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COMMENTS ON THE SHIP'S LOG KEPT BY CAPTAIN EPHRAIM JONES OF A VOYAGE FROM FALMOUTH TO BERMUDA AND THE TURKS ISLANDS, 1765

Willis Collection, volume K, rear, Maine Historical Society Collections

BY CHARLES P. M. OUTWIN

BY 1765, the commercial center of Falmouth in Casco Bay (now Portland) was a boomtown. Falmouth had proven its worth to the British realm, exporting thousands of tons per year of masts, spars and ship building materials for the Royal Navy alone. This was not all the town produced, however. The port at the southernmost terminus of Casco Bay exported finished lumber, firewood, and many other forest products all over the British Empire. Falmouth's craftsmen turned out a tremendous variety of well-made goods in wood, iron, brass, leather, and clay, both for use by the town's dynamic ship-yards and many substantial homes and for export by its merchants. Their shops were stocked in turn with both expensive imported consumer items, from Chinese green teas to green-glazed earthenware by Wedgwood, as well as necessities that could not be produced locally, such as the salt crucial everywhere to food preservation.¹

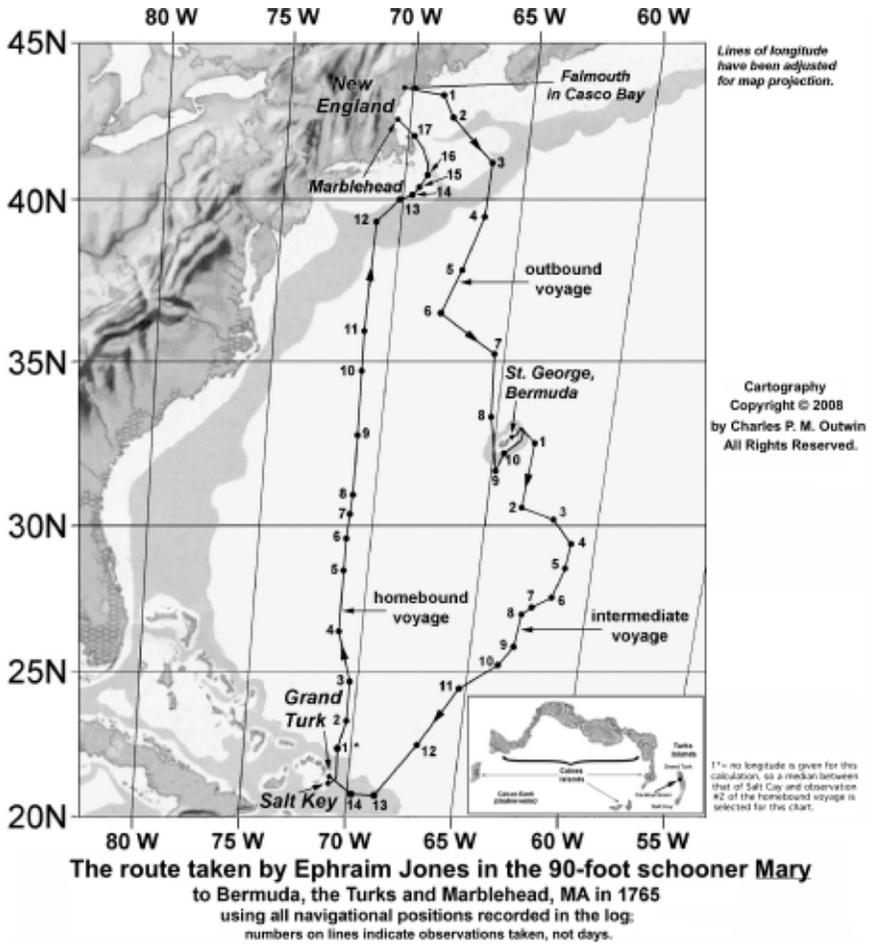
Falmouth's business oriented community was constantly looking for opportunities to expand its business enterprise. Ephraim Jones (1712-1783) was a "master mariner" (a sea captain) and owner of the large trading sloop, *Mary*. Jones was born in Weston, then called the west precinct of Watertown, in Massachusetts, and arrived in Falmouth around 1743, age twenty-one. He was well established there as a master mariner, merchant and trader by 1749.

