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### AS THE WORLD TURNS OR THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS PLAIN SAILING: MISHAP AND MAYHEM ON THE HIGH SEAS LECTURE FINDING AID & TRANSCRIPT

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#### Video Description

Cape Ann Museum's own Librarian and Archivist Stephanie Buck entertains her audience with this narration of real-life adventures drawn from the sea journals of three Gloucester captains who sailed around the turn of the 19th century: Thomas Saville, Edward Babson, and William Preston. With varying degrees of

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eventual success, these three men recorded many of the all-too-common trials of maritime trade such as sudden bouts of bad weather, piracy, states of war, and changeable market conditions. Trips to such far flung locations as Surinam and Sumatra were guaranteed to require endurance and resourcefulness by captains and their crew, and the stories Buck relates are a testament to the determined perseverance of those who pursued a livelihood on the high seas.

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### Subject list

Thomas Saville	Seaman's journal
Edward Babson	Ship's logbook
William Preston	Fishermen's Valentine
Stephanie Buck	

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### Script

[1st IMAGE – A Map of the World from the Best Authorities, 1795]

Good afternoon. This talk is a peek through a very small porthole for a glimpse at some of the challenges of sailing the oceans on board a trade ship around the turn of the 19th century as told primarily through the sea-journals of 3 Gloucester men: Captain Thomas Saville – Captain Edward Babson – and Captain William Presson.

[2nd IMAGE - First page of Seaman's Journal]

The terms seaman's journal and logbook are, to a certain extent, interchangeable. The main difference is that Logbooks are official documents, legally admissible in a court of law if disaster should strike, while Seamen's journals are an informal record of a ship's voyage.

Both frequently take the same format, recording the weather and the progress and general well being of the vessel, its crew and its cargo. But the journal is also the log-keeper's personal

record of his voyages, traveling with him from vessel to vessel and voyage to voyage. For instance, Thomas's journal covers more than 14 voyages in everything from sloops and schooners to brigs and packets, even once a French galiote.

All three of our books fall into the category of journals and, as we will see, were frequently appended with very unofficial entries.

Written at the beginning of this journal are the hopeful words: May it please God to Send us a prosperous Passage to our Intended Port & from thence home to our friends in Safety at Gloucester our Usual Place of Abode.

[3rd IMAGE – Annisquam - 1851 Walling map]

Our first seafarer, Captain Thomas Saville, was born in Annisquam on August 18, 1764, the first child of Jesse Saville and Martha Babson.

This 1851 map of the Annisquam area shows where he grew up.

His father was a much reviled and abused Collector of Taxes for the Port of Gloucester, at one point dragged from his bed and tarred and feathered by irate residents. So, it is ironic that at least 5 of his sons took to the sea, 3 of them succumbing to the dangers of such a life.

Thomas's brothers David and Oliver were both lost on separate voyages and his brother John, who went to sea at 14, was taken by the English and never heard from again.

We don't know how old Thomas was when he first stepped foot on board a seagoing vessel, but he was a captain at the age of 25 when we first meet him. Thomas's book is composed of blank pages that he ruled himself for each day's entry. Despite this his reports are quite formal.

[4th IMAGE – photograph of Edward Babson c.1860]

Our second, Captain Edward Babson, who posed for this photograph later in his life, was born February 18, 1811, the second son of William Babson and Mary Griffin. His older brother was the local historian and author John James Babson.

Edward's grand-father and great-grandfather had been seafaring men and his father was the owner of several vessels and a prosperous merchant. His family resided in the center of town in the vicinity of the harbor. Edward began his seafaring career at the age of 13 and for the next 22 years sailed to the East Indies, the Mediterranean and South America, becoming one of Gloucester's most successful Surinam traders. Edward's journal is the most informal of the 3 with no columns for course or wind speed just a narrative for each day.

[5th IMAGE - Dandy c.1820 & William's bills]

Our third, William Presson or Preston, he used both names, was born on April 13, 1805, the first child of Capt. William Presson and Sarah Eveleth of West Gloucester.

