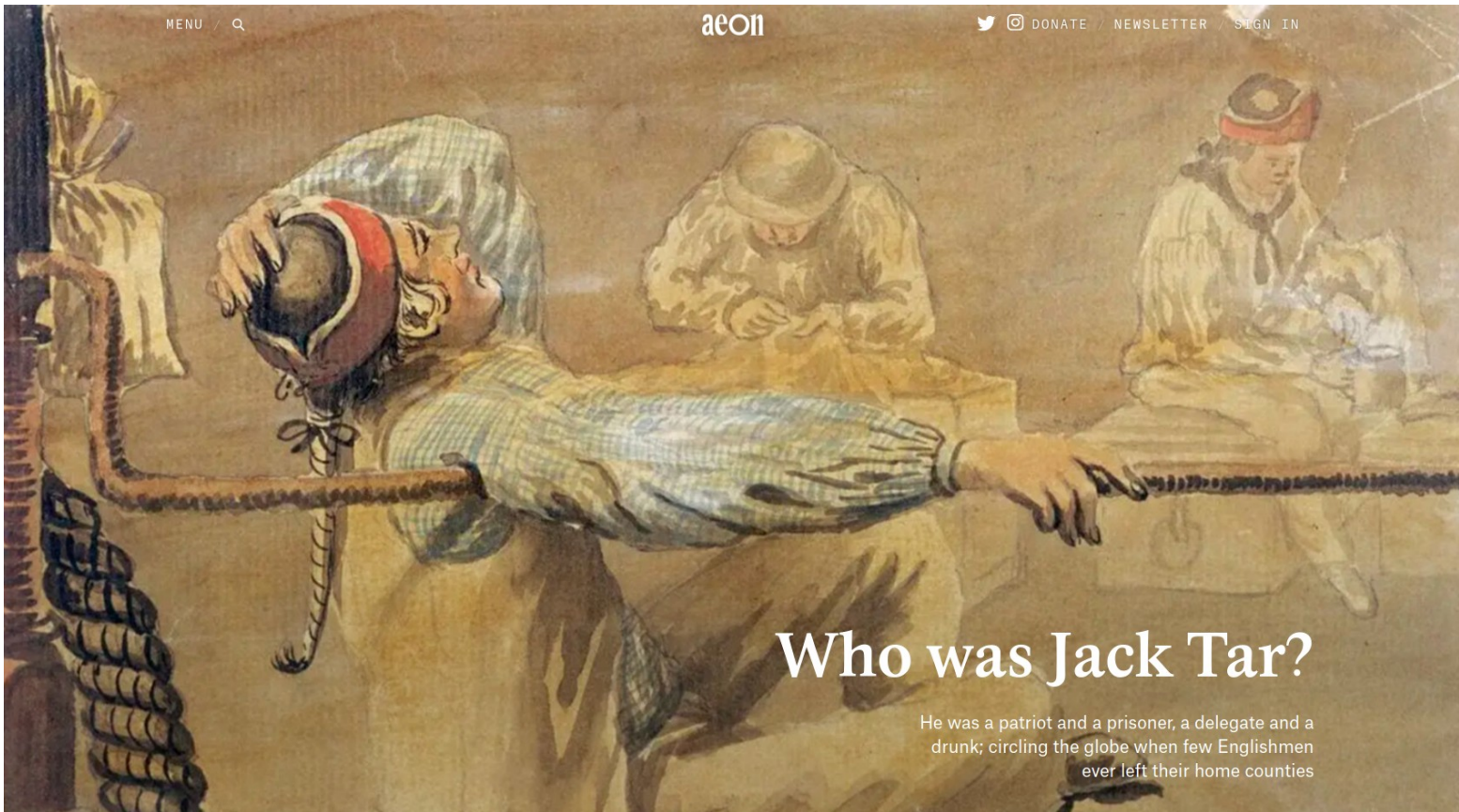


Who was Jack Tar?



Seamen relaxing on the HMS Pallas, April 1775. Early depictions of common seamen are exceedingly rare; this one is from an album of watercolours by Second Lieutenant Gabriel Bray aboard the ship. Courtesy the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

Stephen Taylorⁱ

Brought to you by Curio, an Aeon
partnerⁱⁱ

Edited by Sam Dresser

1. Britain's maritime past is now most commonly recalled in images of gold-epauletted admirals and wooden ships surging the waves or locked in blazing battle. Yet maritime history is not simply Nelson and Trafalgar. Nor, to widen the compass, is it over with James Cook and the *Endeavour*. Naval supremacy and mapping the globe did indeed play a major role in Britain's rise as a 19th-century superpower. Trade, especially in the Indian Ocean, was a vital element too. And along with wealth and the creation of empire came a thirst for scientific knowledge; Charles Darwin on the *Beagle* is only the most famous of many Enlightenment voyages.

All these enterprises have been widely studied and celebrated – apart, that is, from the crucial element that binds them. The common seamen, those who went aloft to set their ships on a course to victory, riches or discovery, are virtually anonymous. The simple name ‘Jack Tar’ serves as a label for the entire tribe.

The age of sail has broad terms of definition, but a reasonable range is from 1740 to 1840. This was the century when Britain became the world’s leading power. In this process, Jack – with numbers that peaked in the Napoleonic Wars at 147,000 naval hands and 115,000 in the mercantile sector – was an essential factor. He would have been

the last to see it that way, but it is reasonable to suggest that the engine of progress up to the Industrial Revolution was the plain sailor.

His name proclaimed him a man of the people – Jack being a generic term for the common man. (The term Tar was added because of that substance's common use in aspects of seafaring, from sealing sailors' jackets to binding rope.) Yet, among them, he was an outsider, almost another species, who excited profound suspicion ashore. At a time when others of his class might never stir beyond their native valley, he roamed the world like one of the exotic creatures he encountered on his travels,

returning home bearing fabulous tales (some of them actually true), curious objects and even stranger beasts.

Although while at sea he was as poor as any rustic labourer, ashore he knew brief spells of wealth. Then, fired up with back pay and prize money, he would eat, drink, cavort and fornicate like a lord.

Habitually profligate and with a terrifying thirst for alcohol, he was loyal to his ship, his country and his king, roughly in that order. Most of all, though, he was loyal to his mates, and it was this kinship that made him capable of the boldness that marked him in his golden age.

He was, simply, the most successful fighting man produced by his native land which, with its taste for booty, pugilism and foreign adventure is saying quite something. So profoundly did he believe in himself, and so deeply did he awe the enemy, that defeat was never contemplated and rarely experienced. His spirit earned him the respect, the admiration and, sometimes, even the love of his officers.

It bears emphasising, however, that it was not only in war that he was tested. Voyages of trade and exploration took him to the farthest corners of the globe. Jack joined in the discovery of a Pacific idyll, and helped to cast William Bligh

adrift when the dream turned to nightmare. He ventured to lands of distant peoples and mystifying customs. In doing so, he encountered perils every bit as dire as those he faced in battle; for, if one thing about his existence is plain, it is that he was far more likely to be carried off by disease or shipwreck than a cannonball.

The dangers and hardships of his life were quite enough to deter most of his compatriots. Samuel Johnson spoke for baffled landsmen in general when he declared: 'No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being

drowned.’ One clergyman who ministered briefly to a man of war – and fled as soon as he was able – could not fathom how humans dwelt ‘in a prison within the narrow limits of which dwell likewise Constraint, Disease, Ignorance, Insensibility, Tyranny, Sameness, Dirt and Foul air; and to these subjoined the dangers of Ocean, Fire, Mutiny, Pestilence, Battle and Exile’.

Yet – and here is the paradox – if there is one characteristic that emerges from Jack’s world, it is pride. As well as being part of a brotherhood, he had an independence unknown to his class at the time: he didn’t join the Navy, he joined a ship; and if he didn’t like her he

could desert at the next port and sign on with a new captain, because his skills were always in demand. He might be a press-ganged hostage, but he could also be a patriotic volunteer; as often as he was a noble simpleton he was a cunning devil; and the drunken dolt was sometimes a thoughtful and, yes, literate, traveller.



Self-portrait of Second Lieutenant Gabriel Bray sketching in watercolour aboard the HMS Pallas, 1775. Photo courtesy the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

A navy surgeon who had years to observe the men in his care described them thus in 1797:

The[ir] mind, by custom and example, is thus trained to brave the fury of the elements, in their different forms, with a degree of contempt, at danger and death, that is to be met with no where else, and which has become proverbial.

Excluded, by the employment they have chosen from all society, the deficiencies of education are not felt and information on general affairs is not courted. Their pride consists in being reputed a thoroughbred seaman; and they look on all landsmen as beings of inferior order.

2. Among the biggest myths is that they lacked a voice. Jack's story was neglected by generations of naval historians, perhaps because of a mistaken belief that he had failed to tell it. Various texts unearthed and dusted off over the past 30 years have amply disproved that. It is now plain that the Trafalgar moment gave rise to a spate of lower-deck memoirs, including one glorious fantasy, *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Mary Anne Talbot, Related by Herself* (1809), purportedly by the illegitimate daughter of an aristocrat who followed her seducer to war, joined the Navy disguised as a man, was wounded at the guns in battle and,

unsurprisingly, created a publishing sensation.

Of genuine full-length accounts by plain tars there are at least a dozen. One of the earliest was the work of William Spavens, an unlettered orphan who believed the world to be flat when he signed on almost 50 years before Trafalgar, and towards the end of his life – disabled by the loss of a leg, living on the charity of benefactors, but self-educated to a level little short of erudition – produced a memoir that is as gripping as it is moving.

Subsequent accounts extend to the Napoleonic wars and beyond. One of the most thoughtful is by John Nicol, who

manned the guns at the Nile but was also a shrewd observer of Polynesia and China in the 18th century – and an incurable romantic. On a voyage transporting convicts to New South Wales, Nicol fell hopelessly in love with a female prisoner who bore his child while they were still at sea and, after she was landed, spent years sailing in a fruitless quest to find her.