Mr. Jones usually functioned as an agent for his father-in-law, Moses Pearson, one of Falmouth's foremost merchants, officials, and citizens.

A Journal of a Voyage from Falmouth in Cephalonia to the Island of Bermuda: In y^e Schooner Mary - May 6. 1765
 Left Falmouth Town about 6 o'clock got with out Ram Island brought 200. By one hour or more waiting for Capt. M^r Long who was in y^e Blog Hopewell bound to y^e same Island; ~~at~~ but after dark I made sail and Sho^d a light Expecting he was near: at 8 o'clock this evening Capt. Elizabeth born: 11 Miles Distance from which I took my Departure In y^e Lat: 43-00 & Longt: 67-30

H	K	HK	Course	Winds	Remarks on Sunday	May 7-1765
10	4	1	SE 1/2 E	NW 1/2 W	Departed rather smooth sea	Course made S. 2. by S. Dist: 65 miles
12	4	1	20	---	---	Dist: 70 00
1	4	1	---	---	at 11 in Morn. We a sail a storm which I think to be y ^e same well along by	Dist: 75 00
4	4	1	20	---	near to home but found it was one bound to y ^e Westward	Dist: 80 00
6	4	1	---	---	---	Dist: 85 00
8	4	1	---	---	---	Dist: 90 00
10	4	1	---	---	---	Dist: 95 00
12	4	1	---	---	---	Dist: 100 00
2	5	1	SE 1/2 E	W 1/2 N	at 4 see a schooner standing to y ^e Eastward	Course made S. 2. by S. Dist: 105 miles
4	3	1	SE 1/2 E	SW 1/2 S	Cloudy: moderat. smooth sea	Dist: 110 00
6	3	1	---	---	---	Dist: 115 00
8	4	1	---	---	---	Dist: 120 00
10	5	1	SE 1/2 E	SW 1/2 W	---	Dist: 125 00
12	4	1	---	---	Flattering & calm weather in Morn. 10 o'clock wind variable	Dist: 130 00
2	2	1	---	---	Rain: No bottom - began to rain at 10 o'clock no bottom	Dist: 135 00
4	2	1	---	---	at 12 o'clock no bottom	Dist: 140 00
6	2	1	---	---	at 2 o'clock no bottom	Dist: 145 00
8	1	1	SW 1/2 S	SE 1/2 E	at 3 o'clock no bottom	Dist: 150 00
10	2	1	---	---	at 4 o'clock no bottom	Dist: 155 00
12	5	1	---	---	Rain	Dist: 160 00
2	6	1	---	---	Remarks on Thursday	May 9
4	5	1	SW 1/2 W	S 1/2 W	at 4 P. Mercedan spook with a whale man. They said they were 30 leagues east of Massachusetts	Course made S. 2. by S. Dist: 165 miles
6	2	1	---	---	at 6 it was calm but soon fresh: up again: sounded 30 fathoms	Dist: 170 00
8	1	1	SE 1/2 E	SE 1/2 E	at 8 it was calm but soon fresh: up again: sounded 30 fathoms	Dist: 175 00
10	3	1	SE 1/2 E	---	at 10 it was calm but soon fresh: up again: sounded 30 fathoms	Dist: 180 00
12	4	1	---	---	fine sand with dark green oazy	Dist: 185 00
2	4	1	---	---	---	Dist: 190 00
4	4	1	---	---	Cloudy & Rain	Dist: 195 00
6	5	1	---	---	---	Dist: 200 00
8	6	1	---	---	---	Dist: 205 00
10	6	1	---	---	---	Dist: 210 00
12	5	1	---	---	---	Dist: 215 00

The first page of the log manuscript detailing the 1765 voyage of the *Mary*. The vessel traveled from Falmouth to Bermuda and the Turks Islands. Captain Ephraim Jones kept detailed notes of the ship's journey, recording information every two hours. *Maine Historical Society.*



Navigational chart of Captain Ephraim Jones' voyage on the *Mary*. *Graphic designed and produced by the author.*

Ephraim also traded on his own account from time to time. He was fifty-three years old at the time he undertook a voyage to Bermuda and the Turks Islands for salt, over sixty eight days in the late spring and early summer of 1765. Although there is no conclusive evidence of this, Jones may have undertaken this enterprise of his own volition, as suggested by the use of the first person possessive in the journal's final lines regarding the ship's cargo.²

