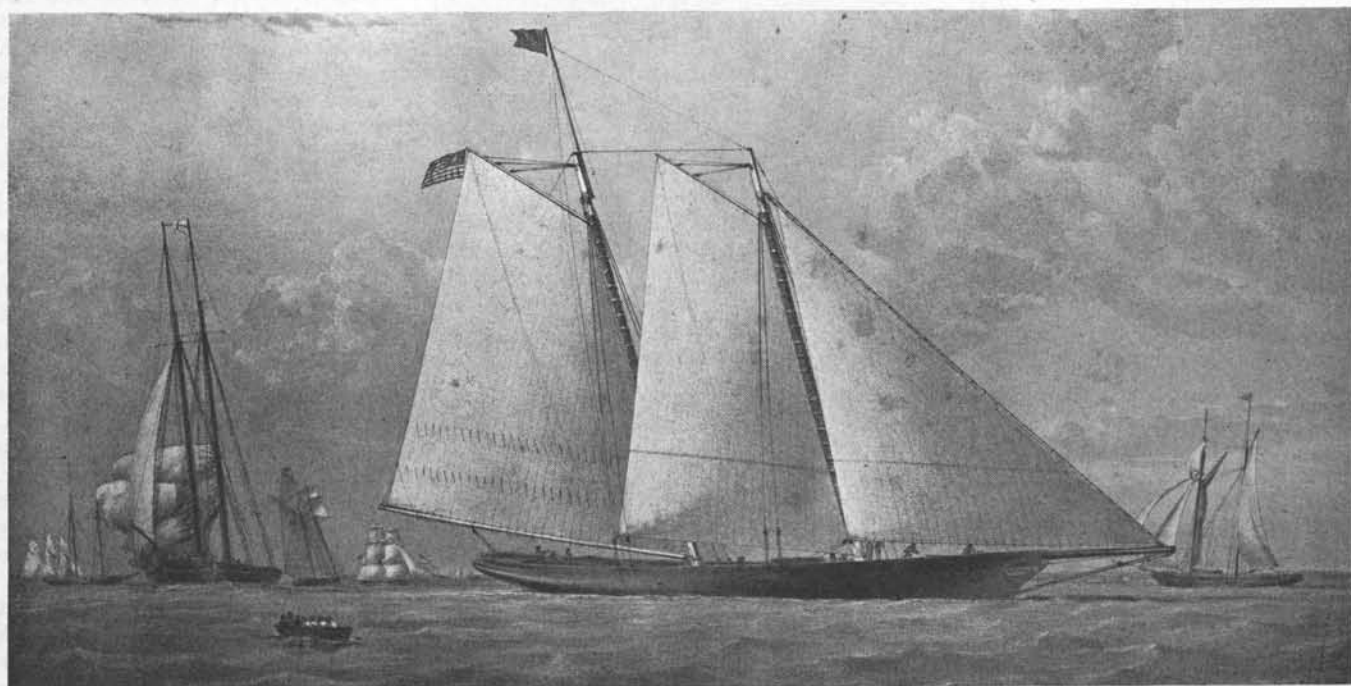


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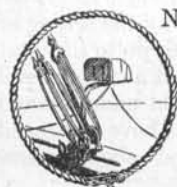
From a lithograph by I. G. Dutto

A contemporary British print of the "America" during one of her first races off the Isle of Wight

THE LOG OF THE YACHT "AMERICA"

June 21st, 1851, to August 18th, 1851

By JAMES R. STEERS



ONE JUNE DAY in 1851, the schooner *America* let go her lines from the dock of the yard in New York where she was built and started on her voyage to England, the first American yacht to cross the Atlantic to race against the cream of the British yachting fleet. The result of the voyage was to make the *America* famous and to put in competition a cup

which has become the most important yachting trophy in the world.

