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THE LOG OF THE BRIG *REBECCA*

October 15 - November 7, 1779

By LEWIS LEARY

As our readers are already aware, the Rutgers Library owns a large number of manuscript and printed materials by Philip Freneau. In the course of preparing That Rascal Freneau, the first full-length biography of our Revolutionary poet, Dr. Leary searched through these papers, and he has several times paused to contribute articles on his findings to the Journal. He is at present on the English faculty of Duke University.

AFTER returning to Monmouth County on July 9, 1778, from what he was later to call his "agreeable residence" during the first two years of the American Revolution at Santa Cruz (St. Croix) in the Caribbean, Philip Freneau entered immediately into patriotic service. He first enlisted as a private in the New Jersey Militia. Assigned to service as a "scout and guard" along the shore, he helped patrol "day and night" the twenty-odd mile strip of seacoast between South Amboy and Long Branch. At the same time he found time to compose and publish caustic verses directed against the enemy which had recently laid waste so much of his Jersey homeland. Nor was this double activity of military and literary service enough. In the intervals between his tours of duty as a militiaman, Freneau went to sea, slipping through the English blockade to bring supplies from the West Indies. Twice he sailed from Shrewsbury to St. Eustacia as captain of his own vessel. Then, late in September or early in October of 1779, he sailed again, this time as supercargo, and bound

H	K	FK	Course	Winds	Remarks on Sunday Oct 31. 1879			
2	3	1	ESE	South	<p>The Gale increased this Day we made smaller sail till 4 P.M. when we was obliged to heave too. The kyle laboured prodigiously we had to bend down the Mast four yards. There was a very great sea running. We rolled round under continually. The Greater party the Day I sailed very slowly</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No Observation</p>			
4	2	1						
6	2	1						
8	1	1						
10	1							
12	1							
2								
4			down too.					
6			up SSE					
8			of SSE.					
10								
12								
			25					
Course		Dist	Dr Lat	Dep	Mer Dr	Lat by DR	Long by DR	Longitude
SSE		25	20	23	1:23	34:32	1:42	22:27

for the Canary Islands,¹ on the brig *Rebecca*, under the command of Captain Chatham.²

It was not until November 7 that the brig made port. For weeks she had run a jagged course across the Atlantic, constantly on the lookout for enemy vessels, prepared at any moment to run for her life. The voyage had not been uneventful: three times suspicious looking sails were seen on the Horizon; once the brig had bounded about in a rough sea not half a gunshot from a large and ominous craft; again she was given chase all one afternoon and evening by a vessel which was never allowed close enough for identification. Freneau kept a daily record of the *Rebecca's* progress, taking his position carefully and comparing it with the more experienced reckonings of Captain Chatham. His log book for this voyage is now one of the most important items in the Freneau Collection of the Rutgers University Library.³

The first pages of the log are missing. The earliest extant entry is of Friday, October 15, and the brig is then in mid-Atlantic (lat. 37:57; long. 41:10), roughly five hundred miles west of the Azores. Freneau kept diligent record of the course which the vessel followed, of the direction of the wind, of the number of knots covered during each two hour period. At the end of each day he noted the distance covered in miles and in degrees of latitude, the present latitude by dead reckoning and by instrument observation, the meridian distance, and the longitude in which the vessel then found itself. Finally, he wrote "Remarks" for each day, sometimes scarcely a dozen words, at other times a whole crowded page.

Among the duties of the supercargo was the keeping of an "Account of Cash and Sundries Supply'd the Hands of the

¹ The details of Freneau's activities during the early Revolutionary period will be found in the present writer's *That Rascal Freneau* (Rutgers University Press, 1941), pp. 65-85. On p. 75 of that work, however, it is stated that Freneau sailed on the brig *Rebecca* for the Azores, a geographical blunder for which the writer takes full blame, but which he wishes to take this opportunity shamefacedly to correct.

² Of Captain Chatham or the date on which his vessel sailed nothing has been discovered. Freneau was in Monmouth on September 10 (see "Psal. cxxxvii, Versified," *United States Magazine*, I, 403, September, 1779); he was in Monmouth again on December 30, one of the detachment of militiamen which captured the British privateer *Britannia* (see MS Asher Holmes Papers, Monmouth County Historical Association, Box I).

³ Important, not so much in its own right, but because during the late summer of 1780 Freneau, convalescent from his experiences on the prison ships, utilized vacant pages of the log book for the composition of his poem *The British Prison-Ship*, his prose *Some Account of the Capture of the Ship Aurora*, and his poetical drama *The Spy*.