The ship's log, which Jones called a journal, is recorded on both sides of twelve quarto-sized pages of good quality paper that appear to have been bound in a ledger. The entries are written in ink with a surprisingly clear hand, considering that the vessel was often heaving. Sections and columns were hand-ruled, probably as needed. The grammar, spelling, and abbreviations are fairly consistent and quite comprehensible. Jones' observations and comments are meticulous, if cryptic. He made notes every two hours, as needed, of distance traveled, speed, heading, and wind direction, along with observations of weather, ocean, and sea-bottom conditions. He also recorded remarks about encounters with other vessels, shipboard procedures, decision-making processes, and even a few personal comments. The log gives, too, a very accurate idea of the perhaps surprising speed of commercial voyages.

Perhaps most interesting are his navigational calculations. It is clear that he took sextant noon-time readings as regularly as possible. His calculations indicate not only an awareness of longitude, but a precise reckoning thereof. This suggests that, although he probably did not have a proper marine chronometer, he may have had a fairly reliable motion- and shock-resistant watch with him. In any case, he made no attempt to hide his pleasure with the accuracy of his estimates when he neatly arrived off the western reefs of Bermuda on May 15, after a voyage of only nine days.

He subsequently stayed in St. George's Bay for twenty-one days, presumably selling the cargo he had brought from Falmouth and negotiating with the Honorable Henry Tucker, who controlled Bermuda's salt monopoly in the Turks Islands far to the south, or with his representatives. One can easily guess at the items Jones sold while in Bermuda, since the island's supply of cedar trees was already nearing depletion and the availability of finished leather, iron, brass and ceramic goods was always limited. The log of the *Mary*, however, makes no reference either to sales or monies received at this or any other point.

Jones then undertook a longer voyage of eleven days to Salt Cay in the Turks Islands, at the far southeastern terminus of the Bahamas chain,

beating along the eastern edge of the Gulf Stream and against its current. The trip took eleven days, and he arrived at Salt Cay on June 17. He remained long enough to sell what little remaining cargo from Falmouth he had left and to load 3,525 bushels of salt in cargo, taking about fourteen days.³

The last leg of the voyage, from Salt Cay to Marblehead, was the longest, lasting from July 2 to July 19, seventeen or eighteen days. For the first few days he was sick and thus unable to keep more than the most cursory records for two days. Whereas the passages south had been mostly fair and pleasant, the first weeks of the voyage home brought heavy weather and high seas, preventing mid-day sextant readings. He encountered a contrary current on July 11, which is surprising, since presumably he was following the Gulf Stream home. The *Mary* reached the Nantucket Banks by the 17th, and was in Marblehead by the evening on the 19th. To his disgust, Jones found no buyers for his salt in Marblehead, and left for Boston on the 20th. The log ends abruptly at this point; the voyage home was routine and required no comment. It is not known if any of the salt was retained for sale in Falmouth.

Over the years after his return, Jones enjoyed considerable respect in the community, serving in a number of town offices, including that of sheriff pro tem, and seeing his children well established in careers and advantageously married. However, both he and his family shared in the general distress leading up to the British destruction of Falmouth on October 18, 1775. After the fall of 1775, his life was troubled by one calamitous loss after another. His wife, Mary Pearson (b.1722) died September 19, 1775, almost exactly one month before their house and property were burned in Mowat's attack. The nearby home, warehouses, wharf, and goods of his father-in-law Moses Pearson's were also destroyed. The entire family fortune having thus been lost, he removed with his youngest children to Pearisontown (now Standish) on the edge of the wilderness near Sebago Lake and remained there in terribly reduced circumstances for the last eight years of his life. Moses Pearson died in 1778, and Ephraim's favorite daughter, Sarah, left Cumberland County for Newburyport, along with her husband and children, at about the same time.

Ephraim's son, Lieutenant Pearson Jones, aide-de-campe to General Washington, died in 1781 during a pneumonia epidemic. Ephraim seems not to have recovered from the shock of this particular blow, and died less than twenty four months later at age seventy-one. His papers, belongings, and family were dispersed.⁴

A transcription of
**"A Journal of a Voyage from Falmouth in Casco Bay
to the Island of Bermuda,"**
the Turks Islands, and Boston (Marblehead)
by C^o^p: Ephraim Jones, A. D. 1765.

