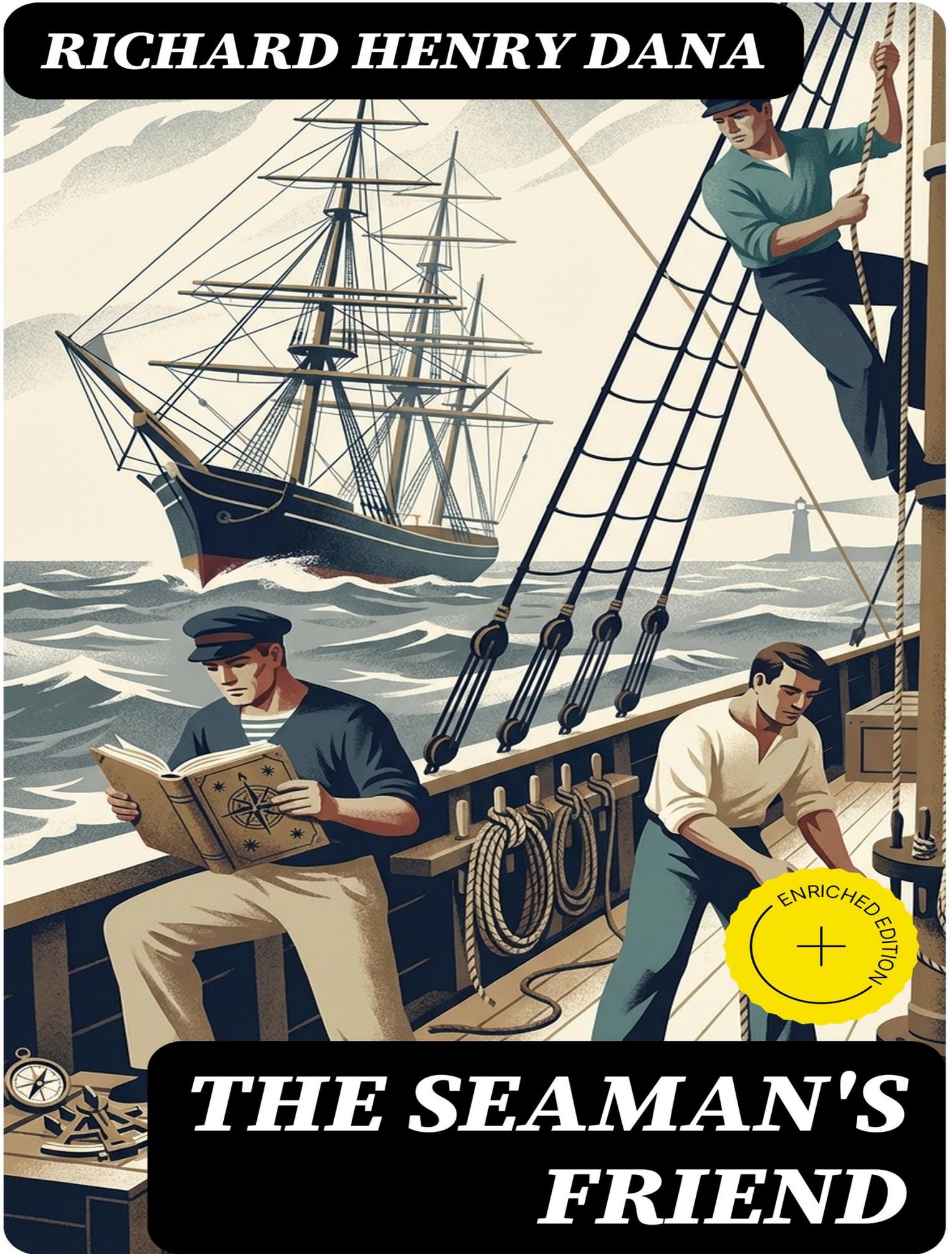
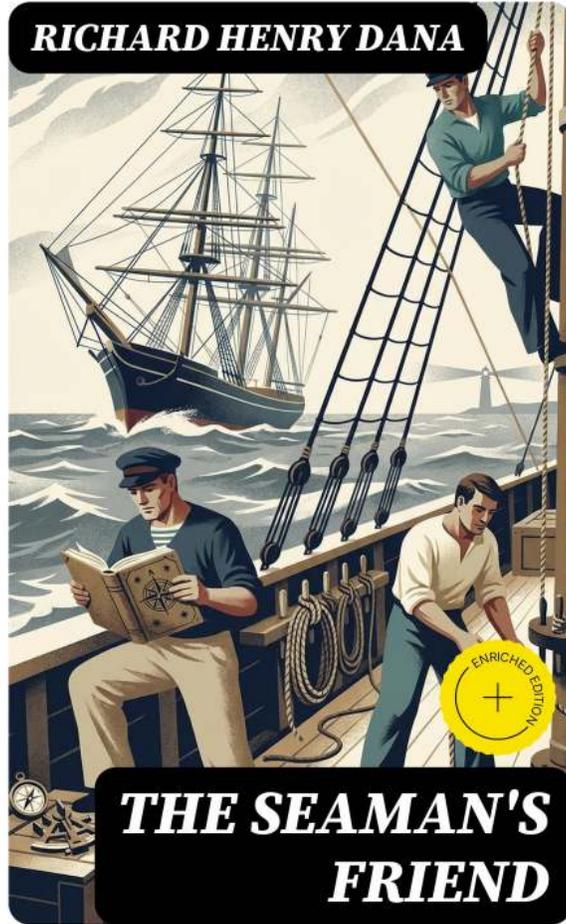