Brig Rebecca." Thomas Palmer, the mate, was to receive thirty-two pounds upon arrival at Teneriffe. By the time such sums as six shillings for two and a half yards of stripped ticking, one pound four shillings for a pair of trousers, six pounds for two casks of wine, and one pound ten shillings for a hundredweight of raisins had been deducted, however, he received a carefully recorded balance of only three pounds fifteen shillings and one pence. With crew members Thomas Gardner and William Edgar, there was apparently some misunderstanding: each man spent more on the voyage than was due him in wages. Each case was summarily decided: "By advance due him (as he says)," wrote Freneau, "£9:12. N.B. Captain Chatham says he was to have but £6:8 advanced"; and "He says he was to have 5 half Joes. Capt. Chatham says 4." Negro Thomas King had fourteen shillings sixpence left for pocket money of his eleven pounds four shillings wages. But John Clark had more trouble than anyone else: after he had spent practically all his money on the voyage for blankets, a jacket, a yard and a half of baize, an equal amount of course cloth, he "dyed in Teneriffe" and almost his last shilling was spent "for an Express for a Friar." Only the last member of the crew, a mysterious John ——, of Carolina (probably a second negro), spent nothing on the voyage. At Teneriffe he pocketed his full wage of six pounds eight shillings. What he did in a foreign port with his hoard is a story which the log book does not tell.

The daily record of the voyage as contained in Freneau's "Remarks" is worthy of preservation as the only day by day account which survives of the poet's many sea voyages. But even as an anonymous record it is of interest through what we may read into its laconic phrases of the perils and delays which confronted the seamen who braved privateer infested waters during the American Revolution. No apology, therefore, is needed for printing it complete.⁴

Friday, October 15. This day we have had a fresh Wind from the Southward—with a Rough Sea. Fair Weather throughout.

Saturday, October 16. Fine pleasant Weather the whole of these 24 hours.

⁴ In place of Freneau's daily heading, e.g. "Remarks for Friday Oct^r 15th 1779," a shorter date notation is here used. In a few instances periods have been inserted to make the meaning of sentences clear. Otherwise the punctuation, the spelling, and the capitalization is that of the log book.

Sunday, October 17. The beginning of this Day was Very pleasant. About 8 A.M. we had a Shower of Rain from the N.E. which continued about half an hour. The latter part was Moderate weather but somewhat Cloudy. Saw this day large Quantities of Gulf Weed.

Tuesday, October 19. These 24 hours has been Very pleasant weather, at 6 P.M. the wind Sprung up fresh at West which Continued the rest of the Day.

Wednesday, October 20. The first part of this Day was pleasant Clear Weather. The latter part it was very thick and Hazy—we got no Observation—Hitherto I have kept my Longitude made, in Degrees of 47 miles each, which I find to be wrong, for by that reckoning I am as far east as the Island of St. Mavis, which is not the Case—neither does it agree with my Meridian Distance—I have therefore in my next day's work put my Long^de made, into degrees of 60 miles each which I take to be the True Method.

Thursday, October 21. The Whole of these 24 hours we had Very pleasant Weather with a good Breese at N. West. By our Observations to Day we find we have got more Northing by 40 Miles than our Dead Reckoning gives.

Friday, October 22. The whole of this Day pleasant weather with a fresh wind at WSW. At half after 11 A.M. we discovered a Sail to Windward of us, giving us Chase.

Saturday, October 23. This day at 6 P.M. we lost sight of the vessel that gave us Chase. She appear'd to have gained not much on us at Dark—at 12 Midnight we hauld our Wind to S.E. At this time Mr. Palmer our mate, thought he saw land bearing N.E. of us. Capt. Chatham thought the same. However at day light we could not see any signs of it, if it was land it must have been Pico or Fyal as we were in the Longitude of them & about 30 miles to the Southward of their lat^d by our Reckoning. The latter part of this Day the sky appear'd excessive wild and lowering. The wind blew very hard at S.W. and made a very rough sea.

Sunday, October 24. The first part of this Day we had fair Weather with a high Wind and Rough Sea. At 6 P.M. it Came to be Very Squally which continued till 8 A.M. It rained at Times excessive hard. We had no sail up but our foresail and Close: reef'd Mainsail. At 4 A.M. it fell Calm and continued till 10, we had a Very pitching Sea. At 1 A.M. we discover'd a large Vessel right ahead of us standing to the Westward. We went under her within the distance of half Gun Shot. She was a large ship under her Topsails, Mizzen and Mainstay sail. I believe she did not see us, as she took no notice of us. At noon we discovered Land bearing N.E. of us distant about 12 Leagues which we take to be St. Michaels.

Monday, October 25. The greater part of this day it rained Very hard. At 3 P.M. we made land to the Southward at 10 Leagues Distant, which we took to be St. Maries—we stood directly for it. At 10 P.M. we perceived plainly that it was that Island. We stood off and on all night. In the morning it bore S.E. of us distant about 4 leagues. At 6 A.M. it fell Calm and the Sun broke out. About 10 A.M. it cleared away. At Noon we are still becalmed abreast of St. Maries.