Jacob Nagle cut a more dashing figure. An American, Nagle was living evidence that seafaring transcended national allegiance. He was born in Pennsylvania, and fought on land and sea for his country's independence before signing on with the old enemy to serve in the

king's ships; he also sailed with the East India Company, survived shipwreck and being cast away, and for 40 years kept a vivid, carefree journal that is in every sense an epic – the tales of a seafaring adventurer to rank with any from Joseph Conrad's pen. Nagle was Foremast Jack writ large.

The best sailors' memoirs are about more than life at sea. Robert Hay, William Richardson, Samuel Leech and Robert Wilson cast real light on their times. Olaudah Equiano, renowned as the former slave from Benin who campaigned for abolition and wrote a celebrated autobiography, was also a sailor. Charles Pemberton was among

those – and there were a few – taken to the sea by a romantic imagination. He proved a hopeless sailor but wrote eloquently of ships and the sea before achieving fame as a thespian.

There is a belief among historians that wariness is needed – that Jack's love of a good yarn led him to embroider the truth. It is said, moreover, that in the age of reform following the Napoleonic Wars he became a vehicle for polemical pamphleteering – as the wretched victim of naval discipline. But the records are there for us to test his accounts, and to a remarkable degree they stand up to scrutiny.

Standing 100 feet above a plunging deck, swaying with a mast that might move through 60 degrees

Take the case of James Choyce, a London boy aged 16 when he started sailing. Four years later, in 1797, he was taken prisoner off a whaler in Peru. His deadpan account of survival at the edge over the next 11 years stretches the bounds of credibility by any standards: various escape attempts, a short-lived career as a pirate, service on a navy frigate culminating in desertion before a second spell in captivity – in France. At this point, Choyce writes, ‘I here disowned the name of an Englishman, as it had always been unlucky to me’, and

joined the enemy, reasoning: ‘Who would not fight for so good a master as Buonaparte?’

Choyce’s loyalties were always flexible, though. Sighting a British squadron at anchor off the Brittany coast in 1808, he stole a boat and rowed out to the *Theseus*. Here, at the very point when his story is most likely to be dismissed as fantasy, the ship’s log confirms that one James Choyce had been welcomed up the side after escaping ‘from a French prison’. Other facts, including his various desertions, are also substantiated by Admiralty records. For cunning, determination and daredevilry, few Jacks could have matched Choyce.

Writing styles are as varied as the characters. Choyce's journal – found at the Brighton lodging house where he died – is unfortunately wooden. Take, by contrast, Nicol's exhilaration at sighting China in 1787: 'The immense number of buildings that extended as far as the eye could reach, their fantastic shapes and gaudy colours, their trees and flowers so like their paintings ...' He was fascinated by local eating habits:

The Chinese, I really believe, eat anything there is life in ... I like their manner of setting out the table at dinner. All that is to be eaten is placed upon the table at once, and all the liquors at the same time. You

have all before you and may make your choice.

Nagle had earthier tastes. His journal is unique in the insights it offers of life at sea – of being high in the tops where the ablest hands battled the elements, standing 100 feet above a plunging deck, braced against the yards, feet planted on ropes slung below, swaying with a mast that might move through 60 degrees, and awed by all they surveyed. Nagle's adventures, set down in his distinctively phonetic style, show a man rambunctious among his fellows and quick with his fists, yet, when it came to women, thoughtful and generous. Paid off at Wapping, he would set out to

impress the tavern lasses, ‘with about two guineas in my pocked [sic] and some silver to cut a flash with’. Once, after a hectic ‘last cruise’ ashore, and being taken to a woman’s bed, he found she had concealed his purse. Nagle felt no resentment, simply demanded it back, and ‘she said I was the best friend she ever fell in with. I have saved her from the gallos or transportation.’ He still gave her a guinea.

Among those who had wives to return to, Ned Coxere captured the poignant moment of an unannounced homecoming (what Jane Austen called ‘the true Sailor way’):

She, being surprised, could hardly speak, for she knew not before whether I was dead or alive. I laid down my pack and rested myself, and had my relations come about me with joy.

3. Perhaps because of their proximity to suffering, seamen's writings often reflect a simple humanity. William Richardson, recalling his solitary voyage on a slaver, thought the Igbo people of West Africa 'sober and industrious, and no more deserv[ing] the name of savages than some countries where they call themselves Christians'. He also noted guiltily how slaves shackled on deck during the day would beg for a can of water, 'and instead of guzling [sic] it up

as many who call themselves Christians would do, they would fill their mouth, pass it to the next, who did the same, and so on until it was expended’.

A significant number of black seamen, including former slaves such as Equiano, served on British ships. Precise figures are elusive because the ships’ musters which record the age, experience and hometown of each hand are colour-blind. However, a proclamation of 1775 welcoming slaves from America, ‘willing to bear arms’ for the king, stimulated naval recruitment; and as the pay, food and living conditions were the same for all hands, theirs was an uncommonly egalitarian world.

‘Everybody on board used me very kindly,’ Equiano recalled, ‘quite contrary to what I had seen of any white people before.’

Another prominent black seaman, Dr Johnson’s former servant Francis Barber, actually preferred naval life to his master’s household; after the Doctor, mystified that Barber had left him, went to the Admiralty to insist on his discharge, a resentful Barber told James Boswell that it had been done ‘without any wish of his own’.

*For the kind of violence that
earned a seaman 150 lashes, a
civilian might die on the gallows*

There is no ignoring the dark side of their world. Floggings were routine, the results gruesome. Leech wrote that human flesh whipped with the cat-o'-nine-tails resembled 'roasted meat burnt nearly black before a scorching fire'. Images of the press gang remain among the most enduring of the age – typically a band of thugs, cudgels in hand, tearing a forlorn figure from his family cowering in the background. The reality could be even worse, as in the cases of entire crews seized within sight of home shores after years away and, without any family contact, sent to another corner of the world.

Yet the sadists common to maritime fiction were rare, and naval discipline could be less severe than the criminal code of the day. For the kind of violence that earned a seaman 150 lashes, a civilian might die on the gallows.

Nagle's distress at seeing a woman hanged in New South Wales for theft, 'much intocsicated in liquor', is palpable: 'It was dreadful to see her going to aternity out of this world in such a senceless, shocking manner.'

Even the press gang had its defenders. Nicol, taunted by lubberly civilians about his serf-like treatment, touched on a truth when he shot back:

Could the government make perfect seamen as easily as they could soldiers there would be no such thing as pressing. I told them that I was happy to be of more value than them all put together.

The fact that Jack did indeed hold the nation's destiny in his calloused hands was never more powerfully demonstrated than by the Great Mutiny of 1797.

4. Two years after the French Revolution, a tract was published in London acclaiming the monarchy's overthrow, and setting a landmark in the battle for civil rights in Britain. Thomas Paine, the author, was a former seaman,

and while *Rights of Man* (1791) addressed wider issues of social inequality, he proclaimed the coming of a time when ‘the tortured sailor, no longer dragged along the streets like a felon, will pursue his mercantile voyage in safety’. It chimed with a mood of grievance on the lower deck over navy pay – which had not been increased for almost 150 years – and poor rations. Early in 1797, petitions from 11 ships at Spithead – the waters between Hampshire and the Isle of White – were sent to the commander of the Channel Fleet and the Admiralty, requesting ‘speedy redress’ over wages, not only for hands, but for their families labouring

ashore under the rising costs of ‘every necessary of life’. The petitions’ wording was identical and had been agreed by senior men who formed a circle of activists, rowing across to one another and acting as spokesmen for their shipmates. They chose to be known as Delegates. But even that highly charged term failed to dent a ruling-class sense of complacency. The petitions were simply ignored.

All this needs to be set in the context of a nation in crisis. Bonaparte had mustered an army at Brest in northwestern France to launch an invasion. The Navy’s supposedly impassable ‘Wooden Walls’ stood in the

way, reassuring citizens of their security – until 1,400 French troops landed in Wales. Although that inept foray was swiftly dealt with, it precipitated a run on the banks.

On Easter Sunday, orders came for the flagship, *Queen Charlotte*, to set sail. The hands refused to go to their stations. Instead, a boatload of men put out from her side and proceeded from ship to ship, addressing their companies. By nightfall, the entire fleet was in a state of mutiny.

‘For a mutiny ... it has been the most manly that I ever heard of, and does the British sailor infinite honour’

The Spithead rebellion is estimated to have involved almost 80 ships, manned by more than 30,000 sailors, a quarter of the Navy's manpower. The demands were simple – pay increases for all hands and improved rations. Until these were approved, and a pardon from the king was granted to every man, no anchor would be raised on any ship – unless the French set out from Brest, in which case they would sail to give battle directly. Their lordships at the Admiralty surrendered. Pay was increased as demanded, and the king signed a general pardon. The first mass mutiny by an entire fleet had been marked by order and restraint. The leader, 26-year-old

Valentine Joyce, a plain sailor from the Channel Island of Jersey who'd been at sea since the age of 11, was acknowledged to have handled negotiations with authority and dignity. Nelson's opinion was that 'for a mutiny ... it has been the most manly that I ever heard of, and does the British sailor infinite honour.'

It did not quite end there. A second mutiny broke out at another anchorage in pursuit of further reforms – and voicing radical polemic:

Shall we who have endured the toils of a long and disgraceful war bear the tackles of tyranny and oppression, which vile pampered knaves wallowing in the lap of

*luxury choose to load us with? ... No
– the Age of Reason is at Length
arrived ...*

Order collapsed amid infighting among lower-deck factions. This time, the authorities stood firm. A few leaders escaped to France, and 29 men were hanged.