RICHARD HENRY DANA



***THE SEAMAN'S
FRIEND***

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FRIEND**

Richard Henry Dana

The Seaman's Friend

Enriched edition. Containing a treatise on practical seamanship, with plates, a dictionary of sea terms, customs and usages of the merchant service

Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Jared Black

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Introduction

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Between the implacable demands of the sea and the vulnerable claims of those who work upon it, *The Seaman's Friend* traces how skill, order, and law can protect life without extinguishing the independence and dignity that make seamanship possible, balancing the necessity for swift obedience with the equally urgent requirement for clear rights, reliable knowledge, and mutual obligation, so that a ship's company may turn risk into routine, language into safety, and discipline into a shared ethic rather than a blunt instrument, even as weather, distance, and commerce exert relentless pressure on bodies, judgment, and time.

The Seaman's Friend is a nineteenth-century American maritime manual by Richard Henry Dana, written for the age of sail in the merchant service. Blending practical instruction with concise explanations of shipboard customs and applicable law, it serves as a compact guide to the work and world of a crew at sea. Rather than following a narrative, Dana organizes knowledge around tasks, roles, and terms a mariner must master aboard a trading vessel. First appearing in the United States during the era when square-rigged ships still carried global commerce, it orients readers to the realities of labor, command, and survival offshore.

In use, the book reads like a seasoned hand speaking steadily from the windward rail: direct, precise, and mindful of the chain of consequences that follows any order at sea. Chapters explain how work is organized, what each station entails, and how communication keeps motion coordinated.

Definitions anchor the vocabulary of rigging and maneuver, and a dictionary of sea terms allows newcomers to enter the craft's language without guesswork. Interwoven notes on duties and regulations present the legal backdrop without abstraction. The tone is pragmatic yet humane, assuming responsibility from both officers and crew while treating competence as the core virtue.

One of the book's animating themes is that knowledge is a form of safety. By breaking complex operations into crisp procedures and common terms, it shows how shared understanding prevents confusion from multiplying into danger. A second theme is the discipline of fairness: rules are not merely instruments of command but safeguards that bind leaders to obligations as surely as they bind crews to duties. The text links habit to judgment, insisting that preparation and calm repetition enable decisive action amid uncertainty. In this view, seamanship is both a craft of hands and an ethic of mutual reliance.

Because it was produced for an industry often marked by harsh conditions and distance from oversight, the manual's attention to rights and procedures carries moral weight. By setting out the responsibilities of officers and the entitlements of seamen alongside practical routines, it asserts that safety and legality are inseparable parts of the same craft. The emphasis on documentation, custom, and due process treats sailors not as expendable labor but as persons operating within a defined framework.

Contemporary readers will recognize an early model of workplace professionalism in a high-risk field, where clarity of roles and standards safeguards both efficiency and human welfare.

For modern audiences far from a mast or yard, the book's value lies in how it translates complexity into shared

practice. Its insistence on precise language anticipates contemporary checklists and standard operating procedures; its portrayal of authority grounded in competence echoes current thinking about leadership in aviation, medicine, and emergency response. It also preserves a working lexicon and set of methods foundational to maritime heritage, offering historical insight into how global trade once moved. Readers interested in craft knowledge, labor history, or organizational behavior will find a durable model of how technical instruction, culture, and law reinforce one another.

Approached today, *The Seaman's Friend* functions as both a practical digest of the sailing-ship world and a meditation on the responsibilities that knit a crew into a coherent whole. Its measured voice, careful definitions, and orderly progression render a demanding environment intelligible without diminishing its hazards. The book argues, by structure as much as by content, that clarity is a collective asset and that professionalism is learned habit. In an era still defined by complex systems and long supply chains, its steady counsel remains pertinent: competence is communal, language is safety, and law is a living companion to work.

Synopsis

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The Seaman's Friend by Richard Henry Dana Jr., issued soon after his voyage narrative, serves as a compact manual for American merchant seamen, combining practical seamanship with a digest of maritime law. Designed for use aboard ship and ashore, it turns Dana's firsthand experience into a structured guide meant to standardize commands, clarify duties, and improve safety. Rather than telling a story, it proceeds systematically, defining the ship as a working system and the sailor as a trained contributor within it. The book's premise is that essential knowledge should be portable and dependable, so novices and practiced hands share a common, reliable reference.