Although his father sailed brigs to South America William was not from a long line of seafarers. His grandfather was a tailor from Beverly, which may account for William's rather excessive concern with his sartorial appearance. Truth to tell William was a bit of a dandy, partial to jewelry, silk hats, fine lawn shirts, thin white socks to wear with his pantaloons and dancing pumps, as shown by these bills.

TOP - Dancing pumps and buckles

BOTTOM - 6 pairs each of calf and goat shoes, slippers and pumps.

This led to him being frequently short of funds. He once wrote to his sister "I hope I shall be able one these days to pay my debts but it has taken almost all I had left of my voyage to fit me out as Master, my clothes are in shocking bad order I never went to sea so before."

We are fortunate in having an extensive collection of the Presson family's correspondence as well as the logbook, so we know that William, sometimes Mate and sometimes Captain, first went to sea at the age of 19 shortly after graduating from the Governor Dummer Academy in Byfield.

William's log is official in that it is pre-printed but his entries are not always what the Admiralty Court would want to see.

[6th IMAGE – Guyana – Map of S. America, 1795]

All 3 of our seafarers traveled far and wide in the course of their careers but Thomas and Edward made frequent, short voyages up and down the coast from Cape Ann to the Caribbean and the South American ports of Demerara (now part of Guyana), Cayenne (now part of French Guiana) and Paramaribo in Surinam.

Trips that can be likened to those of the long-haul truck drivers of today.

Surinam was to Gloucester what China was to Salem and for the first half of the 19th century Gloucester merchant ships monopolized the trade of exchanging salt fish for molasses.

The fish was often of poor quality destined for the mouths of plantation slaves.

The molasses was a necessary ingredient of the very lucrative rum business and the wealth of many of Gloucester's merchant families was based on this trade.

Edward gives us a hint of how crucial the molasses was when, slated to stop at Cayenne before Surinam, he found himself battling in vain against a strong northerly current. He remarked "I concluded to proceed to Surinam as I have spent so much time in trying to get to Cayenne I am fearful that some vessels bound direct to Surinam will get there before me & I will lose my turn in getting my molasses – which is all important."

Each trip took an average of 23 days each way and Edward, who was a very competitive sailor and took great pride in making his trips in as short a time as possible, entered the number of days each one took in his log, and commented on other vessels and captains both faster and slower than his, once ruefully noting that his brother-in-law beat him home by 6 days.

[7 IMAGE – Diorama of Surinam port, 1812 by Gerrit Schouten (1779-1839) Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam]

It took less than a month to get to Surinam but the men's total absence from home averaged about 4 months because they always stayed in the southern port for about 10 weeks before starting back to Cape Ann. Their time there was spent unloading and selling their outward cargo and buying molasses, sugar and cotton to bring home. The fact that the weather was beguiling and the towns frequently beautiful and inviting made such long stays bearable. Paramaribo, for instance, Surinam's major port city, seen here in a contemporary diorama by Gerrit Schouten, had wide, tree lined streets bordered with graceful mansions, a large and wealthy European population, and all the amusements that a cosmopolitan society could offer, including, according to one visitor, an elegant tea held every afternoon in the best homes where the tea was actually a rather alcoholic punch.

Edward and Thomas were their own masters. They either fully owned, or had shares in, both their vessels and their cargos.

William was for hire, moving from ship to ship and from captain to mate as opportunity came his way. In later years most of his berths were on vessels out of Boston and New York traveling to Africa and the East Indies, but his first passage was on the brig Falcon captained by his cousin Timothy Davis out of Gloucester headed for the Mediterranean.

William did not keep a log for this voyage but Captain Davis wrote to William's mother:

“Dear Aunt - William has been remarkable attentive to his duty - he bids fair to make a very capable man if his health can be improved.”

[8th IMAGE – Medicine chest]

Apparently William suffered from both rheumatoid arthritis and hemorrhoids, the latter, in Captain Davis's opinion, exacerbated by his insistence, despite being repeatedly told not to, on eating large quantities of grapefruit which he bought from the native sellers that came alongside the brig.