But the war had entered a phase when battle and survival took precedence. Jack won redemption at the guns, from Camperdown to the Nile and, ultimately, his finest hour, Trafalgar. By then, he had established himself in enemy eyes as invincible. When English seamen came aboard his ship as a furious storm descended, a French captain wrote how:

[T]he English immediately set to work to shorten sail and reef the topsails, with as much regularity and order as if their ships had not been fighting a dreadful battle. We were all amazement, wondering what the English sailor could be made of. All our seamen were either drunk or disabled ...

The brotherhood endured until the coming of steam, and the need for smaller, more technically qualified crews. At that point, with the creation of a Navy standing force, Jack came ashore. Among those to observe the transition, and lament his passing, was a Polish seaman, born Konrad Korzeniowski, who found his calling

under canvas in British clippers and became one of the great writers in the English language. His own character, wrote Joseph Conrad, had been shaped by his shipmates:

men who knew toil, privation, violence, debauchery – but knew not fear, and had no desire of spite in their hearts. Men hard to manage, but easy to inspire; voiceless men – but men enough to scorn in their hearts the sentimental voices that bewailed the hardness of their fate. It was a fate unique and their own; the capacity to bear it appeared to them the privilege of the chosen! ... They were the everlasting children of the mysterious sea.

Jack Tarⁱⁱⁱ

Jack Tar (also **Jacktar**, **Jack-tar** or **Tar**) is a common [English](#) term originally used to refer to [seamen](#) of the [Merchant](#) or [Royal Navy](#), particularly during the period of the [British Empire](#). By [World War I](#) the term was used as a nickname for those in the [U.S. Navy](#).^[1] Members of the public and seafarers alike made use of the name in identifying those who went to sea. It was not used as a pejorative and sailors were happy to use the term to label themselves.^[2]

the mass of common people.[3] There are several plausible etymologies for the reference to "tar":

- In the age of wooden sailing vessels, a ship's rigging was rope made of hemp, which would rot quickly in such a damp environment. To avoid this, the ropes and cables of the standing rig were soaked in tar, which had to be replenished by tarring. [4]
- Seamen were known to 'tar' their clothes before departing on voyages, in order to make them waterproof, before the invention of waterproof fabrics. Later they frequently wore coats and hats made from a waterproof fabric called tarpaulin.

This may have been shortened to 'tar' at some point.[\[3\]](#)

- It was common among seamen to plait their long hair into a [ponytail](#) and smear it with high grade tar to prevent it getting caught in the ship's equipment.[\[1\]](#)

2. Usages

- [Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta, *H.M.S. Pinafore*](#), subtitled *The Lass That Loved a Sailor*, uses the synonym 'tar' frequently in its dialogue, including the songs 'The Merry Maiden and the Tar' and 'A British Tar.'
- One of [John Philip Sousa's](#) lesser known works was his 'Jack Tar

March,' written in 1903, which featured "[The Sailor's Hornpipe](#)" tune in one of its segments.

- *Jack Tar: Life in Nelson's Navy*, best-selling non-fiction book written by Roy and Lesley Adkins about the real lives of sailors in Nelson's age.[\[5\]](#)
- The traditional English [folk song](#) "[Go to Sea Once More](#)" (alternately titled "Jack Tarr the Sailor") tells the tale of a sailor by the name of Jack Tarr who loses everything after an ill-advised drunken escapade while ashore in [Liverpool](#).
- The traditional English folk song "Jacky Tar," sung by [Eliza Carthy](#) (previously collected and sung by [A.](#)

L. Lloyd as "Do Me Ama"): Roud 511; Laws K40; Ballad Index LK40.

[6]

- John Adams called the crowd involved with the Boston Massacre "a motley rabble of saucy boys, negros and molattoes, Irish teagues and outlandish jack tarrs." [7]

- "Heart of Oak," the official march of the Royal Navy, features the line "Heart of oak are our ships, jolly tars are our men."

- Rollins College of Winter Park, Florida chose the "Tar" as its mascot.

[8]

- People born in Swansea, UK are known as "Jacks" or "Swansea Jacks."

One explanation for the name is that the people of Swansea had a reputation as skilled sailors and that their services were much sought after by the navy.[\[9\]](#)

- In [Anthony Shaffer](#)'s comedy/thriller play [Sleuth](#), the most prominent of Andrew Wyke's automata is Jolly Jack Tarr, the Jovial Sailor. This life-sized figure laughs, and his body shakes appropriately, with the pressing of a remote control button. He is in several scenes, including one where a clue to a murder is hidden on Jolly Jack Tarr's person.
- The term forms the basis for the expression, "[I'm alright, Jack](#)," which

signifies smug complacency at the expense of others.

- Period writers often referred to the simplicity of Jack Tar, and when he was represented as a drunk and a womanizer, the moral of the story was that he was easy prey for women, publicans and boarding house keepers.

[\[3\]](#)

3. References

(1) Stewart Binns (22 October 2015).

[The Darkness and the Thunder: 1915: The Great War Series](#). Penguin Books Limited. p. 428. [ISBN](#) .

(2) Williams, James H (1917). ["A Better Berth for Jack Tar"](#). *The Independent*. New York: S.W. Benedict (Sept. 29):

502–503, 515. Retrieved March 24, 2010.

(3) ["Jack Tar: Myth and Reality"](#). *More than a List of Crew. Memorial University of Newfoundland*. Retrieved 27 June 2018.

(4) Bruzelius, Lars (1998). ["Fordyce: Blacking Rigging, 1837"](#). *Blacking Rigging. The Maritime History Virtual Archives*. Retrieved 19 April 2010.

(5) Adkins, Roy; Adkins, Lesley (October 2, 2008). *Jack Tar: Life in Nelson's Navy*. London: Little, Brown. [ISBN](#) .

(6) ["Do Me Ama/Jacky Tar"](#). *Mainly Norfolk: English Folk and Other Good Music*. Retrieved 28 June 2018.

(7) "Speech by John Adams at the Boston Massacre Trial". Boston Massacre Historical Society. Archived from the original on 16 December 2017. Retrieved 28 June 2018.

(8) "What's A Tar?". Rollins College. Archived from the original on 4 December 2016. Retrieved 30 June 2018.

(9) "Archived copy". Archived from the original on 2013-10-21. Retrieved 2013-10-21.

The Sailors' Memoirs Project^{iv}



Sketch between Decks, May 75, Gabriel Bray, 1775, [National Maritime Museum](#)

These are the personal memoirs and journals of eighteenth century common sailors. I am currently working my way through them, and will update this page as I finish (or re-read) each book. My citations are for the copies that I am reading, though there may be other editions. If you are aware of any

common sailors' memoirs that are not included here, do not hesitate to [contact me](#). Officers and admirals are beyond the scope of this project

The memoirs here are organized alphabetically by the last name of the author.

Unfortunate Shipwright :
O R
Cruel CAPTAIN.

B E I N G

A faithful Narrative of the unparalleled'd Sufferings of *Robert Barker*, late Carpenter on board the *Thetis Snow*, of *Bristol*, in a Voyage to the Coast of *Guinea* and *Antigua*.



L O N D O N :

Printed for, and Sold by the Sufferer, for his own Benefit; and by no one else.

The Unfortunate Shipwright: Or Cruel Captain. Being a Faithful Narrative of the Unparalleled'd Sufferings of Robert Barker

Citation:

Barker, Robert, *The Unfortunate Shipwright: Or Cruel Captain. Being a*

*Faithful Narrative of the Unparallel'd
Sufferings of Robert Barker, Late
Carpenter on Board the Thetis Snow, of
Bristol, in a Voyage to the Coast of
Guinea and Antigua, London: Robert
Barker, c1760 [?].*

(LOG-BOOK
OF
TIMOTHY BOARDMAN;)

KEPT ON BOARD THE PRIVATEER OLIVER CROMWELL, DURING A
CRUISE FROM NEW LONDON, CT., TO CHARLESTON,
S. C., AND RETURN,
IN 1778;

ALSO,

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
OF THE AUTHOR.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL W. BOARDMAN, D.D.

ISSUED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE RUTLAND
COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

ALBANY, N. Y.:
JOEL MUNSELL'S SONS.
1885.