It opens by fixing a precise vocabulary for parts of the ship and the relations among them, from hull and spars to masts, yards, sails, and the web of standing and running rigging. By naming each object and line exactly, Dana aligns language with action, so orders can be understood instantly and carried out safely. He relates terminology to station bills and watch organization, making clear how officers and hands coordinate in routine work and emergencies. This foundation frames the rest of the manual, since effective seamanship depends on shared terms, correct identification, and practiced responses to commands under changing conditions.

Subsequent chapters describe the principal evolutions of a square-rigged vessel under ordinary circumstances. Dana explains getting under way, making and reducing sail,

steering to keep a course, trimming for wind and sea, and changing tack by tacking or wearing. He treats coming to and leaving anchor, mooring, and the precautions that protect ground tackle and hull. Attention to timing, signals, and lookout duties shows how individual actions fit the ship's collective rhythm. The emphasis is practical: the reader learns what to do, when to do it, and how to maintain control while preserving gear, speed, and the crew's strength.

The manual then addresses heavy-weather seamanship, where judgment and preparation matter most. Dana sets out how to snug the ship, secure gear, reef or furl in timely fashion, and heave-to when necessary to ride out a blow. He describes distributing men on yards, using proper leads and purchases, and avoiding chafe and shock loads that can part lines or spars. The goal is to manage risk rather than court it, preserving the vessel's ability to work when the weather moderates. His guidance stresses discipline, foresight, and economy of effort, so that safety and endurance are maintained without wasteful strain.

Alongside shiphandling, Dana includes the skills that keep a vessel serviceable at sea. He treats ropework and splicing, the purposes of common bends and hitches, and the care of running and standing rigging so that defects are found early and corrected. He notes the routines by which sailors inspect, replace, and secure working gear, stow lines clear for instant use, and prepare for specific tasks aloft or on deck. These pages emphasize that seamanship is cumulative: steady maintenance and neat stowage make complex operations easier, reduce hazards, and ensure the ship answers the helm and sails efficiently in all weathers.

A distinctive portion of the book condenses the law governing the merchant service into accessible terms. Dana

outlines the authority of the master and the duties of the crew, the binding force of shipping articles, the earning and payment of wages, and the consequences of disobedience or desertion. He summarizes what discipline the law permits, what remedies seamen may seek for mistreatment or breach of contract, and how they can pursue relief in port at home or abroad. By pairing rules with examples of practice, he clarifies expectations on both sides of the forecastle and quarterdeck.

Taken together, these sections form a compact curriculum whose clarity helped make *The Seaman's Friend* widely consulted in the nineteenth-century American maritime world. Its blend of procedures and rights aimed to improve efficiency while tempering custom with law, linking seamanship to humane treatment and orderly command. As a counterpart to Dana's better-known narrative, it preserves the working knowledge of square-rigged commerce in a durable, teachable form. The book's lasting value lies in that synthesis: it records the craft, discipline, and legal framework that shaped a sailor's life, and it continues to illuminate how ships and crews operated safely and justly.

Historical Context

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Richard Henry Dana Jr.'s *The Seaman's Friend* appeared in 1841, amid the high tide of the American merchant marine. In the 1830s–1840s, Boston, New York, and other Atlantic ports provisioned brigs, ships, and schooners bound to the Pacific, China, and Europe. Federal district courts exercised admiralty jurisdiction; customs houses, consulates, and marine insurers formed the institutional web surrounding voyages. Crews were hired through shipping offices and waterfront boardinghouses, often with little formal training. Written “shipping articles” governed service, but knowledge of their terms varied widely. Dana's handbook entered this environment to standardize seamanship and clarify the legal framework of life at sea.

Dana, a Harvard student who left college in 1834 after a severe eye inflammation, shipped as a common sailor to Mexican California on the brig *Pilgrim* and returned on the *Alert* in 1836. His experiences informed *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840) and propelled a legal career in Boston focused on admiralty practice. Admitted to the bar in 1840, he represented seamen in wage, discipline, and injury cases. *The Seaman's Friend* distilled this dual vantage point: practical instruction in rigging, sail handling, and shipboard duty, coupled with a plain-language digest of statutes and cases defining the rights and obligations of masters and crews.

American maritime law already afforded distinctive protections. Congress's 1790 statute regulating seamen in

the merchants' service required written shipping articles, set procedures for payment of wages, and penalized desertion. In circuit decisions such as *Harden v. Gordon* (1823), Justice Joseph Story described seamen as "wards of admiralty," emphasizing doctrines like maintenance and cure and a shipowner's duty to provide provisions and medical care. Federal consuls abroad could assist in disputes and repatriation. Yet the practical reach of these rules depended on access to information. Dana's manual compiled the operative rules so mariners could recognize lawful commands, remedies, and limits on shipboard authority.