While much has been written about the *America*, and how she won the trophy which now bears her name in a race around the Isle of Wight against fourteen British yachts, little has been recorded about her actual passage across the Atlantic to Havre, France, where she refitted before proceeding to Cowes. In a vault in the New York Yacht Club there has been preserved a log of that memorable voyage, kept by James R. Steers, the brother of the yacht's designer and builder, which tells the day-by-day story of her fast passage of a few hours over 20 days. By permission of the club, we are enabled to publish here, for what we believe is the first time, the full story of her passage. Excerpts from the log have appeared occasionally, in various books on the *America*, but these were very brief and did not give the whole story.

In command of the *America* was Captain "Dick" Brown, a well known Sandy Hook pilot. "Nelse" Comstock was mate, and the afterguard consisted of George Steers himself, his

brother James R. Steers, who kept the log, and the latter's son George Steers, Jr. There were about six sailors, and a cook and steward. Commodore John C. Stevens did not cross in the yacht but, with James A. Hamilton, another member of the syndicate which built the *America*, joined her at Havre. — *Ed.*

JUNE 21st, 1851. Left the foot of Twelfth Street 8 o'clock a.m. Wind light. 9 o'clock, took steamer and was towed out of the East River. 11 o'clock, 10 m., parted with our friends. George Gibbons came on board with officers. 1 o'clock and 12 minutes, the steamer *Pacific* passed us and gave us nine cheers and two guns, which was returned by us with as good a heart as it was given, Capt. Nye standing on the wheelhouse, with his hat in his hand. At 3 o'clock, crossed Sandy Hook bar, going 11 knots. At 8 o'clock p.m., set the starboard watch; at 10 o'clock p.m., hove the log and found her to be going 10 knots. Wind SSE, thick fog. Course E X S. Second Mate Howes turned in rather squamish. 10 o'clock and 10 minutes, captain, second mate and carpenter took a little brandy and water, say about 10 drops. 12 p.m., hove the log, going 8 knots. Wind SSE course E X S. 2 a.m., going 9 knots. 4 a.m., Cap., mate and Chips took a seidlitz powder. 6 a.m., course ENE, wind ESE 6 knots, thick as mush. 8 a.m., log gave 5½ knots, fog like rain, scrubbed the leach and foot of mainsail.

June 22nd. 12 o'clock Sunday. Wind SSE, light and foggy. Had for dinner a small roast turkey and green peas, boiled beef and pork with a bread pudding to top off with. Took soundings in 22 fathoms water. From 12 to 2, course E X N ½ N, 3½ knots;

from 2 to 4, course E×N, 6 knots. Howes, second mate, a little sick. Sails set like a board. Four o'clock, a drink to all our friends at home. 6 o'clock, course E½S, going 5 knots; continual fog. Set topmast staysail. 8 o'clock, tacked ship, wind northeast. 10 o'clock, calm, no wind. 12, going about one knot. 2 o'clock a.m., 1½ knots, wind SW. 4 knots from 4 to 6, 3½. At 7 o'clock, took soundings in 14 fathoms water; from 6 to 8, 1 mile the hour; from 8 to 10, log gave her 6 knots; from 10 to 12, 10 knots, course ESE, wind south. Distance run the last 24 hours on our course E×S, 69 miles. Second mate a little sick. Had for dinner veal potpie and indian fritters with sauce.

June 23rd. From 12 until 2, course ESE, 10 knots, wind S×E; from 2 to 4, 10 knots; from 4 to 6, 11 knots; from 6 to 8, 12 knots. At 9 o'clock, set the square-sail, or "Big Ben," as the Captain called it; at ten took him in as he would not stand, the wind hauling. From 8 to 10, 12 knots; from 10 to 12, 11 knots; from 12 to 2 a.m., 10 knots; from 2 to 4, 10 knots; from 4 to 6, 12 knots; from 6 to 8, 12 knots. At 8½, set Big Ben, the wind blowing a stiff breeze. From 8 to 10 a.m., 13 knots; from 10 to 12, 13½ knots large. Run the last 24 hours, 284 miles. At 10 o'clock saw an English brig. She set her colors and we tried to set ours but could not. Thus endeth this day.