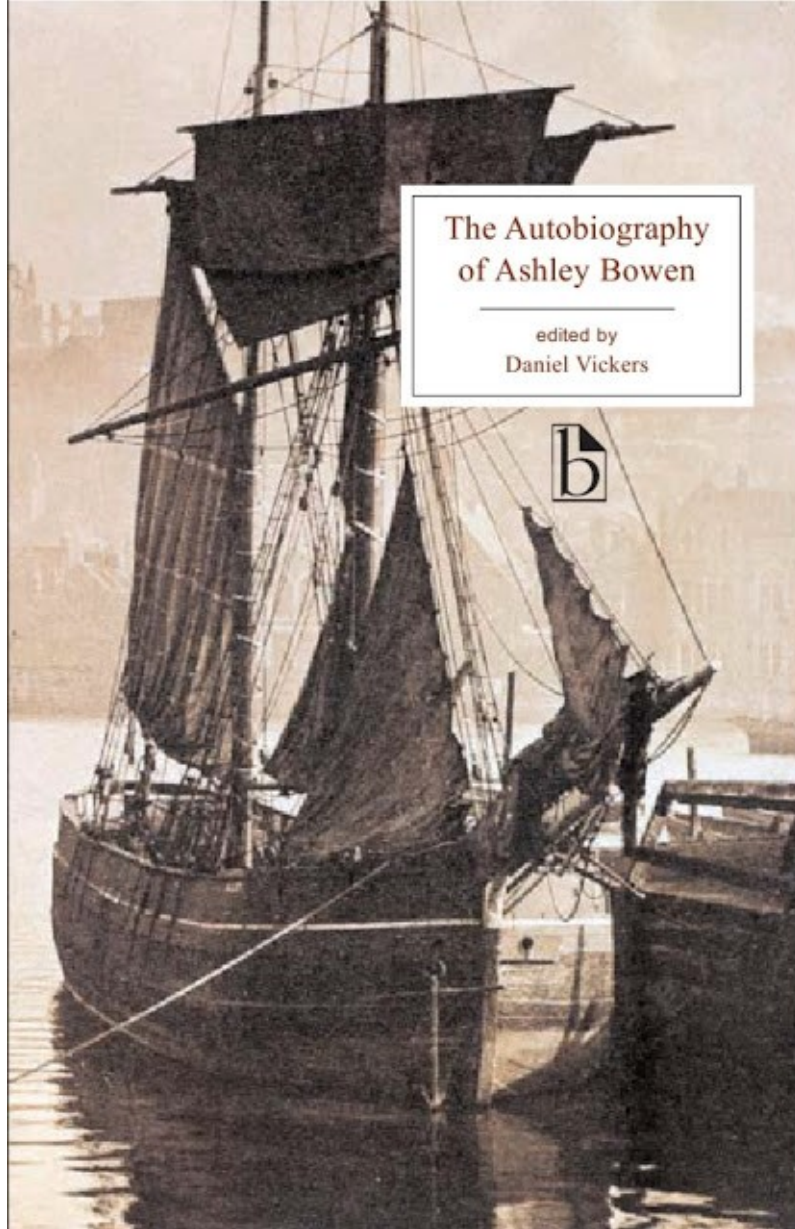
Log-Book of Timothy Boardman

Boardman's 'Log-Book' is not the official ship's log, but a sailor's private journal kept in the style of a log-book. Despite covering two separate and eventful voyages, Boardman's work is very brief. The book's length was padded by Rev.

Boardman's late nineteenth century recounting of the Boardman family's entire tedious genealogy. Skipping straight past the later Boardman's family tree does reward the reader with a few gems, but the account is largely unexceptional.

Citation:

Boardman, Timothy, *Log-Book of Timothy Boardman*, edited by Rev. Samuel W. Boardman, Albany, New York; Joel Munsell's Sons, 1885.



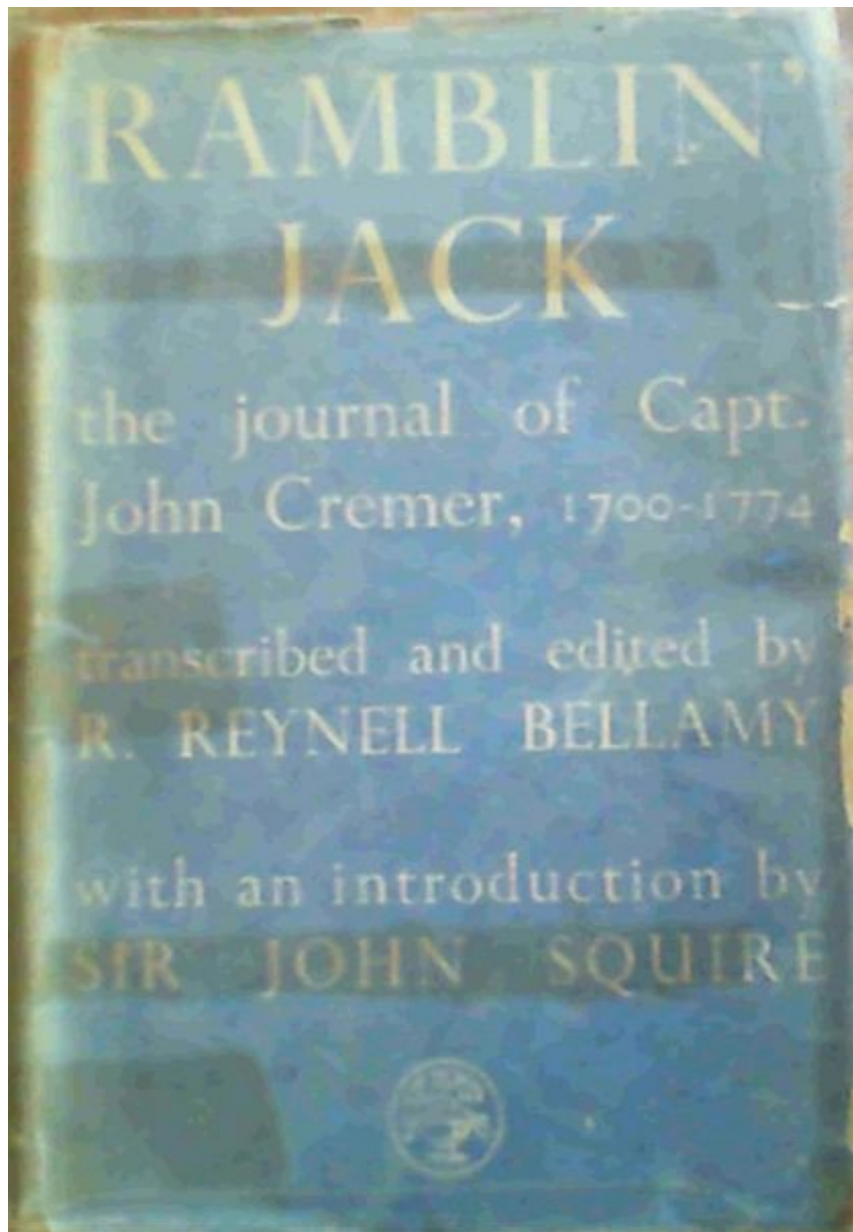
The Autobiography of Ashley Bowen (1728-1813)

In what might be the earliest memoir by an American sailor, Bowen describes his numerous adventures sailing to and from New England. Particularly memorable are his brief interactions with James

Cook and General Wolfe before Quebec.

Citation:

Bowen, Ashley, *The Autobiography of Ashley Bowen (1728-1813)*, edited by Daniel Vickers, Ontario: Broadview Editions, 2006.

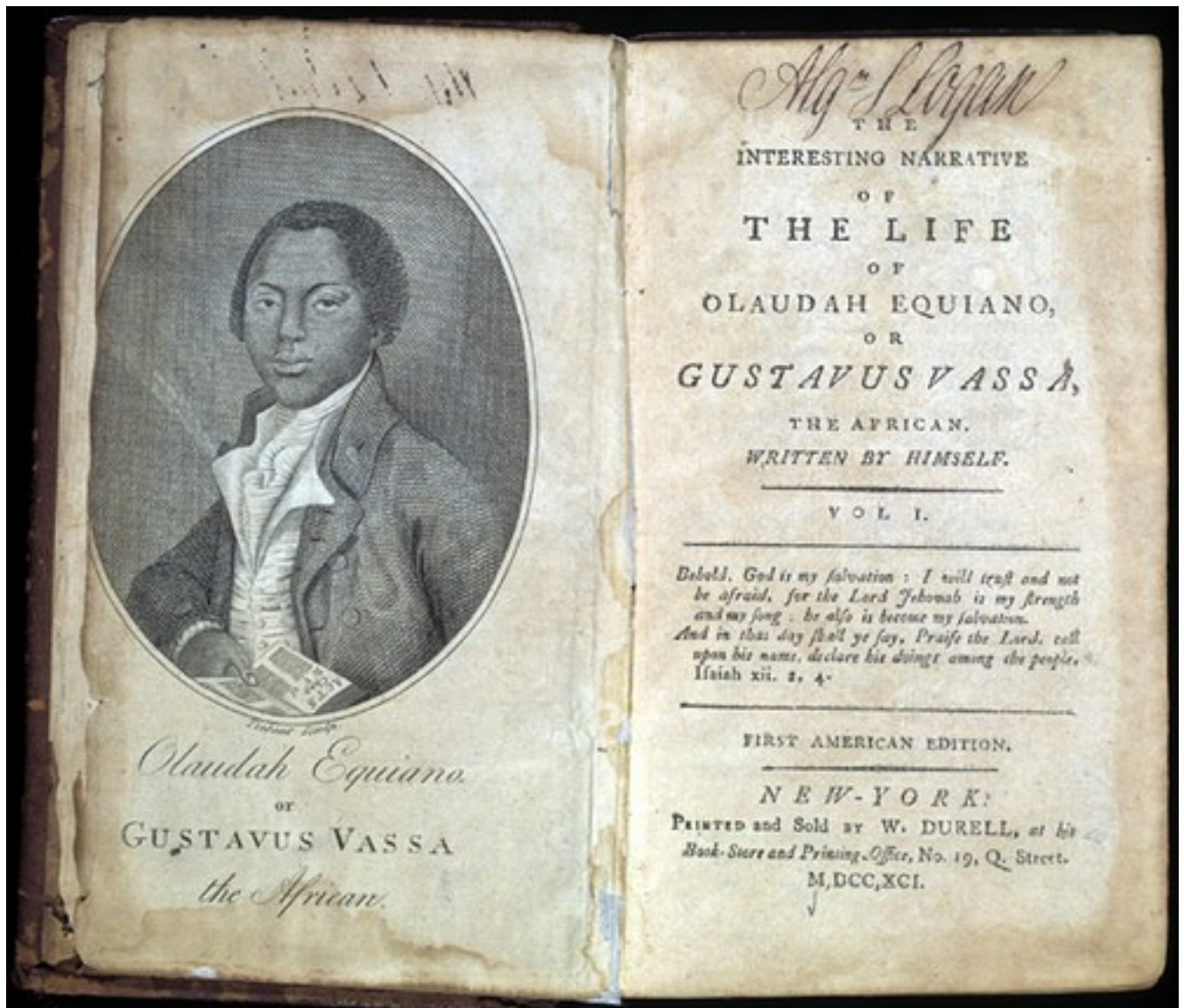


***Ramblin' Jack: The Journal of Captain
John Cremer (1700-1774)***

Citation:

Cremer, John, *Ramblin' Jack: The
Journal of Captain John Cremer (1700-*

1774), edited by Richard Reynell
Bellamy, London: Jonathan Cape, 1936.