Merchant ships operated under a strict hierarchy: the master, mates, and petty officers directed able and ordinary seamen through a round-the-clock watch system. Customary discipline included confinement and, on some vessels, corporal punishment, though courts scrutinized cruelty and excess. Wages could be forfeited for desertion or persistent disobedience, while seamen held a maritime lien for wages earned. Dana organized these realities into guidance: what duties were owed aloft and on deck; what punishments the law permitted; how grievances, recoverable wages, and discharge were to be handled. By aligning practice to legal standards, the book sought to reduce arbitrary enforcement.

The book also intersected with antebellum humanitarian reform. Organizations such as the American Seamen's Friend Society (founded 1828) promoted chaplaincy, reading rooms, and "Seamen's Bethels," including the well-known Boston Bethel associated with Edward T. Taylor. Sailors' Snug Harbor, opened on Staten Island in 1833, provided a home for aged mariners. Temperance advocates and moral reformers targeted waterfront vice and exploitation. Within this culture of welfare and uplift, *The Seaman's Friend*

offered practical tools rather than sermons: it taught workmanlike seamanship and explained contract terms and protections, enabling sailors to navigate institutions that were changing but still uneven in their treatment of crews.

Technologically, *The Seaman's Friend* belongs to the late Age of Sail. Long before steam displaced canvas on ocean routes, American brigs, barks, and full-rigged ships required intricate coordination of yards, braces, and sails in heavy weather and narrow harbors. Dana's instruction echoes the period's technical literature, complementing Nathaniel Bowditch's widely used *American Practical Navigator* (first published 1802) by focusing on deck evolutions, ropework, and command language rather than celestial calculation alone. The manual codified practices for reefing, anchoring, and emergencies, presenting standardized procedures that could be followed by heterogeneous crews whose seamanship ranged from seasoned whalers to green hands.

Expanding trade intensified the need for such guidance. After 1815, relatively secure sea-lanes and growing American commerce linked cotton ports, New England whaling centers, the China trade, and the hide-and-tallow traffic on the Pacific coast. Crews were often multinational and transient, recruited through keepers of boardinghouses and sometimes prey to crimps who advanced lodging against future wages. U.S. consuls abroad mediated disputes and desertions, but confusion over documents and pay remained common. By explaining the contents of shipping articles, summarizing remedies, and translating legal language into practical advice, Dana equipped ordinary seamen to understand their contracts and to assert rights recognized by courts and statutes.

The Seaman's Friend was frequently reprinted and circulated aboard American merchant vessels through the nineteenth century. Its blend of seamanship and legal digest shaped expectations for professional conduct at sea and provided a portable reference in forecabin and cabin alike. The book reflects its era's confidence in codifying practical knowledge and its reformist insistence that authority be bounded by law. Without romanticizing the forecabin, Dana critiqued abusive discipline and opaque contracting by exposing standards already on the books. In doing so, his manual advanced the antebellum project of making maritime labor more orderly, informed, and humane within an expanding global trade.

The Seaman's Friend

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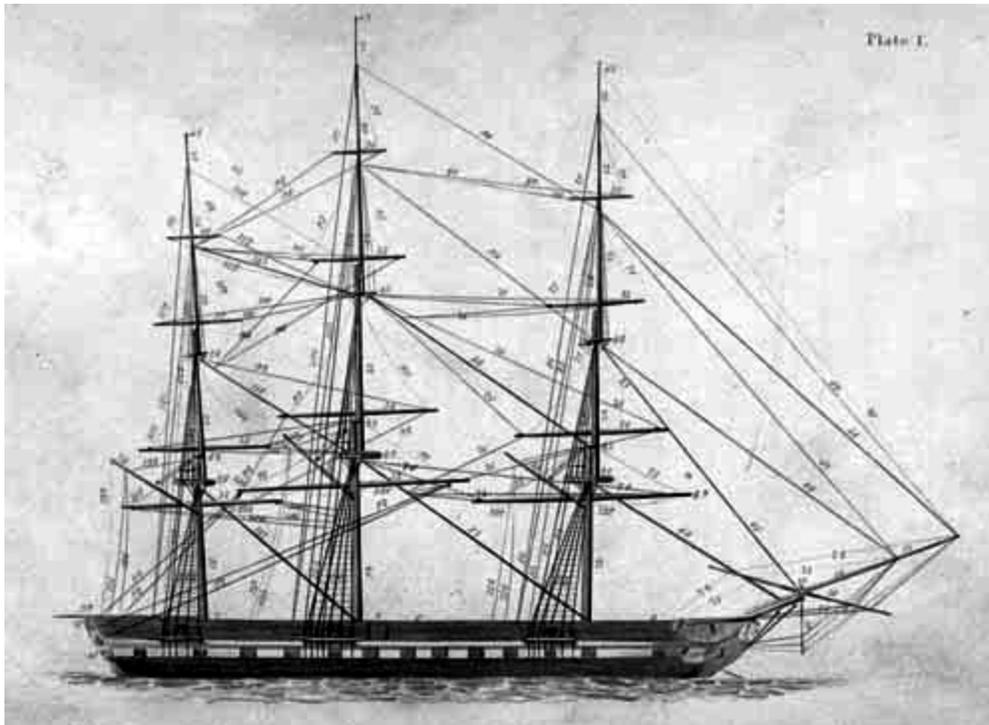


