was much less at the beginning of the trade. In 1775, the British alone transported 60K slaves, which was a peak. All European countries that had colonies in the new world were involved in this trade, even the Norwegians, the Swedes and the Danes.

The Triangular Trade. This was a case of business, winds and currents working together. Ships left European (and later North American) home ports carrying trade goods (firearms, ammunition, rum/brandy, cloth, beads, and metal goods, such as cooking pots), which were traded for slaves in African ports, mainly through local agents or factors. These agents, who worked for the parent company, such as the British Royal African Company, dispensed the trade goods to the Africans who brought in the newly captured slaves. While awaiting transport, the slaves were held in jail-like warehouses owned by the trading companies, called barracoons. The slaves were shipped mainly to the West Indies, and later South America, where they were sold through agents to local plantation owners. Only about 5%, or 600K slaves, came to North America, either directly or via the West Indies. Raw sugar, tobacco, and later coffee or other agricultural products were purchased for the third, or homebound leg. Sugar was a newly discovered sweetener that fueled this engine. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century it had become overwhelming popular in Europe which had no other such sweetener save honey. It also worked out that the route from Europe to Africa, then on to the West Indies and finally home to Europe along the coast of North America, also followed the track of favorable prevailing winds and ocean currents.

In the 15th century, Dutch and Portuguese slave traders had foraged into the African Continent to capture natives for enslavement. This method proved ineffective because the natives soon learned to flee at the approach of white men. So the Europeans left that part of the business to local African kings and marauders. Under this arrangement, the European factors operated the depots on the coast and did not penetrate further inland except by influence.

Of the slaves shipped overseas, most (70+%) were males. Four out of five came from the area of the Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra, Gold Coast and West Central Africa. Some discretion was applied in selecting the members of the various tribes that were whipped to the New World. Plantation owners seemed to prefer slaves from Gambia and the Gold Coast as field hands, and Ibos, Congos and Angolans as house servants. Slave ships never carried slaves all from one tribe. There was too much chance of them being able to plot a mutiny. Crews used some slaves to control others, either through use of tribal enmity or bribes. Male slaves were shackled two by two at the ankles, as in a three-legged race. Below decks they were generally not attached to chains but the hatchways were guarded by armed crewmen. When topside the male slaves were attached to chains running along the deck to keep them from jumping overboard. Women were kept separate and generally not shackled.

## MONTHLY PRESENTATIONS

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From the following, it will be seen that a wide variety of subjects are on offer for the remainder of the year and the greater part of next. Our club continues to have a monthly program and we only need four more talks to round out 2001, so please retain this list and, by all means, add to it.

Graham Home.

November	Joe McCleary	The Slave Trade
December	Bob Comet	Sea Chanteys
January	David Baker	Modern Ships Systems
February	Alan Frazer	Chesapeake Deadrise
March	Harvey Williams	Floating Dry Docks
April	Jack Bobbitt	Framing, Room & Space
May	Bill Clarke	Photography
June	John Cheevers	Something
July	Bob Sanderson	Steamships
August	Graham Home	Incompetence & Treachery
September	OPEN	
October	OPEN	
November	OPEN	
December	OPEN	

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Slaves were generally brought topside each day at about 8:00AM to be fed and watered. The slaves were fed on boiled rice, beans and yams (sometimes with a little meat added). Some Africans found this food palatable but others hated it because it differed so much from their normal diets. Some slaves had to be forced to eat or they would have starved to death from despair. After breakfast, the slaves were forced to "dance" for exercise, which they also hated. While the slaves were topside, the crew washed down the below decks area and sometimes fumigated these areas. Periodically the slaves themselves were washed to keep them clean. In late afternoon the slaves were fed again and then put below for the night. There were latrines topside and below decks but they were difficult to get to because of crowding and the fact that the males were joined two-by-two. In bad weather slaves were not brought topside and it was difficult to distribute food and water. Since the slaves were naked (for reasons of cleanliness and to keep them from hiding weapons) and they were lying directly on rough boards, they could get rubbed raw at pressure points from the rolling of the ship. Naturally in such crowded conditions, disease could take a severe toll if sickness broke out.