William's arthritis however, was much more serious and practically crippled him at times.

During a bad bout Captain Davis assured William's mother that "I have ordered a warm bath of salt water and afterwards a thorough sweat and have applied bitter herbs to the most painful parts. I hope to be in Trieste in the course of 48 hours and shall call for medical advice."

The medical advice was to have William drink a glass of cod liver oil every day for a week.

Captain Davis was skeptical remarking that it was the same as the "oil that aunt Sukey used to burn in her old betty lamp."

However, the remedy was followed and found effective, with both the fever and swelling reduced.

Despite Captain Davis's optimistic opening remark he concluded his letter with the words: "I think that William ought to try to get his living on shore as the sailor's life is too rough for his constitution."

Although plagued by illness the rest of his life William did not heed his cousin's advice and the following year got a berth on the Brig Fox, formerly the Byker, an English brig captured in the War of 1812 and now owned by a conglomerate of Gloucester merchants.

[9th IMAGE - Brig Corporal Trim, Elias Davis, 1815]

The Fox was a sizable vessel - 78' long 23' wide and 11' from deck to keel.

She had a square stern, a billet head, 2 decks and 2 masts.

We do not have an image of the Fox but this is the Corporal Trim which was about the same size but with only one deck and a figure head instead of a scrolled billet head.

For those of us dimensionally challenged this room is about half her length, which means that her stern would be across Federal St. behind me and her prow towards the back of the Fitz Henry Lane gallery, and those of you sitting in the seats between the lobby and about here would be in the hold with the cargo and the bilge; the rest of you would be treading water.

A few days before Christmas, 1825, the Fox set out from Gloucester headed for Sumatra for pepper and this time William did keep a log.

The start was not auspicious.

William wrote:

“At 8 a.m. dropped off from the wharf - at 10 got under way – made several tacks and grounded.

Started again and grounded on Rocky Neck – laid till 3 o’clock then got off and beat out.”

[10th IMAGE – Photo Lone brig at sea]

The rest of the voyage was relatively uneventful however, and rather lonely. They had been at sea for 3 months and were in the middle of the Indian Ocean before they sailed close enough to another vessel to identify and speak with her. These chance meetings in the vast expanse of ocean allowed an exchange of news that would then be passed on at the next encounter or port of call. It was the only way for men at sea to let loved ones at home know how they fared and news that a vessel had been spoken with was eagerly awaited.

A few months after returning from Sumatra William got another berth as First Mate on the brig Aurora out of Boston under the command of Captain Gray, traveling to the West Indies and Guyana, probably for molasses.



For William the trip down on the Aurora took 3 weeks followed by a month spent unloading the cargo and buying and loading the return freight at the end of which Captain Gray announced that he was going to stay in Guyana for a while and handed the Aurora over to William.

William was 22 years old and this was his first command.

[11th IMAGE - William - May Heaven's Blessings]

William wrote in his log:

May Heaven's blessings on me pour  
Since Captain I've become  
And aid me to my native shore  
To meet my friends at home

William enjoyed poetry, so signing it Grimes was probably a reference to a seafaring character in a well-known poem by English poet and naturalist George Crabbe.

However, it was not exactly blessings that Heaven poured on William.

He ran afoul of a series of horrendous storms, accidentally rammed and sank another ship, and one of his passengers died.

[12th IMAGE – Rough Sea US Ship Constellation, J.H. Wright, 1833, MFA]

Everything was plain sailing until they were off Bermuda when the weather suddenly turned ugly. The wind abruptly veered and blew a gale. At one in the morning they lost their main mast and the topmast was split in half. At 2 a.m. they shipped a sea that washed away the bulwarks on both sides.

On November 15th William wrote “The vessel almost a wreck – the sea sweeping over us in such a manner no one can venture on deck to do anything.”

Over the next few days the weather improved enough that they managed to make necessary repairs and get the sails back up. They estimated they were at latitude 40° but had no idea of their longitude, in other words how near or far they were from the coast.