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1 Head.	45 Main topmast cross-trees.	89 Main topgallant stay.
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4 Bows.	48 Mizzen topmast cross-trees.	92 Main braces.
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7 Quarter-deck.	51 Fore topgallant yard.	95 Main topgallant lifts.
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10 Stern.	54 Main topsail yard.	98 Main royal braces.
11 Tafferel.	55 Main topgallant yard.	99 Main rigging.
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13 Main chains.	57 Cross-jack yard.	101 Main topgallant rigging.
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15 Bowsprit.	59 Mizzen topgallant yard.	103 Main topgallant backstays.
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18 Spritsail yard.	62 Main truck.	106 Cross-jack braces.
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21 Foremast.	65 Fore topmast stay.	109 Mizzen topgallant lifts.
22 Fore topmast.	66 Jib stay.	110 Mizzen topgal't braces.
23 Fore topgallant mast.	67 Fore topgallant stay.	111 Mizzen royal lifts.
24 Fore royal mast.	68 Flying-jib stay.	112 Mizzen royal braces.
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29 Main royal mast.	73 Fore lifts.	117 Mizzen skysail stay.
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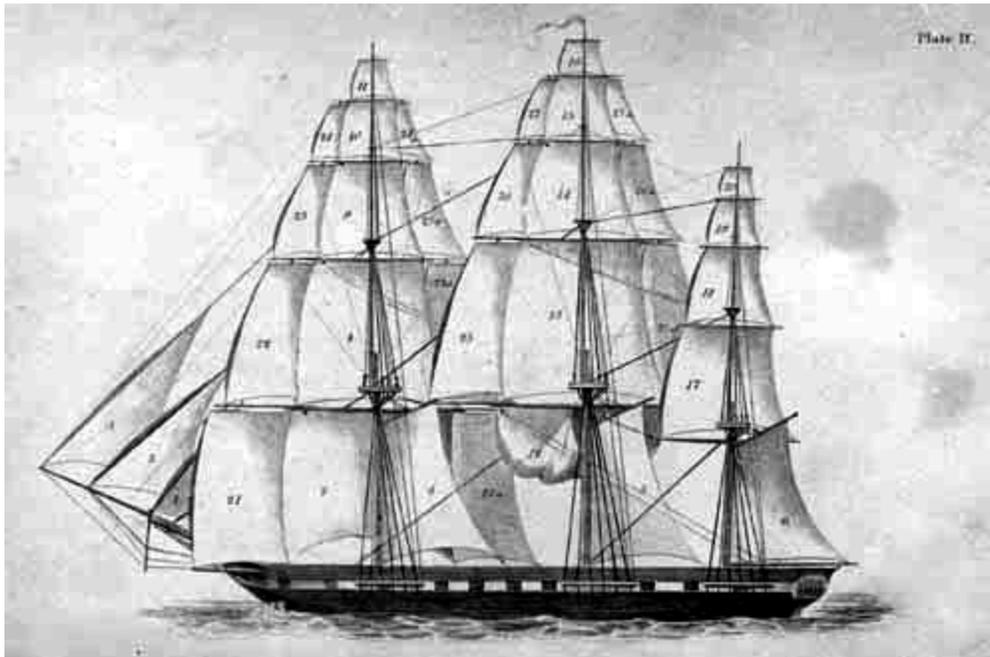


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3 Flying jib.	20 Mizzen skysail.
4 Fore spencer.	21 Lower studdingsail.
5 Main spencer.	21a Lee ditto.
6 Spanker.	22 Fore topmast studdingsail.
7 Foresail.	22a Lee ditto.
8 Fore topsail.	23 Fore topgallant studdingsail.