Up until the early 19th century, when the slave trade became illegal, quite ordinary merchant ships were employed in the

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# MINUTES



HRSMS Monthly Meeting  
November 13, 2000  
Williamsburg Va.  
Host: Heinz Shiller

## Guests:

Gerald Pauls 1 <sup>st</sup>	Dr. Balta 1 <sup>st</sup>
Ed Saunders 1 <sup>st</sup>	Fred Hemmingway 1 <sup>st</sup>
Brad Granum 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Lee Adderson 1 <sup>st</sup>
George Callis 1 <sup>st</sup>	Ryland Craze 2 <sup>nd</sup>

A Purser's report was given.

## Corrections to the minutes:

The minutes of the September meeting stated " Dave Baker had copies of The Proceedings of the Naval Institute for \$9.00." Reference to \$9.00 was in error and should have read " Dave Baker had copies of The Proceedings of the Naval Institute."

Old Business: The Skipper thanked the NRG Conference Committee for their outstanding work in making the conference a success. They were given a hearty round of applause by the membership. Bill Clarke gave highlights of the conference and spoke to the Friday harbor cruise, Friday night reception, Saturday tech sessions, and the banquet in Saturday night. He noted that the hotel did a "masterful job"

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trade, though they were specially configured for this work. Extra food and water and expanded cooking facilities had to be carried. False decks with only about two feet of headroom were installed that resembled five foot wide bookshelves. This allowed more slaves to be crammed into a ship's hold. After the trade became illegal, smaller, faster ships, that could better evade patrolling naval vessels, were employed in the trade.

Tight Packers versus Loose Packers. The number of slave carried in a ship was largely dependent on its cargo capacity. Anywhere from 1.5 to 2.5 slaves could and were carried per ton. For emigrants and soldiers the rate was about 1 to 1.5 persons per ton. A slave was allowed a space of about 16 inches by 24 inches by six feet. About 12% died en route. This mortality rate is very close to the average rate for emigrants as well. Captains who generally carried fewer slaves were called "loose packers" and those who crammed in every possible slave were known as "tight packers". Based on statistics, the main factor in the death rate was the length of the voyage not the density of packing. Slaves had a definite value which could not be realized if they did not get delivered. Passengers and crew members had no value. Most slave ships before the 19th century actually carried surgeons

in supporting the conference. The Conference Committee gave a financial report and thanked the members who helped them. Several letters were read that expressed praise for the conference. The Skipper read a letter from Roger Cole thanking the HRSMS for bestowing an honorary membership upon him.

New Business: Brad Granum was asked if he wanted to join the HRSMS and he indicated the he would. He and the guests were asked to leave the room while the members followed the usual ritual. Mr. Granum and the guests returned and he was welcomed as a new member. Tom Saunders read a note he received asking about an appraisal for a Crabtree model held by a private collector. Joe McCleary said that he would send the names of qualified appraisers. THE CLERK WAS BERATED FOR NOT PROVIDING THE MEMBERS WITH A CURENT ROSTER. He again said that he would provide one.

Show and Tell: Joe McCleary had a copy of a catalog from Blue Ridge Tools. Dave Baker showed some original ship drawings. Graham Horne asked a question about using laser-cut frames, and if the model could be considered scratch-built. The answer was a resounding no from several knowledgeable members.

The Meeting was adjourned.