June 24th. At one p.m., double reefed the mainsail and set the gaff topsail over the mainsail, raining hard all the time. At 2 p.m., hove the log and found her to be going 12 knots; from 2 to 4, 12 knots; from 4 to 6, 12 knots; from 6 to 8, 10 knots; from 8 to 10, 11 knots; from 10 to 12, 11 knots; from 12 to 2, 11 knots; from 2 to 4, 11 knots; from 4 to 6, 9 knots; from 6 to 8, 9 knots; from 8 to 10, 6 knots; from 10 to 12, 6 knots. From 4 o'clock a.m., wind light, about west. Course run E×S. Distance run these 24 hours, 240 miles. At 4 a.m., shook out the reef in the mainsail and jibed over, the wind hauling. At 6 p.m., passed a ship going the same way, supposed to be the *Lady Franklin*. Thus endeth this day.

June 26th. Strong breeze from the NW and hazy. At 6 a.m. spoke an English brig from Falmouth, could not tell where bound, we passed him so quick. After part of day pleasant. Saw seven fishermen fishing for codfish but could not stop to fish, having a fair wind. Latitude by obs. 44°20'. Longitude, 50° about, at 12 o'clock.

June 27th. This day begins with light breezes. Unbent our mainsail and bent the old one, which took till supper time. Today coppered the starboard rail forward to keep the jib sheets from chafing it. Gave up all hopes of making a quick run, the wind so light; all sail set we can get on her. She is the best sea boat that ever went out of the Hook. The way we have passed every vessel we have seen must be witnessed to be believed.

June 28th. This day begins with very light breezes. All hands to work holystoning the quarter deck and cockpit. At 3 p.m., passed and spoke the British bark *Clyde* of Liverpool, 15 days from New York, bound to Liverpool. We saw her about 10 o'clock right ahead and at 6 o'clock p.m. she was out of sight astern. The captain said "she sails like the wind." Also saw the British barque *Sophie*, from New Brunswick for Liverpool, 13 days out. Had for dinner today stewed chickens, with apple pie for dessert. Plenty of good brandy and water. Sea smooth as oil. Thus endeth this day.

June 29th. This day commences with light breezes and continued until about 10 o'clock when the wind breezed up with a heavy head sea. Close-hauled, thick, foggy with rain. I don't think it ever rained harder since Noah floated his ark. At 4 a.m., reefed the mainsail and took off the bonnets of the foresail and jib. In taking in the gaff topsail, it caught and split from end to end. At 10, the wind died away and we shook out our reefs and our bonnets but, the wind being so light and the old sea, I



George Steers. From a contemporary woodcut.

thought she would slat the sails all to pieces. Little George a little better. So ends these 24 hours.

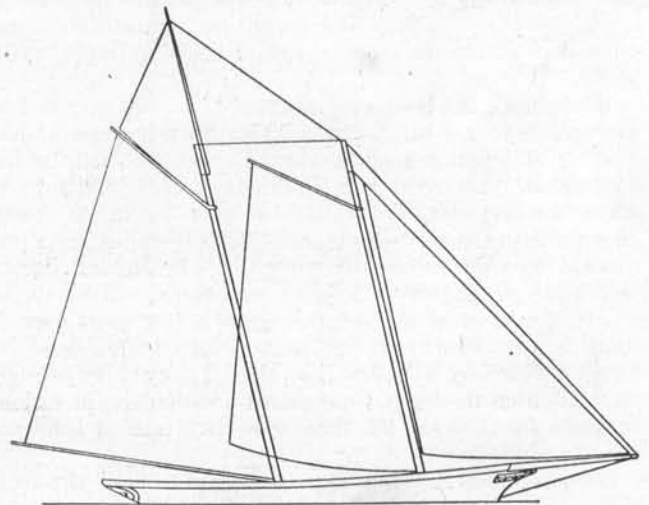
June 30th. Light wind and foggy mixed at times with hard rain. All sail set, on the wind. At ten o'clock p.m., passed and spoke the British ship *Malabar*, from New York bound to Dublin. The wind increased and by eight the next morning she was diving bowsprit under. Brother George seasick, could eat no dinner. Should I live to get home, this will be my last sea trip. All my clothes are wet. It has rained every day since we left.