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 9 Fore topgallant sail. | 23a Lee ditto. |
| 10 Fore royal. | 24 Fore royal studdingsail. |
| 11 Fore skysail. | 24a Lee ditto. |
| 12 Mainsail. | 25 Main topmast studdingsail. |
| 13 Main topsail. | 25a Lee ditto. |
| 14 Main topgallant sail. | 26 Main topgallant studdingsail. |
| 15 Main royal. | 26a Lee ditto. |
| 16 Main skysail. | 27 Main royal studdingsail. |
| 17 Mizzen topsail. | 27a Lee ditto. |

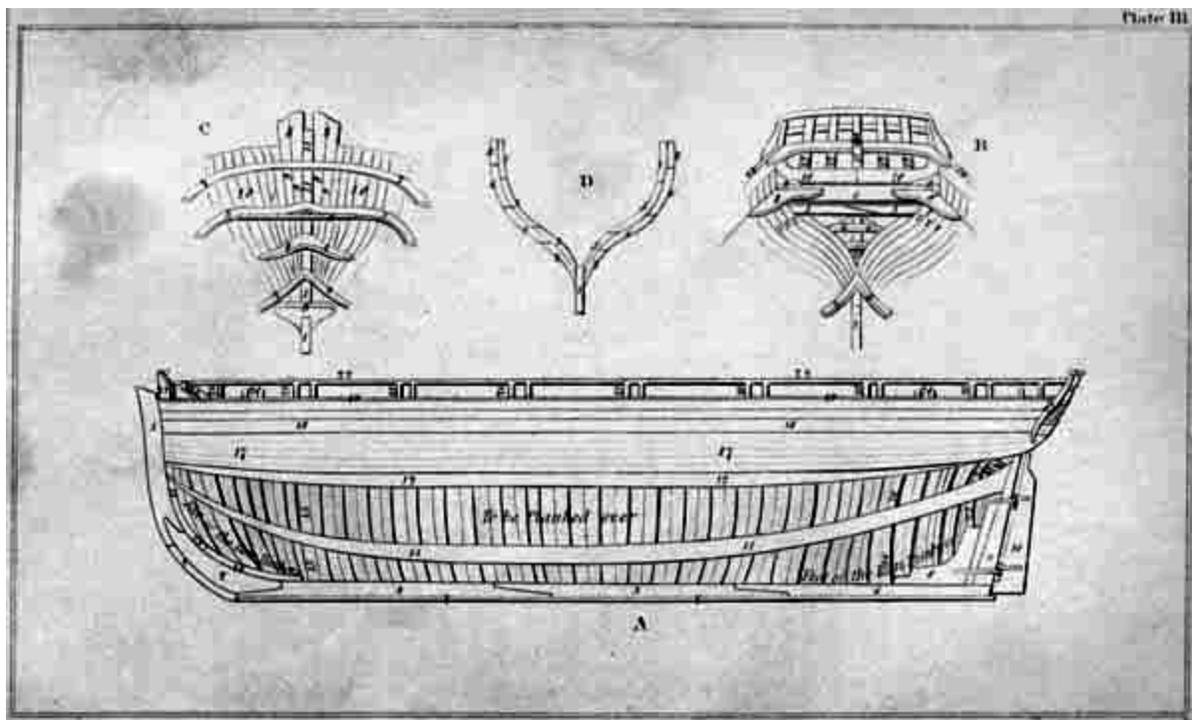


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| 5 Middle keel-piece. | 10 Counter-timber knee. |

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
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| 9 Stern-post. | 14 Upper-deck clamp. |
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| 11 Bilge streaks. | C. THE INSIDE OF THE BOWS. |
| 12 First streak under the wales. | 1 Keelson. |
| 13 Apron. | 2 Pointers. |
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| 19 Plank-shear. | 8 Knight-heads. |
| 20 Timber-heads. | 9 Hawse timbers. |
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| 22 Rail. | 11 Apron of the stem. |
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| 24 Cathead. | D. THE TIMBERS. |
| 25 Fashion timbers. | 1 Keelson. |
| 26 Transoms. | 2 Floor timbers. |
| 27 Quarter pieces. | 3 Naval timbers or ground futtocks. |
| | 4 Lower futtocks. |
| B. THE INSIDE OF THE STERN. | 5 Middle futtocks. |
| 1 Keelson. | 6 Upper futtocks. |
| 2 Pointers. | 7 Top timbers. |
| 3 Chock. | 8 Half timbers, or half top-timbers. |
| 4 Transoms. | |

PLATE IV.
EXPLANATIONS.

SHIP.—A ship is square-rigged throughout; that is, she has tops, and carries square sails on all three of her masts[1q].

BARK.—A bark is square-rigged at her fore and main masts, and differs from a ship in having no top, and carrying only fore-and-aft sails at her mizzenmast.

BRIG.—A full-rigged brig is square-rigged at both her masts.