[13th IMAGE – Longitude Lunar Distance & Almanac]

Calculating longitude was problematic before the advent of reliable, and affordable, marine chronometers in the mid to late 1800s. It involved sighting and measuring the angle between the horizon, the moon and a star, which was called “lunar distance,” and then looking the result up in various printed tables called Nautical Almanacs. This would give you the time this conjunction occurred in Greenwich, England, which was 0° longitude. Then, because it was known that the sun moves across the sky at a set 15° every hour you only needed to know your local time to calculate your longitude. This was done by measuring the height of the sun (or a star) above the horizon and looking that figure up in another table to see what time it occurred at Greenwich. If, for instance, the almanac told you that a particular lunar distance occurred at 2p.m. in Greenwich and it was 6p.m. where you were then you were at longitude 60°. 6 p.m. minus 2 p.m. = 4 hours.  $4 \times 15^\circ = 60$ .

William and Thomas relied on this system of measurement but Edward, from a more affluent family, could afford a chronometer and rarely concerned himself with worries over longitude. A chronometer made life much easier as there was no need to calculate lunar distance. ~~[The chronometer was calibrated for Greenwich Mean Time and when it registered noon at Greenwich you measured the height of the sun above the horizon where you were which when looked up in a table told you your local time.]~~ Never mind. Far too complicated.

Obviously taking these measurements was an almost impossible task in the middle of a raging storm or with cloud covered skies.

In this case William soon met and spoke with a Brig who gave them a reading of 69° 30.’ This meant they had been blown several hundred miles out in the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of New Jersey. But their troubles were not over.

[14th IMAGE – Collision - The ‘Constitution’ and the ‘Guerriere’, Thomas Chambers, c. 1845, Met. Mus. of Art.]

The weather turned bad again and they were battered with hail and snow. For 9 days straight the wind blew from the NNW pushing them further out into the Atlantic and away from land and home.

William wrote in his logbook “Kind Heaven Preserve Us.”

On November 22nd the sea was “heavy and rough.” On the 23rd it was “tremendous.”

The next 2 days were the same and they lay too unable to make any headway at all.

On Monday the 26th all hell broke loose. William writes:

“11 p.m. very dark & squally with a rough sea. Saw a vessel on the lee bow, was unable to discover which way she was standing. We then hoisted our signal lantern and discovered she was a Brig lying too on the opposite tack - head to the SW. It was too late for us to right our helm. We came together nearly head on, her jib boom taking inside our fore rigging which carried it all by the board, split our spencer to pieces. We then swung head on to her with the sea - carried away our fore topmast, bowsprit & lashed anchor and disabled us all over.”

As dawn broke they saw the other vessel just to the south and west of them “cut down to the waters edge and nothing but the main mast standing.”

She was the Brig Hannah of Boston, 105 days from Stockholm and so badly damaged that her master, Capt. Hinckley, decided to abandon her and he and his crew joined William on board the Aurora.

The storm continued with the sea still running “mountains high” and supplies began to run low with all the extra mouths to feed. Fortunately, they met up with a ship just 2 days out of port

bound on a whaling voyage that gave them a barrel of pork, a barrel of bread, and a bushel of potatoes.

On December 4th they made a spencer sail out of the remnants of the main sail and on the 5th spent the day securing the bowsprit and fitting a temporary jib boom.

On the 7th they had just reached Cape Cod when one of the passengers died. They buried him at sea 3 hours later. No explanation was given for his demise.

[15th IMAGE – 1795 North Carolina & Atlantic Coast chart]

Thomas and Edward were older, wiser and more confident sailors but nonetheless occasionally fell afoul of circumstances.

Thomas, for instance, ran into trouble after he started making a few trips to North Carolina and Virginia in 1794. These voyages usually took about 12 days each way with a weeks stay offloading and loading, less than a month in all.