July 1st. This day begins with a good breeze but heavy head sea; she goes over them like a Portuguese man-of-war, taking little or no water on deck. At 12 a.m., saw something about a point on our lee bow and we ran down to see what it was. We found it to be a dead whale, the largest that they ever saw, the fat was at least a foot thick.

Last night was a bad night, the wind all died away and such slashing you never heard tell of. George now feels a little better. I have been coppering the rail forward today, and the men have been cleaning everything out and drying; this is the first day the sun has shown and that only ½ day. It will rain again before night.

July 2nd. Commences with light wind. At 2 o'clock p.m., unbent the large jib and bent the small one; it looks like a shirt on a bean pole. Repaired the gaff topsail and set it. At 2 o'clock a.m., the mate called the captain, the wind had shifted and blowed but he carried on to her, while we could lay our course. At 10 a.m., passed a clipper brig bound the same way, and we passed her faster than she was going ahead. At 12 o'clock a.m. had to get the yard out five or six feet outside the rigging to help support the foremast; there was a heavy head sea and she was making the water fly some. Little George a little better. Brother George sick. I am making him some gruel. Our cook is not a very good caterer. If this wind will only last five days, we will be snug in Havre, barring any accident. George sick of his cruise and I expect will leave as soon as he arrives, or soon after. The wind is dying away fast.

July 3rd. Commences with strong breezes and very thick. At 8 p.m., took the bonnet off the foresail and single reefed the mainsail. Blowing stiff. At 9 p.m., carried away the seizing of the starboard foreshrouds, hove her about with jib to the mast and lowered the foresail down. took the throat and squaresail halliards to keep the mast up. She ran all night under jib and mainsail reefed up to 9 o'clock a.m. when she was hove to to send a man up to seize them; he did after a fashion, she shook him so.



The "America's" original sail plan

I could hardly think he could hold on, but he fixed it and came down. We made sail again. All hands to work, making preparations before we get in.

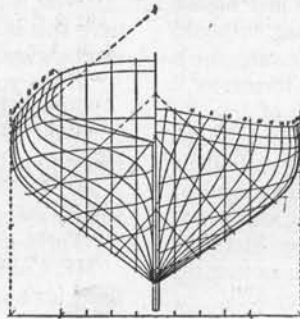
July 4th. This day commences with a good breeze, thick and foggy. All sail set. 8½ p.m., set the gafftopsail; at 4 a.m., set the topmast staysail; at 10 a.m., the fog cleared away and we had a beautiful day, this being the Fourth of July, the glory of all true hearted Americans, and the Wonder of the World. The captain would not let anybody work any more than was actually necessary, gave them a bottle of gin, and you would laugh to hear the toasts given at their dinner. The wind all died away and it was as still as a mill pond. George today is a little better but does not gain as fast as I should think he ought to. His appetite is poor. If we have three days good wind we will make the land. So endeth this day.

July 5th. This day commences with light wind, next to a calm, and so continued throughout the day. All hands holystoning the forward deck, carpenter coppering the break deck beam. George today is sick and weak. After dinner, gave him a shower bath of salt water in the cockpit. He is homesick. Little George is better and I am well and feel first rate. We spoke the brig *Constance* from Havana, bound to Falmouth; had been at sea 35 days. We passed her the same as all the rest.