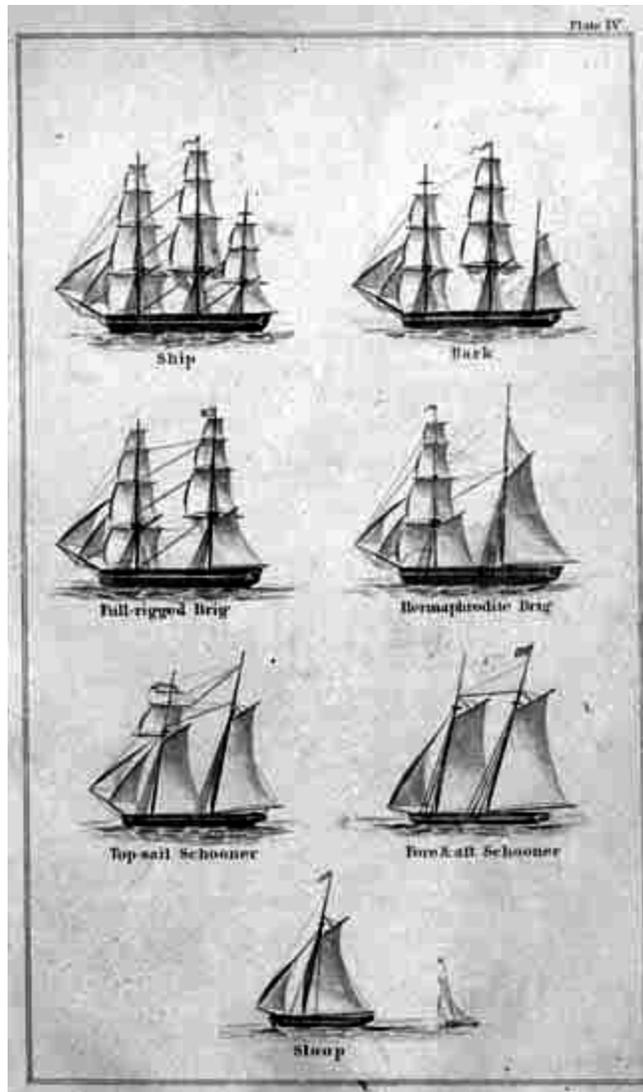
HERMAPHRODITE BRIG.—An hermaphrodite brig is square-rigged at her foremast; but has no top, and only fore-and-aft sails at her main mast.

TOPSAIL SCHOONER.—A topsail schooner has no tops at her foremast, and is fore-and-aft rigged at her mainmast. She differs from an hermaphrodite brig in that she is not properly square-rigged at her foremast, having no top, and carrying a fore-and-aft foresail, in stead of a square foresail and a spencer.

FORE-AND-AFT SCHOONER.—A fore-and-aft schooner is fore-and-aft rigged throughout, differing from a topsail schooner in that the latter carries small square sails aloft at the fore.

SLOOP.—A sloop has one mast, fore-and-aft rigged.

HERMAPHRODITE BRIGS sometimes carry small square sails aloft at the main; in which case they are called **BRIGANTINES**, and differ from a **FULL-RIGGED BRIG** in that they have no top at the mainmast, and carry a fore-and-aft mainsail instead of a square mainsail and trysail. Some **TOPSAIL SCHOONERS** carry small square sails aloft at the main as well as the fore; being in other respects fore-and-aft rigged. They are then called **MAIN TOPSAIL SCHOONERS**.



Ship Bark
Full-rigged Brig Hermaphrodite Brig
Top-sail Schooner Fore & aft Schooner
Sloop

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL RULES AND OBSERVATIONS.

Construction of vessels. Tonnage and carriage of merchant vessels. Proportions of the spars. Placing the masts. Size of anchors and cables. Lead-lines. Log-line. Ballast and lading.

CONSTRUCTION OF VESSELS.—As merchant vessels of the larger class are now built in the United States, the extreme length of deck, from the after part of the stern-post to the fore part of the stem, is from four and a half to four and three fourths that of the beam, at its widest part. The Damascus, of 700 tons' measurement, built at Boston in 1839, and considered a fair specimen of our best freighting vessels, had 150 feet from stem to stern-post, and 32 feet 6 inches extreme breadth. The Rajah, of 530 tons, built at Boston in 1837, had 140 feet length, and 30 feet beam;—being each in length about four and six tenths their beam.

A great contrast to this proportion is exhibited in the most recent statistics (1841) of vessels of the same tonnage in the English navy; as the following table will show.

		Tons.	Deck.	Beam.	Proportion.
	{ Dido	734	120 ft.	37 ft. 6 in.	3.20
English Navy.	{ Pilot	492	105	33 6	3.13
	{ Alert	358	95	30 4	3.16
American	{ Damascus	694	150	32 6	4.60
Merchantmen.	{ Rajah	531	140	30 0	4.66

These may, perhaps, be considered the extremes of ship-building; and between these there is every grade of difference.

TONNAGE AND CARRIAGE OF MERCHANT VESSELS.—The amount a vessel will carry in proportion to her tonnage, depends upon whether, and to what extent, she is full or sharp built. A sharp-built vessel of 300 tons' measurement, will carry just about her tonnage of measurement goods. A sharp-built vessel of 200 tons or under would probably carry less than her measurement; if over 400 tons, she would increase gradually to fifty per cent. above her measurement. A sharp-built vessel of 600 tons, is generally rated at 900 tons carriage. A full-built vessel of 300 tons, after the latest model of American freighting vessels, will carry 525 tons, or seventy-five per cent. above her measurement; and one of 500 tons would carry full double her measurement.