Tuesday, October 26. The first part of this day we lay becalmed about 4 leagues to the Westward of St. Maries. This is a small Island belonging to the Spaniards. It Lies in Lat^{de} 36°: 59' North Long^{de} 23°: 38' West. It is about 3 miles long. At 4 P.M. a small breese sprung up at S.E. At 6 St. Maries Bore East of us Distant 5 Leagues—from which I take a new Departure. The latter part of this Day was fine pleasant Weather.

Wednesday, October 27. The whole of this Day was Dark Cloudy Weather with frequent Squalls, fresh wind from the Eastward. It kept us continually taking in and making sail.

Thursday, October 28. This day was Mostly Cloudy Weather with frequent Squalls. The Sky looked very wild—and the wind blew Very Heavy.

Friday, October 29. This day was altogether Cloudy and Squally—at Meridian it fell calm and we had a very heavy Shower of Rain.

Saturday, October 30. The first part of this day we had a fresh Gale and Very Squally. We hove to for Several Hours, with out head to the Northward. At half past 3 we made sail again. At 4 we hove to again. At 8 we made sail again. We had a very large head Sea.

Sunday, October 31. The Gale increased. This Day we made Small Sail till 4 A.M. when we was obliged to heave too. The Vessel labour'd prodigiously. We had to send down most of our Yards. There was a Very great Sea Running. We Rolled Gunnel under continually. The Greater part of the Day it rained Very Severely.

Monday, November 1. The beginning of this day the Gale abated. We made Sail at 2 P.M. The whole of this day we were employ'd in getting up our yards and Rigging. For some hours we had a brisk Breese at W and WNW. At noon it fell Quite Calm—a heavy Swell from the Northward.

Tuesday, November 2. The beginning of this Day was Calm with a large Swell from the Northward. At 7 P.M. a breese sprung up from the Westward—which Continued the rem^{dr} of the Day. It was a Pleasant Day throughout.

Wednesday, November 3. The first part of these 24 hours pleasant weather with small squalls. At 7 A.M. we made the Island of Madeira bearing N.E. distant about 16 Leagues. Throughout this Day we had a brisk breeze from the Northward & Westward. At Noon we lost sight of Madeira.

Thursday, November 4. This Day was pleasant, warm Weather with a gentle Wind at N. W. At 1 P.M. we lost sight of Madeira bearing N $\frac{1}{2}$ Easterly distant about 20 Leagues.

Friday, November 5. This Day was Pleasant weather somewhat hazy—with light winds and calms. At half past 3 P.M. we saw the Peak of Teneriffe bearing S.W. at S—distant about 28 Leagues. At the same Time we saw the Salvages bearing N.E. by E distant 6 or 7 Leagues. At 10 A.M. we made a Sail directly to Windward of us which appear'd to be standing down on us. We stood in for Land. He did not gain on more as there was little or no wind.

Saturday, November 6. At one P.M. this day the wind Changed to S.W. We then tacked and stood S.E. which brought the Vessel that was in Chase of us to leward. At 2 he appeared to have given over Chasing as he bore away and stood to the N.W. The Vessel was a brig, he appeared to be a 6 mizen. At 4 P.M. it fell Quite Calm and Continued so untill 5 A.M. when a small air Sprung up from the North East. At 7 it again fell Calm, remain'd so till Ten. We had then a light Wind at West. We are now standing for the East End of Teneriffe which is about 8 or 10 miles from us bearing S by E. At 11 Calm again. A brig is now in sight bearing SE by S. distant about 15 Miles. She appears to be standing in for the Road of Santa Cruz. At 12 oClock a Clever breese sprung up from the northward which Continued until 2 oClock. It then fell Calm again. The Brig which is mentioned above stood Close under the Island and stood about North West. We take her to be an American vessel bound home. We are now about 3 Miles from the East End of Teneriffe. The North Side of the Island is remarkable high land and full of Craggy Rocks. It appears to be not Inhabited on the North East Quarter. 3 oClock a small Breese at South which is almost ahead. A sail appears bearing SE by East about 12 or fourteen miles off standing to the westward of the Peak of Teneriffe, now bears by South. At W 4 oClock the Wind still Continues ahead. The above brig is standing in for Santa Cruz of which place we are nearly abreast. 6 oClock we are directly off Santa Cruz but do not Choose to go in as we are unacquainted with the Road.

Sunday, November 7. Last night we stood off and on. In the morning we Run in with a light breese at S.W. At 10 we come to an Anchor directly abreast of the Town when the Harbour Master with Several Other Officers came on board, and had our Vessel moored. Santa Cruz is a Small Town but Makes a handsome appearance at a small distance. The houses are all of stone plaister'd White. The Streets are Very Narrow. In the Middle of the Town near to the . . . [here the narration breaks off: the next pages of the log are missing.]

NO. 89

EARLY PIETY;
OR THE HISTORY OF
MISS DINAH DOUDNEY,
PORTSEA, ENGLAND.

BY REVEREND JOHN GRIFFIN.



Very often she would go to prayer with a little brother and sister,
who were younger than herself.—See page 7.

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