July 6th. This day commences with little or no wind, the sails slatting enough to tear them to pieces. George a little better, but still homesick. This calm is much against us. We had hopes of making the passage in 14 days and would have done it, let the wind come from any point at long as it blew a breeze, but here we are tumbling about and not making any headway. After dinner the wind all left us. We, that is Captain Brown and second mate and Chips, took a port wine sangaree. If George was not so homesick we would enjoy ourselves first rate. I drink to those I love and respect. Amen.

July 7th. This day commences with light breezes SE×S, very pleasant. At 8 o'clock p.m., spoke the schooner *Galinedia* of Liverpool, 55 days from the passage of Rio, hatch cargo, fustic and dyewood. Wished to be reported. This is the fourth day that we have had a calm. We have passed four vessels today and two ships that we saw this morning from the mast-head are now under our lee six miles. George is well and in better spirits. We have been coppering the rail forward on the larboard side, the crew to work making capstan cover, yoke ropes, gangway ropes and such like. Took up a piece of iron to keep the copper down, and it went over.

The lines of the "America," redrawn from an undated draft found in the files of the British Admiralty, 1933



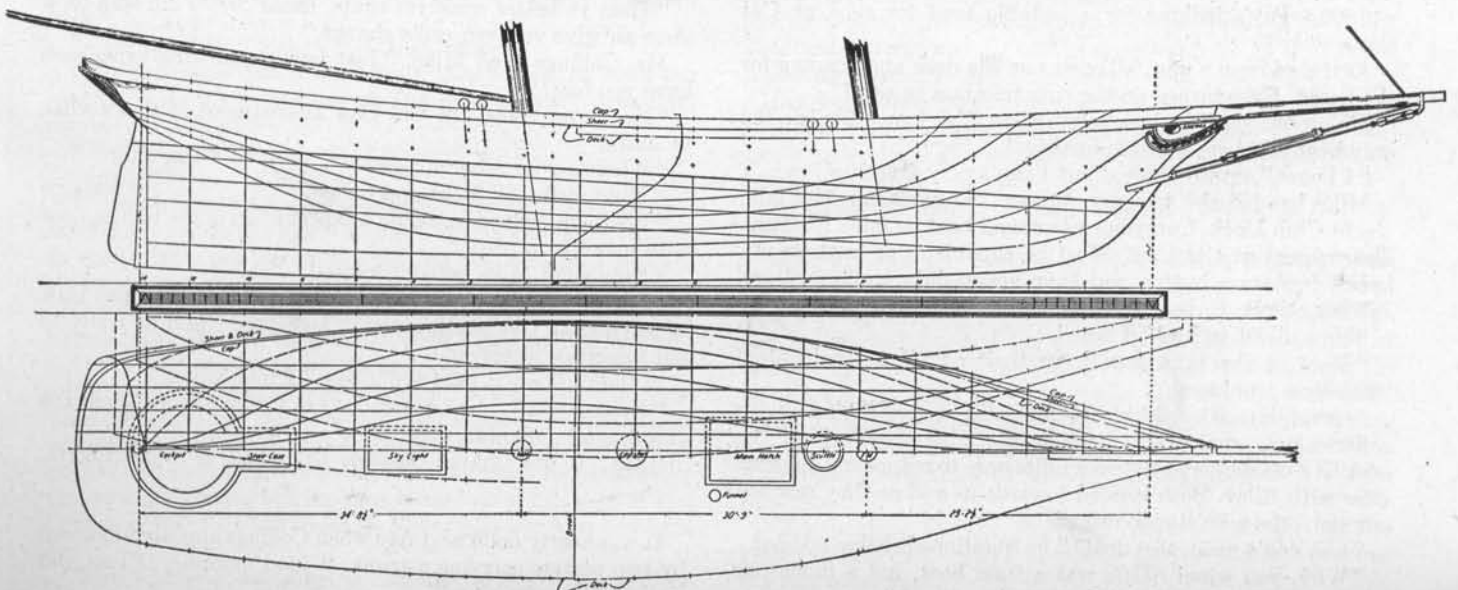
July 8th. This day commences with light breezes from the north. At 5 o'clock p.m., the breeze freshened, the sea smooth, she commenced stepping along pretty lively, which I tell you was gratifying to all on board after four days rolling about and not wind enough to keep her steady. At 2 o'clock p.m., set the squaresail or "Big Ben" or "Broadmouth" as the captain called it. We also set the staysail and gaff topsail. We have three vessels in sight, one is a large ship with everything set she can get, three royals, and we passed her like leaving a dock. We would like to have been close enough to find out what her name was. At 1 o'clock, carried away our gaff topsail sheet, and would not lower our peak to reeve it again, so we lowered it down. All hands well and in good spirits. Our liquor is all but gone.