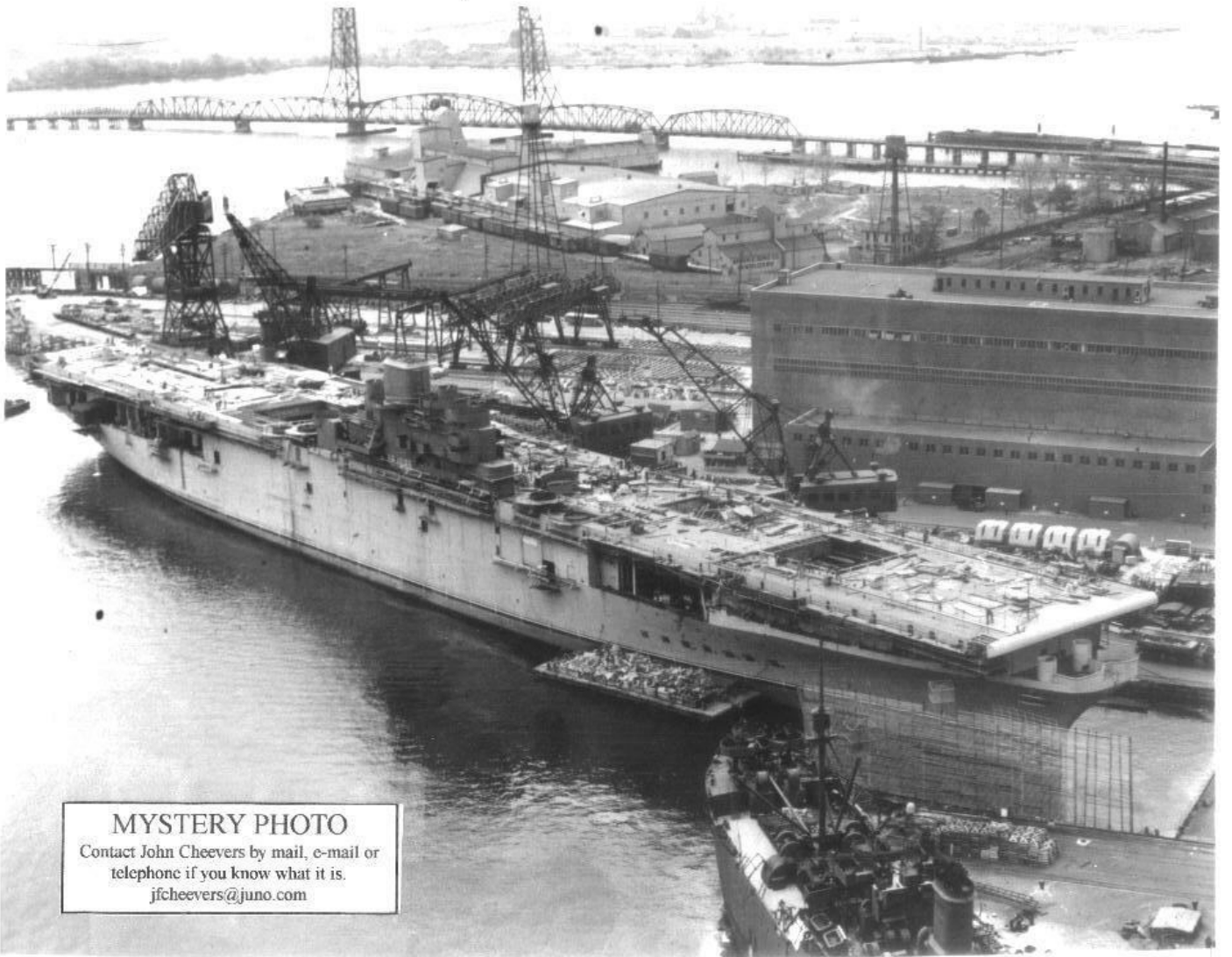
Joe McCleary gave a presentation on the "Atlantic Slave Trade."

to help reduce the death rate. This was simply a matter of good business and not a humanity factor. Slave cargoes were routinely insured against all types of loss except a complete wipe out from disease. On average, crews died at as great or greater a rate than did the slaves.

Economics of the Trade. The demand for slaves increased dramatically in the 17th century, particularly in the West Indies, due to the production of sugar cane, which required huge land acreage and cheap unskilled labor. For example, sugar was introduced in the island of Barbados (same size as Martha's Vineyard) in 1641. In 1643, there were 10K landowners, a total of 18K whites and 5K slaves residing on Barbados. By 1666, the number of landowners had shrunk to 800, as large landowners bought out the small holders; the white population had dwindled to 9K and the slave population risen eight fold to 40K. Because of the unhealthy climate, most plantation owners were absentee landlords who actually lived back home in England.