Found in

the Willis Collection, Volume K (rear), Maine Historical Society Library, Portland, ME.

Transcribed by Charles P. M. Outwin, September, 2003.

Arrangement of text on the page, spelling, capitalization, relative letter size, grammar and punctuation have been kept as close as possible to the original. Large smudges are so noted. Comments on spelling, abbreviations, and other matters are found at the end of this transcription. [Notes embedded in the text are shown in Ariel font bold and brackets.]

First Page, A

A Journal of a Voyage from Falmouth in Casco Bayⁱ
to the Island of Bermuda: In the Schooner Mary –
May 6. 1765 Left Falmouth Town about 6. OClock got
out Ram Island Brought too Lay one houer or more
waiting For Capt. McCoy who was in y^e Sloop Hopewell bound
To y^e Same Island; but after darke I made sail and Shoud a Light
Expecting he was Near: at 8 oClock this Evening Cape Elizabeth
Bore: W: 5 miles distance from which I tuck my Departure
In y^e Lat^d: 43–55 North & Longi^d. 67–58 West

H	K	TK	Corse	Winds	Remarks on Tuesday –	May 7 – 1765
10	4	1	SE 65	NWbN	Pleasant Weather Smooth Sea	Corse made S.E.by S Dis ^t 68 miles
12	4	1	D ^o	–		De ^f Lat. – – – 57.M.
2	4	1				Lat ^d p ^t Acet. [smudge] 42:58
4	4	1			At 4 in Morn See a Sa. Le Stern which	De ^f E – – – – 38.M
6	4	1	D ^o	–	I tuck to by Hopewell Lay By	De ^f of Long ^d – 56.M
8	4	1			Near an Houer. But found it was	Long ^d in – 67- 6
10	3	1	–	NWbW	One bound to y ^e Westward –	Lat ^d p ^t Observ ^d – 42 - 38
12	3	1				
	68					

Transcript of the first page of the log. The log indicates precise navigation for the duration of the journey, a testament to both Jones' seamanship and the accurate timekeeping devices aboard the *Mary*. *Maine Historical Society*.

Eventually, the log of the 1765 voyage was acquired by Portland's great early antiquarian and historical redactor William Willis, sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century. It consequently became part of the Maine Historical Society's original archives, bound together with a number of other documents. Little note was taken of it because, sometime in the subsequent century and a half, the volume in which it had been placed was misindexed. The document was lost in plain view. This clerical error has recently been corrected, and the log can be found in the Willis Collection, volume K, at the rear of the book. It has the notable distinction, according to Ms. Carla Hayward, Chief Archivist of the Bermuda National Archives in Hamilton, of being one of the very few known ship's logs of a voyage to or from Bermuda in the eighteenth century. A faithful transcription of the document has also been made, a printed copy of which can be examined at the Maine Historical Society's library on Congress Street.

NOTES

1. Admiral Horatio Nelson's flagship at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the *HMS Victory*, launched in 1765, was outfitted with masts from Maine. See William Hutchinson Rowe, *The Maritime History of Maine: Three Centuries of Shipbuilding and Seafaring* (Gardiner, ME: Harpswell Press, 1989 [c. 1948]).
2. Edwin A. Churchill, "Merchants and Commerce in Falmouth, 1740-1775," *Maine Historical Society Newsletter* 9 (May 1969): 93-104.
3. The quantity of salt laded can give a rough idea of the size of the *Mary*. Jones records quite clearly that he loaded 3,525 bushels of salt. An imperial bushel of sea-salt is about 1.64 cubic feet. Assuming the hold was fully loaded, this would suggest that the *Mary* had a cargo capacity of about 5,781 cubic feet, or 57.81 net tonnage, with a total interior volume of 115.62 gross tons. Using other eighteenth century ships for comparison, the *Mary* may have been as much as ninety feet long with a twenty-foot beam. See Cynthia M. Kennedy, "The Other White Gold: Salt, Slaves, the Turks and Caicos Islands, and British colonialism," *The Historian* 69 (June 2007).
4. See appendix 18, William Willis, *A History of Portland from 1632 to 1864* (Portland, Maine: Bailey, Noyes, 1865), pp. 900-902.