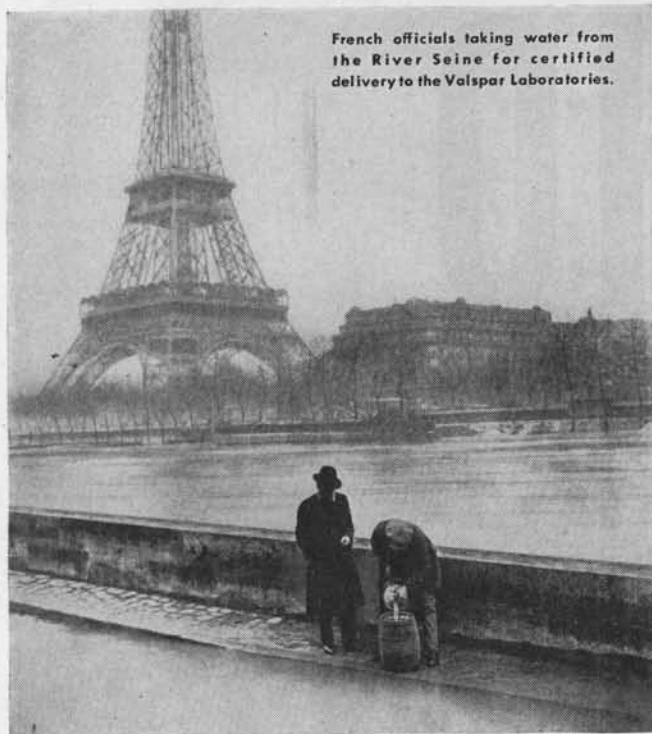
July 9th. This day commences with fresh breezes from the NW. All hands well, pointing ropes and cleaning up, expect to make the land tomorrow about 12 o'clock. Exchanged signals with a large American ship bound west, supposed to be one of the Liverpool packets. We had a glorious run these last 24 hours. We calculated that we are about 480 miles from Havre at noon today. We had to break open one of the boxes marked *Rum*, as George had the bellyache and all of our own was consumed. We were not going to starve in a market place, so we took four bottles out and I think that it will last us.

July 10th. This day commences with fresh breezes and squally. At 8 p.m., took in our squaresail and gaff topsail; at 12 o'clock p.m., double reefed the mainsail and took the bonnet off the foresail; at 4 a.m., shook out the reefs and set the squaresail; at 9½ a.m., took in the squaresail and set the gaff topsail; at 12 o'clock a.m., took in our gaff topsail. Three square-rigged ships ahead of us. We made them about 10 a.m., they have got everything set they can carry, but we are picking them up fast, the scene is exciting. I did not feel altogether well today and wanted something to keep me up. I hope we will be in Havre tomorrow night. This is 19 days today, 3 o'clock.