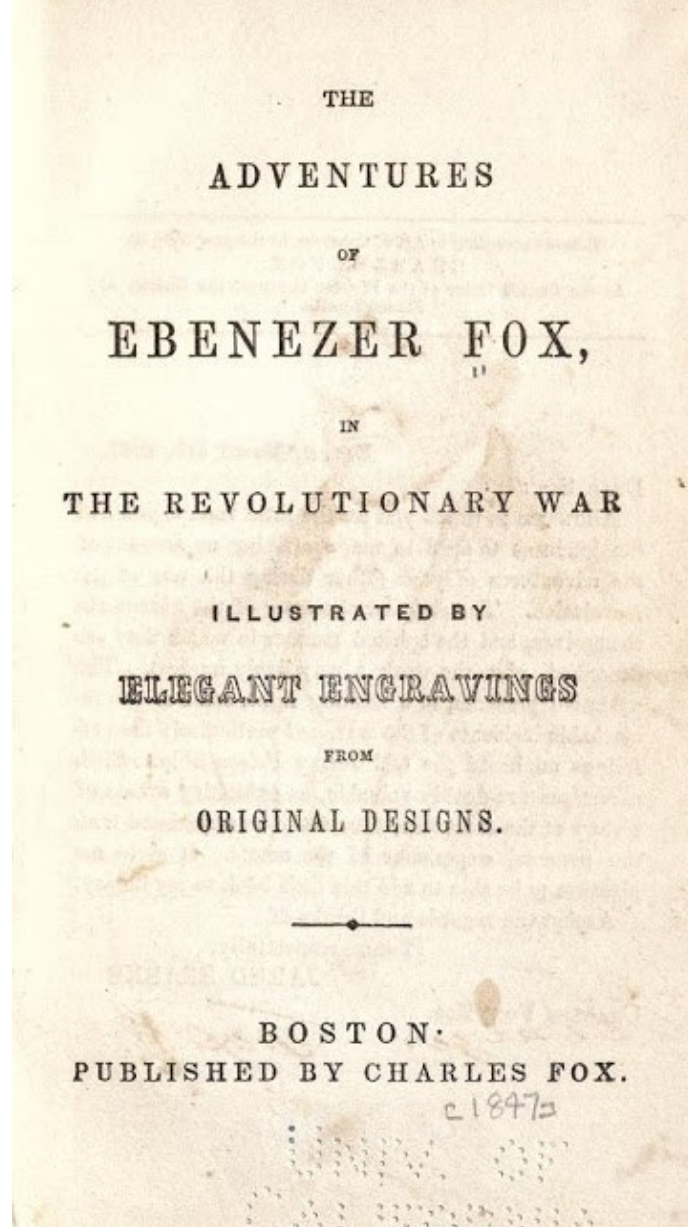
The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African

Equiano was enslaved at a young age, and spent nearly his entire enslavement and much of his free life as a sailor. He

served in the Royal navy, sailed merchant vessels throughout the West Indies, and even participated in several slave voyages from the Caribbean to the British colonies in mainland North America. Equiano is nearly the only voice for enslaved sailors and the innumerable men of color who sailed the Atlantic World.

Citation:

Equiano, Olaudah, *The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, edited by Vincent Carretta, New York: Penguin, 2003.



The Adventures of Ebenezer Fox in the Revolutionary War

Christopher Hawkins and Ebenezer Fox are very similar fellows. Both were young New Englanders who signed on for sea voyages against Britain in the American Revolutionary War, and both

were captured and imprisoned on the notorious hulk *Jersey*. Both served the British at different points in the war, and both escaped from them.

Hawkins narrative was written much later, and dwells less on the *Jersey* than Hawkins does. His service at sea is interspersed with a few other adventures irrelevant to the project, but there's a lot here to draw from in learning about sailors' everyday lives.

Citation:

Fox, Ebenezer, *The Adventures of Ebenezer Fox in the Revolutionary War*, Boston: Charles Fox, 1847.

NARRATIVE
Of the
UNCOMMON SUFFERINGS,
AND
Surprizing DELIVERANCE
OF

Briton Hammon,

A Negro Man, --- Servant to

GENERAL WINSLOW,
Of *Marshfield*, in NEW-ENGLAND ;

Who returned to *Boston*, after having
been absent almost Thirteen Years.

CONTAINING

An Account of the many Hardships he underwent from
the Time he left his Master's House, in the Year 1747,
to the Time of his Return to *Boston*.---How he was
Cast away in the Capes of *Florida* ;---the horrid Cru-
elty and inhuman Barbarity of the *Indians* in murder-
ing the whole Ship's Crew ;---the Manner of his being
carry'd by them into Captivity. Also, An Account of
his being Confined Four Years and Seven Months
in a close Dungeon,---And the remarkable Manner in
which he met with his *good old Master* in *London* ; who
returned to *New-England*, a Passenger, in the same Ship.

BOSTON, Printed and Sold by GREEN & RUSSELL,
in Queen-Street. 1760.

***A Narrative of the Uncommon
Sufferings, and Surprizing Deliverance
of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man***
Citation:

*Hammon, Brinton, A Narrative of the
Uncommon Sufferings, and Surprizing
Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro*

Man, Boston: Printed and Sold by Green
& Russell, 1760.

THE
ADVENTURES
OF
CHRISTOPHER HAWKINS,

CONTAINING
"Details of his Captivity,
a first and second time on the High Seas, in the Revolu-
tionary War, by the British, and his consequent sufferings, and escape from
the JERSEY PRISON SHIP, then lying in the harbour of
New York, by swimming."

Now first Printed from the original Manuscript.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

WITH AN
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY
CHARLES I. BUSHNELL.



NEW YORK:
PRIVATELY PRINTED.
1864.

The Adventures of Christopher Hawkins

Hawkins endured the dubious honor of being captured by the Royal Navy twice in his service during the American Revolutionary War. His service aboard

privateers as a teenager provides numerous interesting anecdotes in his memoir. Hawkins is rightly remembered for the account of his sufferings on the shockingly brutal prison barge *Jersey* in New York, and much of his memoir is justly focused on that experience. As the goal of this project is on the lives of common sailors, only the first quarter of the book is relevant to the Sailors Memoirs Project, but it is a helpful source nonetheless.

Citation: Hawkins, Christopher, *The Adventures of Christopher Hawkins*, edited by Charles I. Bushnell, New York: Privately Printed, 1864.

Samuel Kelly
An Eighteenth Century Seaman

Whose days have been few and evil, to which is added remarks, etc., on places he visited during his pilgrimage in this wilderness



*Now edited with an introduction by
Crosbie Garstin*

*Illustrated with twenty-four reproductions
from old prints*

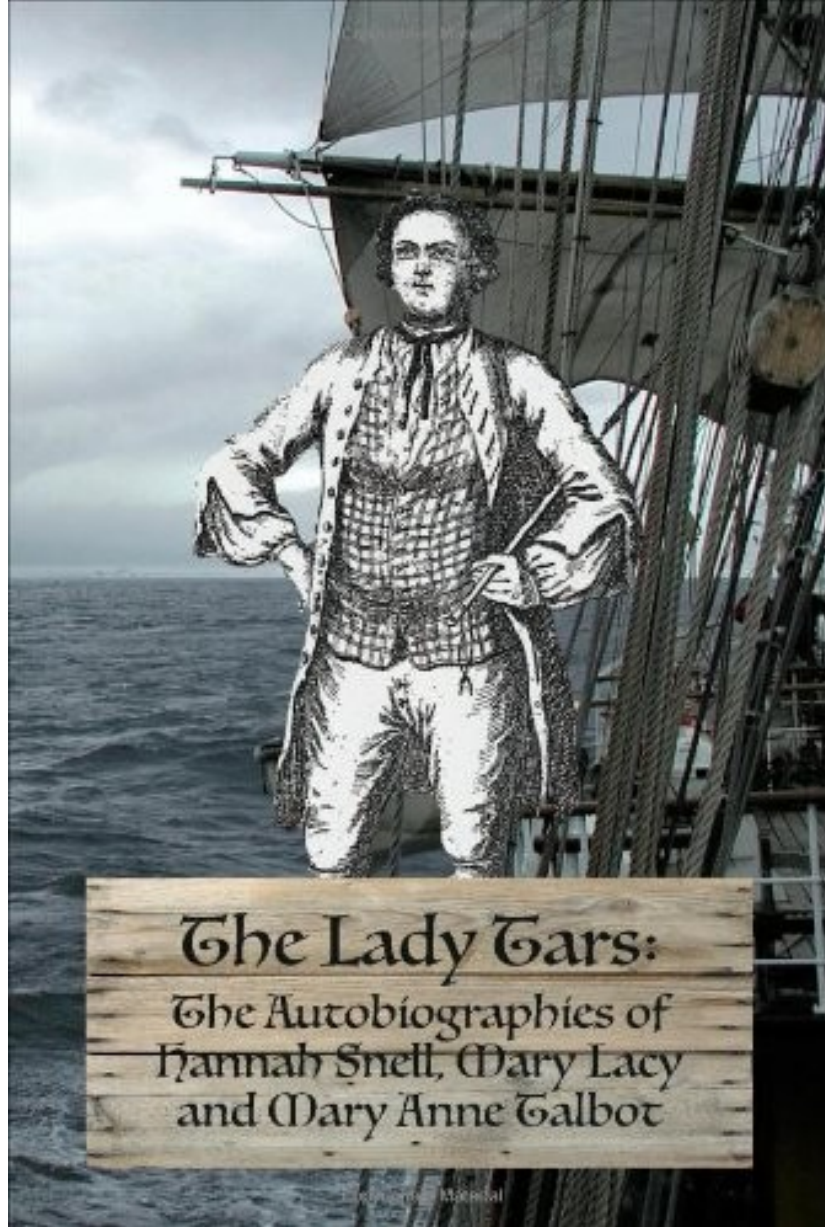
***Samuel Kelly: An Eighteenth Century
Seaman, Whose Days Have Been Few
and Evil***

Kelly's work is dense with anecdotes and telling memories. It follows Kelly's life as a sailor from entering as a young man on a fishing vessel all the way to his

command of vessels on the Philadelphia trade. Readable and informative.