The slave trade was a highly profitable venture. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century a slave could be purchased for 15 pounds (sterling) in Africa and sold in the West Indies for 35 pounds. The transportation cost was only 5 pounds. An indentured servant

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**MYSTERY PHOTO**  
Contact John Cheevers by mail, e-mail or  
telephone if you know what it is.  
[jfcheevers@juno.com](mailto:jfcheevers@juno.com)

## NOTABLE EVENTS

### DECEMBER

- 8 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host, Jack Bobbitt  
 12 Bill Clarke will start a ship model

### JANUARY

- 6 Bill Clarke to finish a ship model

- 12 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

### FEBRUARY

- 9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

### MARCH

- 9 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Dean Sword

### APRIL

- 10 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Williamsburg Bunch

### MAY

- 11 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Bill Clarke

### JUNE

- 8 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

### JULY

- 13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

### AUGUST

- 10 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting:

### SEPTEMBER

- 14 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: Ford's Colony Group

### OCTOBER

- 13 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host, Graham Horne

### NOVEMBER

- 17 **H.R.S.M.S.** Monthly Meeting: host, Heinz Schiller

## 2001 MEETINGS

If you would like to host a meeting next year, please contact the Clerk. Several months have been taken and are shown in the "Noted Events" column.

## Thanks

The members would like to thank Heinz Schiller and his wife Moria for hosting the October Meeting meeting.

## WATCH, QUARTER AND STATION BILL



Skipper:	Bob Comet	(757) 934-1279
1 <sup>st</sup> Mate:	Len Wine	(757) 566-8597
Purser:	John Cheevers	(757) 591-8955
Clerk:	Tom Saunders	(757) 850-0580
Historian:	Len Wine	(757) 566-8597
Editors:	John Cheevers	(757) 591-8955
	Bill Clarke	(757) 868-6809
	Tom Saunders	(757)-850-0580

## Next Meeting

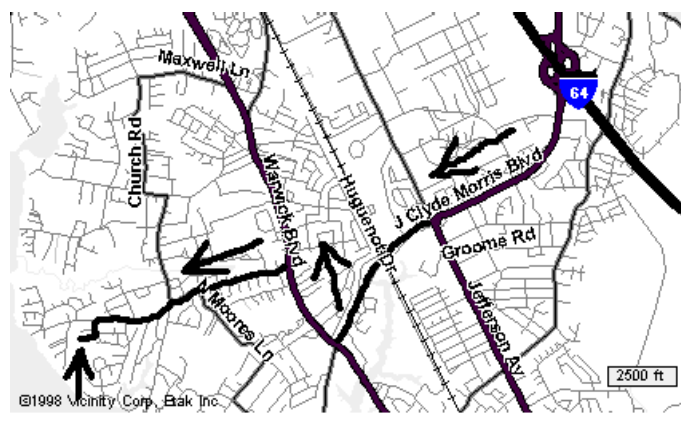
**Date:** December 8, 2000

**Time:** 2000 Hours

**Location:** 69 Queens Court  
 Newport News, Va.  
 599-0557

**Host:** Jack Bobbitt

From I-64 go west on J. Clyde Morris Boulevard to Warwick Boulevard. Turn right on Warwick, proceed to Hiden Blvd. Turn left on Hiden. After Hiden Blvd. narrows, turn left on James Landing Road and proceed to Queens Court. Turn right on Queens Court. Number 69 will be several blocks down Queens Ct. on the right.



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cost about 17 pounds for a term of service that averaged seven years. To illustrate the value of money at the time, in 1775 an able seaman in the Royal Navy made 14 pounds per year and a captain of a frigate made 180 pounds per year.

All new comers to the new world had a "seasoning" period of about three years during which they adjusted to the new and unhealthy climate. About 33% of all new comers, of whatever race, died during the seasoning period. Anyone who survived the seasoning period was likely to experience a normal longevity.

**End of Part I**