July 11th. This day commences with fresh breezes from the NW. At one o'clock and 30 minutes, made the islands from Scilly and ran in for a pilot; at 2 p.m., hove to for a sloop and by so doing parted the parrel of our gaff. At 7 o'clock 30 minutes, Start Point bore NE×N, distant 15 miles. At 9 a.m., Portland Bill bore N×E. We have every sail set and the way she slides along knocks the pilot. He wanted to heave the log himself, so we gratified him, he could not believe she was going 12 knots, because she made so little fuss. From Portland Bill to Havre is 112 miles. We have been cleaning up everything today and try to get there before 7 o'clock this evening on account of it being high water, so we can get in the dock.

(Continued on page 112)





French officials taking water from the River Seine for certified delivery to the Valspar Laboratories.

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could be made of the effect of varying the area of the keel or of deepening it without changing its area. A model should be tested both with and without its keel to determine just what a keel does contribute to performance, while shifting the keel fore and aft should yield some important information regarding balance.

Displacement, which is an important consideration in the design of a yacht, can be varied in a number of ways for a yacht of a given length. A boat can be overloaded or underloaded without a change of lines, or she can have her displacement changed by making proportionate changes in beam and draft without a change in ratio of beam to draft. An investigation of these variations should yield interesting information.

The width of the transom and longitudinal trim should be investigated, since the Tank has found that both have an important effect on resistance and balance. Other variations could be considered, such as changes in the beam-draft ratio without change in displacement.

When starting a program such as this, it must be recognized that no real progress can be made if the scope is limited by tradition or racing rules. Variations in form will have to be much broader than conventional trends—in fact, they can well go beyond apparently practical limits. As far as possible, variations of each important variable should be made without changes of other important variables. This is necessary, since it would be impossible to define clearly the resulting effects if too many changes were made at once.

As time and funds are available, this type of work will be taken on slowly. For a starter, it is proposed to study variables which affect balance in sailing yachts, a matter which is of as much interest to the cruising man as to the racing skipper, since satisfactory steering qualities affect the pleasure derived from sailing any boat (and her seaworthiness as well as her racing performance). It is expected that some of this work will get under way soon as a small group of designers have expressed themselves as willing to help with the financing. Some members of the Tank staff, interested in the problems, are willing to volunteer extra time. It is hoped therefore that before long some results may be forthcoming.

THE LOG OF THE "AMERICA"

(Continued from page 51)

Friday evening, 9 o'clock, July 11. This afternoon the wind blew a fresh breeze and we left Portland Bill and shaped our course for Cape Barfleur which we made at 4 p.m., the Cape bearing south. At 8 o'clock and 30 minutes, hove to off Havre to wait until morning. This Channel beats any and all conception that I have had of its extent or magnitude. The pilot boats beggar all description, they are about 40 feet long, sloop rig, or cutter as they call it, the most of them carrying only two pilots, and these two as dirty as chimney sweeps. The first thing they ask is "Do you want a pilot?" If answered in the affirmative, they shove their small boat over the side and board you. The pilot steps aft and is introduced to the captain. They make a bargain as to the amount then he commences: "Have you a bottle of spirits for the boat?" (I will give the words that passed between the pilot and our captain.) In answer to the first question the captain said "No." "Have you any beef or pork?" The captain told the steward to get some of each kind and give the boat. "Could you spare some tea and coffee?" "No sir," was the answer. "Have you any bread to spare? We have been out this trip three weeks last Tuesday." Here the captain filled away and the boat had to leave. The pilot told me that he boarded or spoke every vessel they could and asked all the same questions. He told me that he supplied a ship last Wednesday with 200 lbs. of beef and pork, besides other things for which they received 3 pounds sterling. They are without any exception the damndest set of beggars I ever fell in with. We have made the run from the foot of Twelfth Street to Havre in 20 days and 6 hours (from land to land, 18 days and 15 hours) and you will observe by the log that we were becalmed, in all, five days and four hours, or 124 hours out of the time. The Zurich packet beat us one day and left six days before us. Lay to all night off Havre. At 4 o'clock a.m., took a French pilot and squared away and got in about 10 o'clock a.m., Saturday, July 12th, 1851.

(To be continued)