Citation:

Kelly, Samuel, *Samuel Kelly: An Eighteenth Century Seaman, Whose Days Have Been Few and Evil*, edited by Crosbie Garstin, Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925.



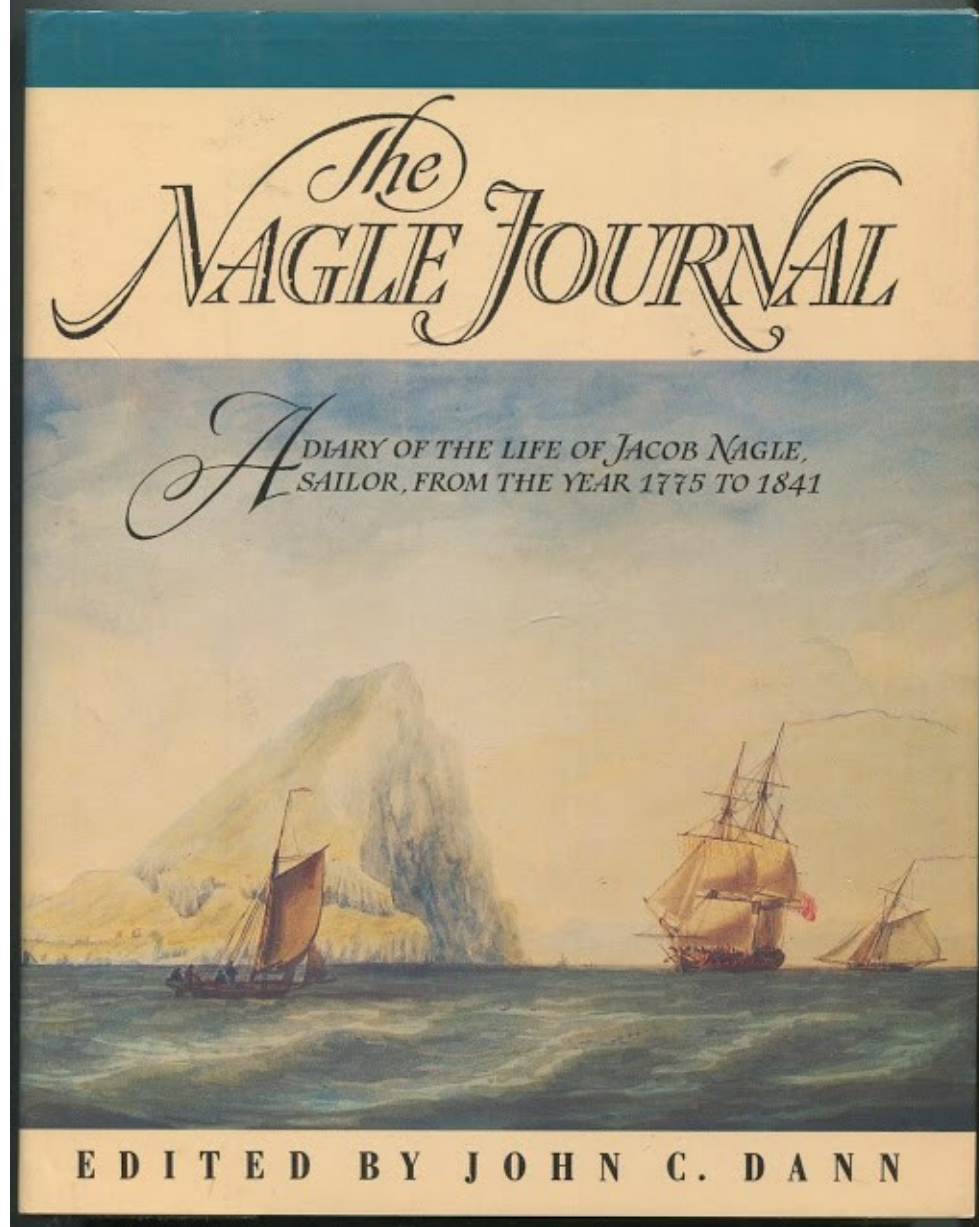
The History of the Female Shipwright
Mary Lacy's adventures as a woman disguised as a man to work afloat and ashore are riveting. Her constant fear of being discovered and willingness to fight any man who questions her masculinity

make for an entertaining read.

Thankfully, the book is also peppered with plenty of useful stories and anecdotes for exploring life at sea.

Citation:

Slade (Lacy), Mary, *The History of the Female Shipwright*, London: M. Lewis, 1773. in in *The Lady Tars: The Autobiographies of Hannah Snell, Mary Lacy and Mary Anne Talbot*, Tucson, Arizona: Fireship Press, 2008.



***The Nagle Journal: A Diary of the Life
of Jacob Nagle, Sailor, from the Year
1775 to 1841***

Nagle's life story is unbelievably adventurous. Privateering in the Caribbean, escaping death when an attractive young jailer's daughter throws

herself between Nagle and the bayonet of a misled French sergeant, fighting off a boatload of loyalists by strapping a cannon to a capstan and firing a load of nails and thimbles, sailing with the First Fleet to Australia, fistfighting a large bosun and succeeding to the delight of a company of regular soldiers and an entire ship's company, and more adventures strain the reader's belief. Surprisingly, there are other primary sources that back up some of Nagle's narrative. Definitely useful in exploring both the exceptional and the mundane in a sailor's life.

Citation: Nagle, Jacob, *The Nagle Journal: A Diary of the Life of Jacob*

Nagle, Sailor, from the Year 1775 to 1841, edited by John C. Dann, New York: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 1988.

WORKS
OF THE
REV. JOHN NEWTON,
LATE
RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES
OF
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,
London.

FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION,
PUBLISHED BY DIRECTION OF HIS EXECUTORS.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-HAVEN:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY NATHAN WHITING.
1824.

*The Works of the Rev. John Newton,
Late Rector of the United Parishes of
St. Mary Woolnoth and St. Mary
Woolchurch Haw, London*

Remembered today for his hymn
'Amazing Grace,' John Newton spent

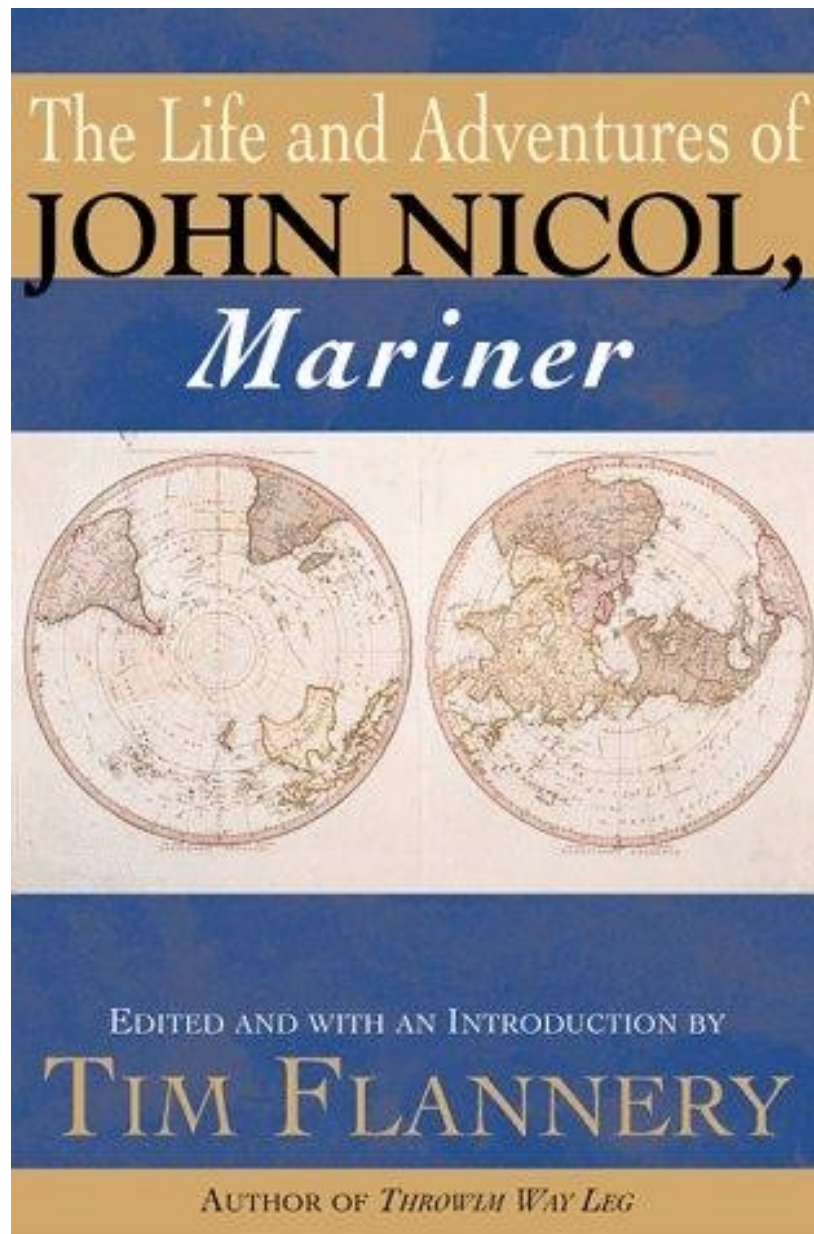
time as a common sailor and midshipman in the Royal Navy. He was demoted and punished for attempting to desert, returning to his former station as a foremast hand, before being transferred to a slave ship. Troublesome and entitled, the young Newton eventually reformed and decades after his involvement with the trade, became a prominent abolitionist voice. His letters are mostly concerned with theological matters, but do contain some interesting information about his time as a common sailor.