In January of 1795, 8 days out on the way home to Cape Ann from New Bern, North Carolina, which was then way up-river south of the Alligator Dismal Swamp, Thomas ran into trouble. They were approximately at latitude 38, about Cape May, NJ [B], with the Lark leaking badly and working the pump non-stop when a hard gale began to blow. Thomas pointed her prow out to sea, lashed the tiller, cut away the main mast, stowed the sails and waited for the storm to abate. But they got caught in a strong southerly current and, unable to break away because of the winds, found themselves off the Florida coast within a week [C], and heading for the Caribbean. Low on provisions and in need of repairs Thomas took the path of least resistance and they landed at St. Eustatia [D] on February 26<sup>th</sup>. The trip had taken 48 days instead of 12 and they still had to get home to friends and family anxiously waiting to hear if they had been “spoken to.”

Edward was even more pragmatic.

In the winter of 1839-40, when storms wrecked more than 50 ships sheltering in Gloucester harbor and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was moved to write the Wreck of the Hesperus, Edward wrote in his journal “Tremendous gales and high seas – the heaviest any of us on board have experienced.”

But when the raging winds tore apart his sails he substituted a tarpaulin and a hammock and calmly hunkered down to ride it out.

Another time, caught off Nantucket in heavy tide rips after a storm, he wrote “if any man wants his patience tried – let him get as near home as we – and have the chance to make headway astern.”

[16th IMAGE – Religious Homily]

Not all the trials and tribulations of a mariner arose from inclement weather.

In the days of sail - being becalmed was just as frustrating and dangerous.

In 1840 Edward was driven to remark that he “might as well about ship - go home and go to the Bunker Hill Convention.”

A reference to the presidential campaigning going on at the time between the Whig candidate William Henry Harrison, Tippecanoe and Tyler too, and the incumbent Democrat Martin Van Buren.

It is not clear whether or not he thought the convention would be an equally boring experience.

William, on his trip to Sumatra in the Fox, was becalmed in the middle of the Indian ocean with not another ship in sight. The temperature was 110° in the shade, they had just committed their favorite dog to the deep, and food and water was rationed. It was, William said, “like the frog getting out of the well – 3 feet forward and 4 back.” All they could do was down the boat and start rowing. They towed the Fox, all 178 tons of her for 2 days straight.

Then there was sometimes trouble with the crew.

William, when first mate, dare not go ashore when in port, even to go to church, for fear that the crew would abandon ship. He complained that he had to leave his berth at every creak and groan of the ship to make sure that they were all still on board.

Edward's first and second mates were once found guilty of smuggling and stealing from the Cadet. Another time he had trouble with the ship's cook who having "been very stupid for the last two or three days. Gave us a cold dinner today." It turned out that the man had "drank up all the spirits in the vessel" and was thoroughly soused.

[17th IMAGE – Pirate]

And there were pirates.

In 1801 Thomas was off the coast of Guyana in the schooner Cornelia when he was shot at by another small schooner. As he came too they drew alongside and hoisted French colors. After showing them his papers they switched to Spanish colors and boarded the Cornelia. They ransacked her, breaking open all the hatches, chests and trunks and taking most of the contents. Thomas was particularly aggrieved that they took all his clothes, making a point of enumerating them: 9 shirts, 5 neckerchiefs, 2 waistcoats, 3 pair of linen trousers, 4 pair of cotton stockings, 3 pair of woolen ones, 2 overalls and a great coat. Not quite up to William's standards.

The next day the brigands demanded that Thomas sail with them to Trinidad or be scuttled. Fortunately, they proved to have a short attention span and when they sighted another ship in the distance they went chasing after her leaving Thomas and the Cornelia to make their cautious way home.

[18 IMAGE - Agreement - John Amory, John Singleton Copley, 1768, MFA]

Dealing with owners, merchants and authorities in both home and foreign ports was often equally fraught with difficulties.

Every voyage began with an agreement between the vessel's owners and the captain. In 1826 William signed an agreement with William Stevens and Benjamin Atkins, owners of the schooner Ann, for a voyage to Martinique. [this painting is of John Amory - a Boston merchant - but illustrates the concept] William was instructed to use the proceeds from the sale of the cargo to buy molasses to bring back to Gloucester. And while he was allowed to use his own discretion on the price paid he was reminded that he was only going to get 6% of the net profit of the return cargo which, with an additional \$20 a month, was “to be considered his full compensation.”

