

THIS IS THE JOURNAL OF

Take Carpenter

*I begin on the twenty-third day of
September in the year 1716. It is the third
year of the reign of our good King George,
and the tenth of my life.*

FOR AS LONG as I can remember, I have lived in the village of Holyoak, North Carolina. My family came to the American colonies from England. I knew not my mother, for she died when I was yet a baby. My father, a medical doctor, raised me with the help of his two sisters. From them I learned my letters. This was my only schooling.

Now, though, my life is to change, for I am to GO TO SEA! My father wants me to study medicine but



believes I should see more of the world first. Thus I am to become a SAILOR — at least for a while.

His plan is that I should join his brother, Will, who is already a seaman. My father sent a letter to the owner of Will's ship, who agreed to take me on the crew.

Now the ship has docked and Will has come to fetch me. He is a fine man. He has the same face as my father, but his hands are larger and rough to the touch.

Whenever he is ashore he comes to see us, bringing strange gifts and wondrous yarns. My aunts laugh and call them "when-I-was" tales, for this is how they always begin.

Will has told me of sea monsters, mermaids, and of floating islands made of ice. He has seen a whirlpool, sailed through a hurricane and escaped from pirates. And soon I am to see all of these things FOR MYSELF.

I write this on my last day at home, for tomorrow I shall return with my Uncle Will to his ship, the *Sally Anne*.

Monday 24th

This morn Will woke me before sun-up. He bid me fetch my belongings, but laughed out loud when I did. "Fie, man!" he snorted. "Do you think we are going to sea in a tailor's shop?" With this he emptied half the clothes from my bag. Seeing my glum face, he told me they were the clothes of a landsman. (This, he explained, is what sailors call those who are used to a life ashore.) "Such finery is no use on a ship, and there's precious little space aboard to stow 'em."

Thus lightly loaded we set off at dawn. My father clapped me upon the shoulder, wished me luck and bid Will take care of me. My aunts both hugged me and dabbed my eyes with their aprons (though they would have better dabbed their own, which needed it more).

The journey to Charleston took us all the day and I most eagerly desired to see the sea. When we arrived I said to Will that I had expected the ocean to be bigger, for I thought I spied the other shore in the distance.

"Nay, Jake!" he laughed in reply. "This here is but a wide river. The open ocean is three leagues east and is far too big to see across."

Our inn for the night is a mean and grimy place. Even the straw mattresses are lumpy and dusty.

Tuesday 25th

Today we had some ill luck when we went to join our ship. We were yet two streets away from the quayside when Will stopped suddenly. He gazed up at the masts that towered above the houses. "She's not there," he gasped, pointing upwards. "The Sally Anne! Her masthead is gone!" With this he dropped his bag and, forgetting me, raced to the waterside.

When I caught up with him, he was sitting gloomily with the harbour master. He told Will his ship had found a cargo sooner than expected and had sailed on the evening tide. I was sorely disappointed. Forcing a smile, Will said, "Never mind, Jake. Our luck will change."

Then the harbour master added, "*Greyhound* is looking for fit and able men. You could do worse than sign on at yonder inn" — pointing out an ale house — "if you can put up with old Captain Nick!" Will shrugged. "Beggars cannot be choosers."

We found a man from the *Greyhound* sitting in a back room. To my surprise, he asked us no questions, but bid us write our names in a book below the names of other members of the crew. Thus it was that by signing my name I ceased to be just the son of a doctor and became a sailor!

We go aboard tomorrow.



Wednesday 26th

This morning Will and I joined our ship. I felt a true landsman, for in walking up the plank from the quayside I lost my footing. Before I could topple into the water, though, Will hauled me on board. One member of the crew saw my misfortune and, when he had recovered from his laughter, led Will and me down into the ship.

Will took down a roll of canvas and, using the ropes at each end, hung it up between two deck timbers. "This hammock is where you shall sleep, Jake. By day you stow it away with your clothes rolled inside." I was thrice tipped out of my hammock before I learned how to climb into it. Now I am here, though, I find it as comfortable as any bed.

The *Greyhound* is an odd place. I am to live in a world of wood and water. Almost everything I look upon is wood. That which is not wood is canvas, rope or tar.

I was eager to explore the ship, but before I could do this Will set me to wash the decks. He explained that they must be kept damp, or the boards shrink apart,

letting in the sea. This was a long and tiresome chore, but when it was complete I was free to watch the seamen load the cargo.

They did this with the aid of one of the ship's yards (these being the stout beams crossing the mast, from which the sails hang). Using ropes fixed to yards, it was easier work to hoist the tubs and barrels from the quayside.

There are two tall masts. The front one, which I must learn to call the foremast, has yards for three great square sails. The mainmast behind it likewise has three of these square sails. But behind this mainmast there is also an odd-shaped sail stretched between two spars, making the shape a little like a letter K. I learned that our ship is called a "brig" on account of this rigging (which is what sailors call the arrangement of the sails, masts and ropes).

Here I must end, for daylight fades. Candles are permitted only inside a horn lantern, which protects the ship against fire. But it also makes the candle's light into a dull glow that is useless for writing.