Citation:

Newton, John, *The Works of the Rev.*

John Newton, Late Rector of the United

*Parishes of St. Mary Woolnoth and St.
Mary Woolchurch Haw, London, Volume
1, New Haven: Nathan Whiting, 1824.*



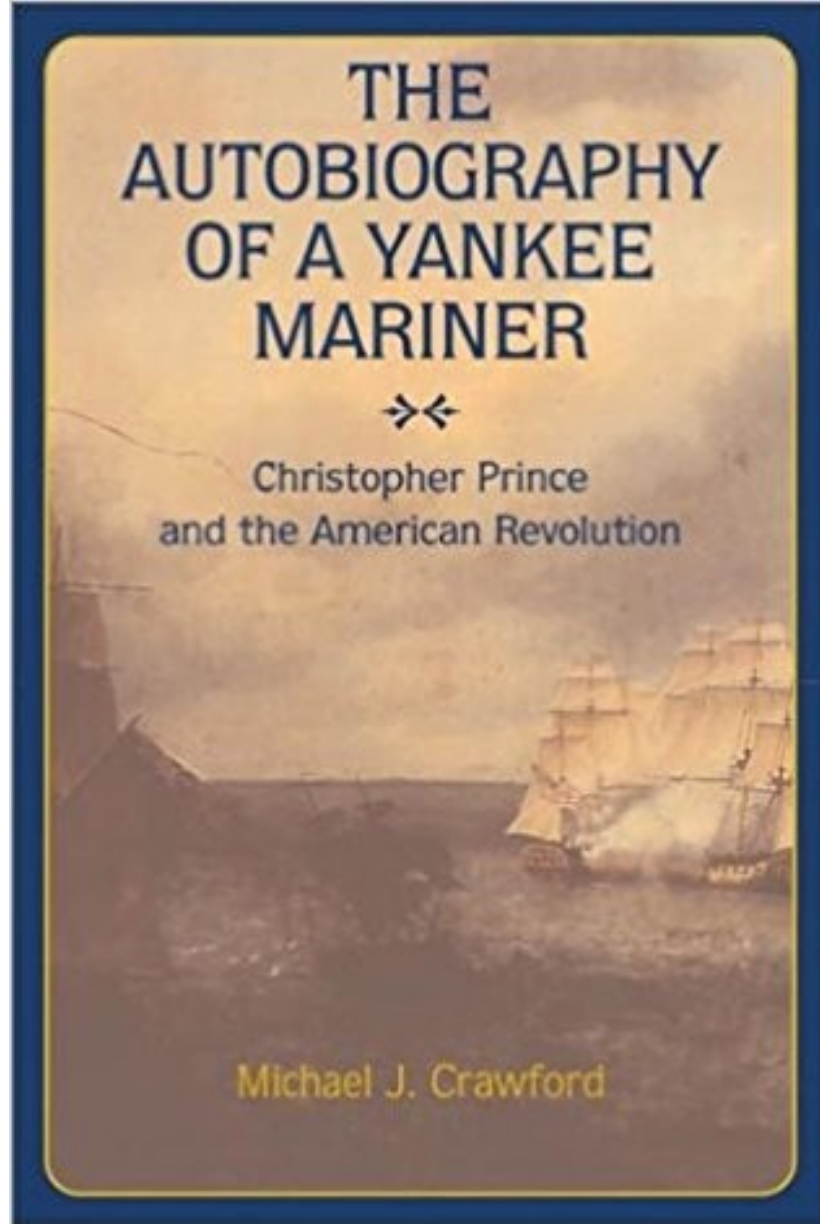
The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner

A Scotsman by birth, John Nicol traveled the world as a cooper, and experienced adventures that typify sailor memoirs of the eighteenth century. The thing that

sets apart his memoir is that it appears to have been dictated. While wandering the streets in 1822, a printer met Nicol and was moved by his stories. Putting pen to paper, the printer related Nicol's words for his audience. Other sailors wrote their own memoirs and for their own reasons, but this is a case where someone else found his story important enough to write and publish the story despite the circumstances of the subject.

Citation:

Nicol, John, *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner*, edited by Tim Flannery, New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1997.



***The Autobiography of a Yankee
Mariner: Christopher Prince and the
American Revolution***

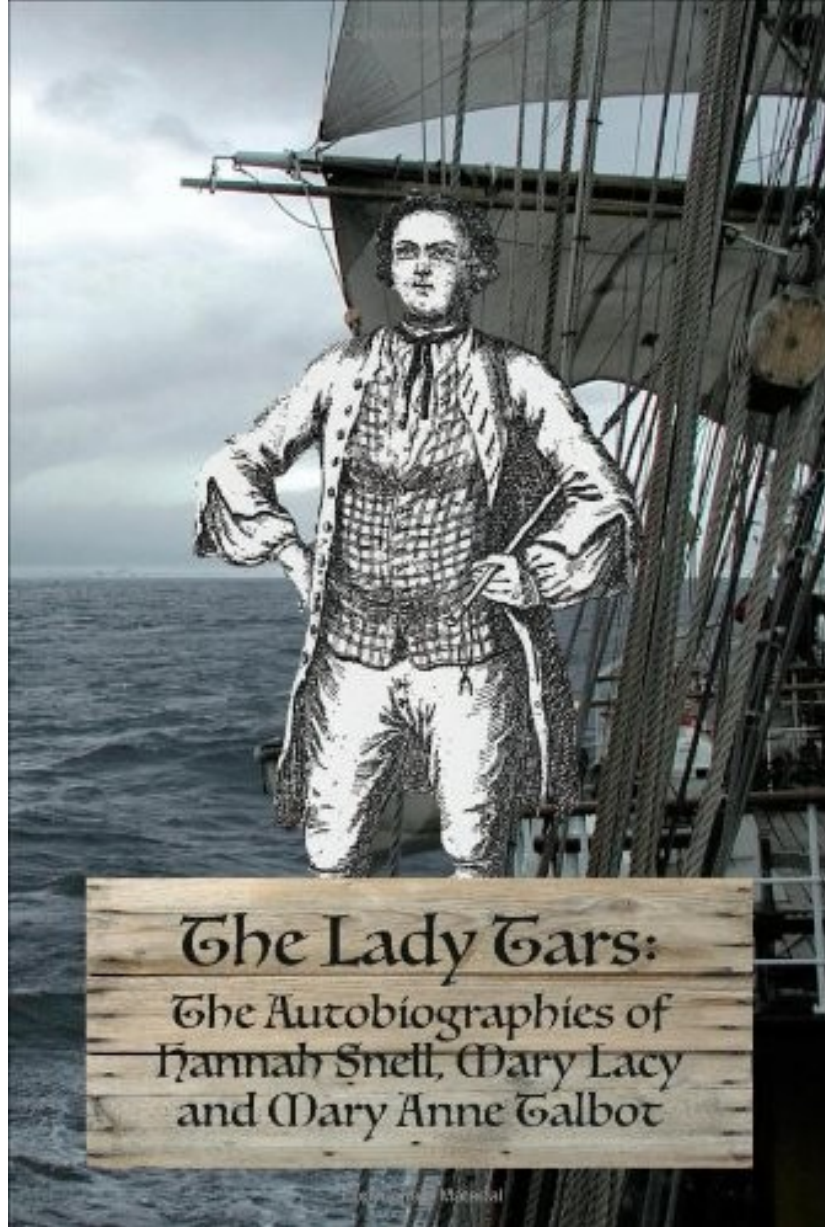
Prince's narrative is an interesting one because of the fluidity of his career. He served on both sides of the American Revolution, rose to become a first mate, was offered a position as sailing master

in the Royal Navy, then enlisted as a landsman in the Connecticut State Navy and rose through the ranks again.

Proving the permeable nature of maritime and naval hierarchy in the period, Prince also offers an interesting narrative full of strange and fascinating anecdotes like the murderous Wreckers of Virginia, the Quaker letter of marque, and more.

Citation:

Prince, Christopher, *The Autobiography of a Yankee Mariner: Christopher Prince and the American Revolution*, edited by Michael J. Crawford, Washington, D.C.: Brassey's Inc., 2002.