Unfortunately, as was often the case with William, things did not go well. He arrived at Martinique in good time with his freight, which consisted of codfish, whale oil, rice, tobacco, beef, barrel shooks and headings, and gunpowder but, despite Mr. Stevens assurance that the cargo was good quality, was told by his Martinique agent that:

“Your fish is old fish – and not liked” and it was suggested that he try to sell it in Guadeloupe.

[19th IMAGE – Martinique letter 8/23]

William hurriedly wrote to Mr. Stevens:

“Sir – I have to inform you that I arrived here on the 21<sup>st</sup> at night – got on shore yesterday – tried the markets and have this day shown my fish – I cannot get any offer for them and must go to Point Peter – shall get off tomorrow as soon as the custom house is open – oil is contraband here and I do not see any chance of doing anything with it - in Guadeloupe it is the

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same – powder is a bad article – rice is worth 5/50 beef 11/50 & 10/50 duties 2/40 - tobacco  
6/50 duties 50cts.”

He did go to Guadeloupe however, and from there scrawled another note:

“I have sold the cargo and landed all but a few barrels of beef and the oil. I have petitioned the government for permission to land the oil and the powder. The voyage is troublesome and must prove bad.”

He wrote again 5 days later to report that he still had the oil on board but had managed to sell the gunpowder. He added that the price of fish was so low that he couldn't get more than half the money that Mr. Stevens expected and molasses was so high that he was unable to buy any, so he was taking on tile as ballast and planned to try and sell the oil in either St. Thomas or Guyana and perhaps buy some sugar or coffee to bring home.

About 2 weeks passed before he finally announced that he had sold the oil and done all he could. He wrote “the fish were spoiling, the oil leaking, three barrels of the fish and a cask of rice were damaged by water - I shall only have something more than 4 thousand dollars – and be coming home in ballast.”

[20th IMAGE – original cargo list \$4189]

This is the invoice for the outgoing cargo showing what Mr. Stevens and Mr. Atkins had paid for it: 4 thousand 139 dollars and 3 cents. A few dollars more than William managed to sell it for. William had also incurred unexpected expenses in having to visit several ports in his attempts to sell the goods and in repairs to the Ann, plus he had been unable to buy anything to sell on his return.

6% of nothing was not going to keep him in cowhide boots, dancing pumps and silver buckles.



[21st IMAGE – Elephant trade card]

The mish-mash of outgoing cargo William carried on board the Ann: oil, gunpowder, tobacco, meat and rice, along with fish, was not unusual. Freights were often an extraordinarily eclectic mix with many people sending out a single barrel of this or box of that on what was termed a venture, hoping to make a profit on its sale.

On one trip Thomas carried fish, oil, oak staves, shingles, tobacco, lumber, candles, bricks, beef, shoes, tongues, bread, potatoes, 500 bunches of onions and 35 live sheep.

William once carried 8 casks of codfish, 4 kegs of butter, 80 barrels of flour, 201 boxes of Herring and a single trunk containing 7 thousand 500 dollars in gold coin.

Another time William complained that he had to waste time in port building a house on the deck to shelter an elephant, a camel and several monkeys.

[22nd IMAGE – Thomas Copy of Surinam Charges]

And everyone wanted a piece of the pie. This is a listing of the charges Thomas incurred on one trip to Surinam, which was under Dutch control at the time so the amounts are in guilders.

Apart from the expected fees for the harbor master and the tax collector there were other set charges such as money for the church and hiring a pilot, which cost you 33 guilders.

Incidentally not hiring a pilot cost you 15.

You also had to fill out innumerable forms, most of them in duplicate unless you were leaving in ballast, then it was in triplicate. And while you were filling out and filing all these forms you had to accommodate a guard on board who had to be feed and paid 50c a day. The authorities even published a 36 page booklet in English and Dutch listing all the shipping rules and

associated costs. Plus, there were no banks and no paper money. One contemporary account remembers the captains carrying sacks full of gold and silver guilders from government office to government office, staggering along under the weight of them.

[23rd IMAGE – William’s Skate.]

There were balmy days of course when the wind was just right and the ship ship-shape and the men had some free time. This they spent in various pursuits including fishing to augment their diet of bread, beans and salt meat. Off Cape Ann they caught cod and dogfish, further south were dolphin, shark, porpoise, rudder fish and once a king fish and a couple of turtles.

Far out in the Atlantic Edward’s crew caught some bonitos – which led to the unexpected treat of a dinner of boiled pork when one of the pigs on board died after eating a bonito head.

In the Indian Ocean William saw, but did not catch, a “vampire” fish, and obligingly sketched it noting the rather unlikely fact that no one on board admitted to having seen one before.

[24th IMAGE - Fishermen’s Valentine.]

Other popular pastimes were drinking grog, playing the fiddle, carving bone and wood and making seashell valentines for sweethearts at home.

William, who had both religious and romantic leanings, and was single, spent his free time reading the Bible and Abbots Sermons to Mariners, and while he is not known to have made a valentine he was a dab hand at composing love poems to various young ladies.

In 1826 he was apparently enamored of a young lady named Susan to whom he wrote several poems in the logbook of the Fox becalmed in the middle of the Indian ocean.

Two years later he was lauding Abby while mate on the schooner Adams traveling to Buenos Aires under Captain Ellery.

[25th IMAGE - Abby poem – hair]

Abby seems to have had similar poetic aspirations. This is a poem of her own composing that she sent to William with a lock of her hair enclosed. The poem begins –

“Take, take, this lock of hair  
Oft twill remind thy heart of me ..”

William, however, had a short memory and a fickle heart. A few weeks later he was wooing Mary with a poem written on an apparently rather dull day at sea:

The entire entry for the day reads:

Beginning light breezes and cloudy. Middle and latter part the same – 3 sail in sight – Latitude by observation 7° 49’

Yes Mary I love thee no more will I say  
Where it wounds thy fond heart so severely  
I swear that I love thee what more can I say  
Than my life I’d resign for thee freely  
So ends this day.

A short time after penning this the Adams arrived at the mouth of the river Platte in a thick fog and William’s muse was rudely interrupted when the fog cleared and they discovered that they were in the middle of a blockade squadron of Brazilian naval ships.

Argentina and Brazil had been at war since 1825 over the attempt by the Brazilian government to quash a bid for independence by the people of what is now Uruguay. Brazil was demanding

that every neutral vessel clearing Montevideo give a bond, a monetary promise, not to enter any Argentinean port.

After the Adams attempted to flee and got involved in a brief skirmish with a few shots fired she was boarded. Unfortunately, Captain Ellery couldn't provide proof of this bond and the schooner was seized. In such circumstances it was each man for himself and William was till trying to get a passage home 3 months later.

[26th IMAGE – 1795 Caribbean map]

This risk of running afoul of warring nations was yet another danger of the high seas.

In the summer of 1799, when Thomas set sail from Boston bound for Demerara on the schooner Lark - America and France were engaged in an undeclared war.

Known as the Quasi War it lasted from 1798 to 1800 and was waged entirely at sea between privateers from both countries. The Lark became one of the victims of this war when she was captured by a French Privateer and carried into Guadeloupe in the French Caribbean.

The voyage had started out well enough despite being slowed down by a storm and by discovering the Lark to be "considerable leaky." Then, about a month into the trip, they were chased and fired on by a Danish ship looking for French vessels to capture. They were released but the encounter made Thomas nervous and for the remainder of the voyage whenever they saw a sail in the distance he turned the Lark in the opposite direction and downed all sails.

These maneuvers proved effective and they eventually came safely to anchor off Demerara.

6 weeks later they set sail for home and had been out 7 days when, on Thursday October 24, Thomas wrote: "at 10 a.m. saw a sail bearing south of us distance 2 miles – made sail and stood to the north – at 5 ditto - brought too – proved to be the French ship Espoir - at 5 boarded us and ordered the vessel for Guadeloupe. Arrived there Thursday November 1<sup>st</sup>."