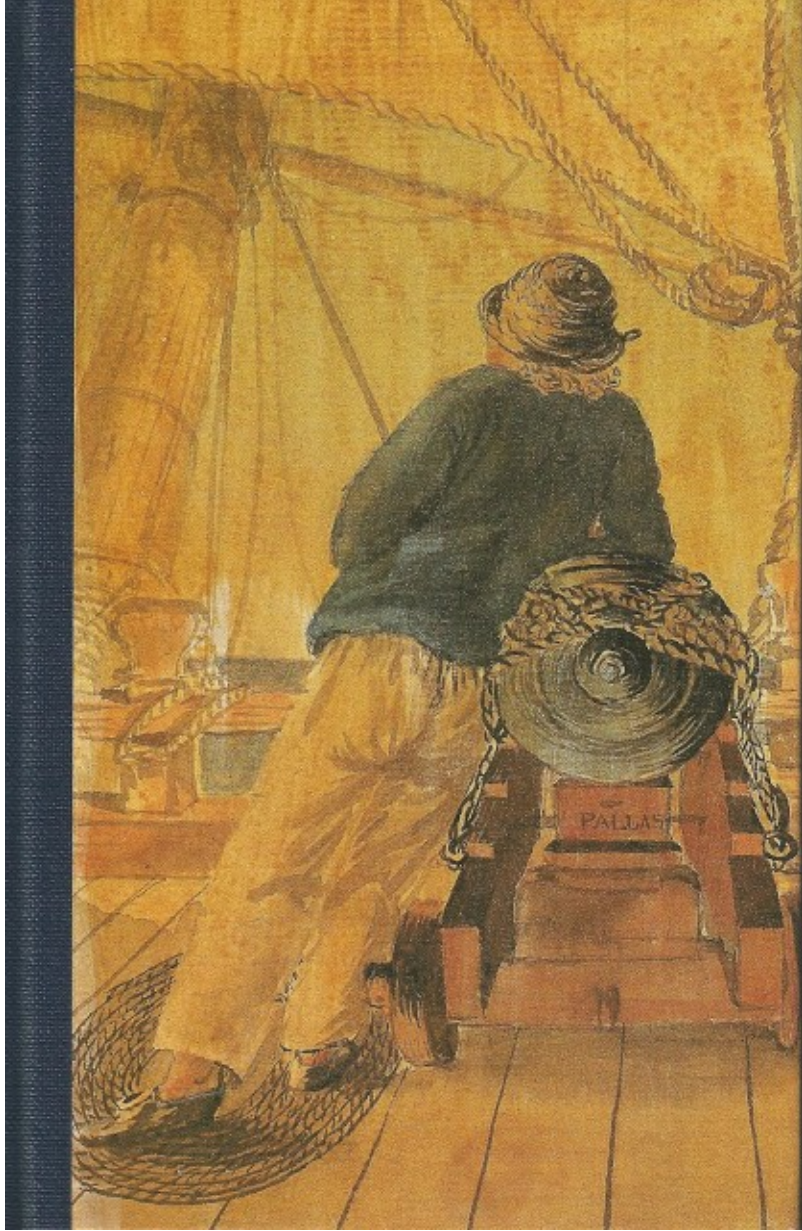


***The Female Soldier; Or, The
Surprising Life and Adventures of
Hannah Snell***

Hannah Snell was a celebrity in mid-eighteenth century England for her life disguised as a man in the marines. Her biography is ghost written by a male

printer who clearly imposes his own perspectives into the story, and dilutes her voice considerably. Further, her career as a soldier is largely irrelevant to this project. However, Snell is described as a "tar," and a few observations in the memoir relating to service at sea are valuable despite her biography's deficiencies.

Citation: Snell, Hannah, *The Female Soldier; Or, The Surprising Life and Adventures of Hannah Snell*, London: R. Walker, 1750, in *The Lady Tars: The Autobiographies of Hannah Snell, Mary Lacy and Mary Anne Talbot*, Tucson, Arizona: Fireship Press, 2008.



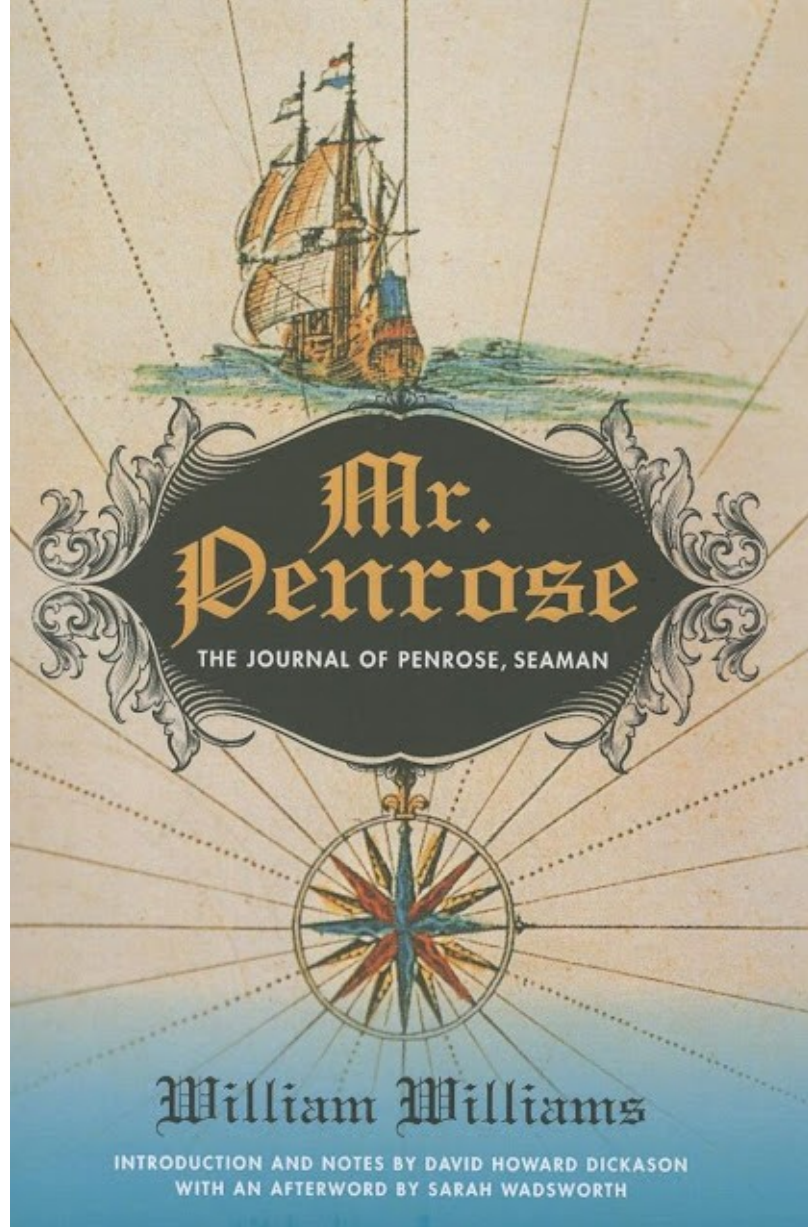
***Memoirs of a Seafaring Life: The
Narrative of William Spavens***

Spavens had a sharp memory and never rose above the rank of a common seaman. His experiences are both exciting and typical for sailors of the time. Spavens pads out the length of his

account with an informative description of everything to do with the navy (from navigation to rations to signal flags) for the second half of his book. While much of this is only passingly relevant to the lives of common seamen, he peppers these textbook like definitions with personal recollections.

Citation:

Spavens, William, *Memoirs of a Seafaring Life: The Narrative of William Spavens*, edited by N.A.M. Rodger, County Somerset: The Bath Press, 2000.



Mr. Penrose: The Journal of Penrose, Seaman

A fictional novel written by the artist and former sailor William Williams, this is semi-autobiographical and therefore worth examining. It is considered by some to be the first American novel.

Unfortunately, it was not published until well after Williams' death, and then in an edited form. The full, unabridged version was published in 1969, with an additional afterward published in 2013.

Citation:

Williams, William, *Mr. Penrose: The Journal of Penrose, Seaman*, introduction and notes by David Howard Dickason, afterward by Sarah Wadsworth, Indianapolis: University of Indiana, 2013.

10817 aa

T H E
L I F E
AND SURPRIZING
A D V E N T U R E S
O F
JAMES WYATT,
Born near *Exeter*, in *Devonshire*, in
the Year 1707.

CONTAINING,

- | | |
|--|---|
| I. His entering himself Trumpeter on board the <i>Revenge</i> Privateer, Capt. <i>James Wimble</i> , May 29, 1741. | Capt. <i>Robert Winter</i> , and five others. |
| II. An Account of their Cruize; and of his being taken Prisoner by the <i>Spaniards</i> ; with his wonderful Deliverance from Death. | IV. How they were drove by contrary Winds on the Coast of <i>Barbary</i> ; where they were taken Prisoners by the <i>Moors</i> , and the Hardships they endur'd among the Infidels. With the Manner of his Deliverance, and his Arrival safe in <i>England</i> after various Vicissitudes of Fortune. |
| III. The Manner of his escaping from the <i>Spaniards</i> , with | |

Written by H I M S E L F.

Adorn'd with COPPER PLATES.

The FIFTH EDITION.

L O N D O N :

Printed and sold by *W. Reeve*, in *Fleet-Street*; *E. Duncomb*, in *Butcherhall-Lane*; *E. Cook*, at the *Royal-Exchange*; and at the Printing-Office, in *Hind-Court*, opposite *Water-Lane*, *Fleet-Street*, 1753.

The Life and Surprizing Adventures of James Wyatt

Wyatt had a hard time of it. Shot and captured by the Spanish, Wyatt's life was saved by a barber who hacked with his razor until he could remove the bullet still lodged in his shoulder. And that was

before he was cast away and sold into slavery. Wyatt's account is not as packed as those of Nagle, Spavens, or Nicol with anecdotes and tales of his life at sea, as he spends much of his account relating the difficulties that followed capture. Nonetheless, his is an exceptionally early memoir, and does contain some relevant bits for understanding sailor's lives.

Citation:

Wyatt, James, *The Life and Surprizing Adventures of James Wyatt*, London: W. Reave, 1753.

i Stephen Taylor a writer of maritime history, biography and travel. His work has appeared in *The Times*, *The Observer* and *The Economist*, among others. He is the author of eight books, the latest of which is *Sons of the Waves: The Common Seaman in the Heroic Age of Sail* (2020).

ii Source: <https://aeon.co/essays/meet-jack-tar-the-sailor-with-a-nation-in-his-calloused-hands> accessed on 20200424

iii Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_Tar accessed on 20200424

iv Source: <https://www.britishtars.com/p/sailors-memoirs.html> accessed on 20200424