The Lark and her cargo were subsequently condemned and sold as a Prize and Thomas wrote:

“Myself, Mr. Elvens Grover mate, John Butler Jr. seaman and David Laville ditto went on board the prison ship.”

[27th IMAGE - Front page/Last page Prize catalogue for Brig Byker (later Fox)]

Prize is the term used for a vessel captured by a privateer. This example is the prize catalogue for the sale of the Byker and her cargo in Gloucester during the War of 1812. You will remember that she was renamed the Fox and William voyaged to Sumatra on her a few years later.

After several printed pages listing the cargo they price the brig.

Our unknown bidder has listed his purchases in the blank area. Again she was carrying a mish-mash of items: paint, varnish oil, bread, beef and pork.

Thomas, who kept an account book as well as a log, made an entry in reference to the Lark's cargo that reads: Took out to Demerara 1 barrel of flour, 100 bunches of onions, 2 kegs of tobacco (not sold), 8 geese, 14,000 shingles, 2 casks & 14 jars of raisins, 67 pairs of mens shoes (17 not sold) and 25 pairs of ladies shoes.

Brought back the unsold tobacco & shoes plus 3 casks of sugar and 7 bags of coffee.

Lost the whole in Guadalope.

A recently published book on the French seizure of American vessels during these years adds the information that the prize value of the Lark was \$930 and the freight \$232. After insurance payments Thomas' net loss was \$342.

Thomas was soon released from the prison ship and about a month after being taken captive he was a passenger on board a brig bound for Virginia leaving St. Christopher's in convoy with 27 other vessels.

[28th IMAGE - Convoy - The Mount Vernon of Salem, 1789, Michel Felice Corne, 1800, Marine Arts Gallery, Salem]

The following year Thomas was back making his regular runs down to Demerara again but as his return journey included a stop in the dangerous waters of the Caribbean where the Quasi War was still being fought, he decided to travel in convoy, an option that was relatively safe but much slower. The trip actually took him 5 weeks rather than the usual 3.

He waited at the mouth of the Demerara river with the English fleet for 4 days while all the boats gathered. On Thursday the 17th of July 22 vessels sailed for the island of St. Christopher's where they planned to meet up with the American convoy which was guarded by a United States gun ship, a privately armed ship of 16 guns, and a prize schooner of 8 guns.

On Thursday the 31st 120 American and English ships set sail for the north together.

Within a few days of starting out the gun ships were chasing away French privateers and a Brig at the rear of the convoy was boarded. By August 8th they were down to 84 sail. Whether the others were taken or left of their own volition is not clear but they were out of the greatest danger zone and the Commodore signaled that they were to disperse and make their way home as best they could. Thomas joined 29 others heading his way under the protection of the 16 gun ship. As each vessel reached its destination it left the convoy. Within a week he was in company with only one other schooner and soon landed safely in Boston.

[29th IMAGE – chart of the world]

So, what became of our intrepid sailors?

Thomas, who had married Betsy Harraden when he was 23 and fathered 10 children over the years, eventually retired to his homestead in Annisquam where he quietly tended his vegetable garden. He died at the age of 81.

Edward married Amanda Stanwood, daughter of another renowned captain, Richard Goss Stanwood, when they were both 22. They lived on Front Street and then Summer Street where they reared 5 children. Edward was an extremely successful Surinam captain and merchant. He retired from the sea at the age 35 a wealthy man, the owner of more than 8 ships. After Amanda's death he married Julia Friend and died 20 years later at the age of 68.

William, despite his ardent heart, never married. Neither did he succumb to either his piles or arthritis but died of tropical fever in Monrovia, Liberia, West Africa, at the age of 37.

I will let William have the last word on why these men – despite the dangers and hardships - followed the wind. Among the doggerels and ditties he left behind is a brief verse that ends:

May this rest firmly on my mind  
That I was born to run my round  
Not as a cumberer of the ground.

Thank you.