The following table may give a pretty fair average.

TONS OF MEASUREMENT GOODS.

Tonnage.	Full built.	Sharp built.
300	(.75) 525	(.00) 300
400	(.80) 725	(.40) 560
500	(1.00) 1000	(.50) 750
600	(1.33) 1400	(.50) 900

PROPORTIONS OF SPARS.—There is no particular rule for sparring merchant vessels; some being light, and others heavy sparred; and some having long topmasts and short lower masts, and others the reverse. The prevailing custom now is, to spar them lightly; the main yard being a little less than double the beam; and the others proportioned by the main. Most merchant vessels now have the yards at the fore and main of the same size, for convenience in shifting sails; so that the same topsail may be bent on either yard.

15 A reinforced hole or eye in a sail, commonly made of rope or metal, through which an earing, reefing line, or block is passed.

16 An auxiliary studding sail set outboard of the topgallant yard on a removable boom to increase sail area in fair weather; the book describes setting and handling it from the ship's top.

17 A small opening or hole in a ship's structure (for example in a top or bulwark) through which a line such as a downhaul or sheet is led or passed.

18 A heavy rope or cable used for mooring, towing, kedging, or other heavy-duty purposes aboard ship.

19 A-hull denotes the condition when a vessel lies with all sails furled and the helm lashed a-lee (secured to leeward), i.e., a stopped or steadied position rather than an active maneuver.

20 The bitter-end is the portion of an anchor cable that lies abaft (aft of) the bitts—the inboard end of the cable—and thus the last part of the rope on board.

21 A capstan is a vertical, drum-like deck machine around which rope or cable is wound to heave anchors or other heavy gear; the text notes men-of-war commonly used capstans while many merchant ships used a horizontal windlass.

22 Dead Reckoning is a navigation method estimating a ship's position by tracking courses and distances made (from the log and compass) rather than by celestial observations, and its positional error typically accumulates over time.

23 A punishment in which a person was dragged under a ship's hull by ropes attached to the yard-arms on each side; historically used in naval service and often caused severe injury or death.

24 The left side of a vessel when looking forward; an older term that was largely replaced by the word 'port' in the 19th century to avoid confusion with 'starboard.'

25 The national flag of the United Kingdom, historically and still often flown at the jack-staff (a short staff at the bowsprit) of British ships.

26 A temporary mast improvised and rigged at sea to replace one lost or damaged, allowing a vessel to make way to port for repairs.

27 An auxiliary square sail set out on a temporary boom (studding-boom) beyond a ship's ordinary square sail to increase sail area in light or fair winds; commonly used in the age of sail and now largely obsolete.

28 Here defined as the tack of the lower studdingsail — i.e., the line that secures the lower outer clew of that sail and pulls it outward; generally a rope used to tension or secure the foot or clew of a sail.

29 An alternative spelling of 'taffrail,' meaning the rail that runs around the stern (rear) of a ship, often forming the stern-rail or decorative edge at the ship's stern.

30 A removable plug or bung fitted into the muzzle (mouth) of a cannon to keep out water and debris and to protect the bore when the gun is not in use.

31 The projecting cylindrical lugs on each side of a cannon barrel that rest in the gun carriage and serve as the pivot

points allowing the gun to be elevated or depressed.

32 Also called trunnels, these are long wooden pins driven through planking into timbers to fasten hull planks in traditional wooden ship construction.

33 A small fore-and-aft sail set on a boom and gaff on a short mast (trysail-mast) generally used as a storm or heavy-weather sail; the term and its placement vary by rig (the entry notes related names such as 'spencers' and 'spankers').

34 In this chapter 'Carpenter.' denotes the ship's carpenter, a specialist who repairs and maintains wooden parts of a vessel and its rigging; the role is trade-focused but sometimes includes seaman's duties in bad weather or if the carpenter is also rated as a seaman.

35 A 'bunt' refers to the middle, gathered part of a square sail and an 'earing' is a short rope used to secure a corner or reef of a sail to a yard or spar; both are specific positions or tasks in handling and furling sails.

36 A marlinspike is a pointed tool used in ropework for unlaying, splicing, and manipulating strands of cordage; it is a standard implement for rigging and seamanship tasks.

37 'Chafing gear' are protective coverings or wrappings (e.g., worming, parcelling, and serving) applied to rigging to prevent wear where ropes or spars rub, typically made from small stuffs and reclaimed cordage.

38 'Dog-watches' are the two half-watches from four to six and six to eight P.M. (each two hours) that create an odd number of watches in the day so the on- and off-watch rotations shift between evenings.

39 In shipboard timekeeping, 'eight bells' signifies the end of a four-hour watch and corresponds to twelve, four, or eight o'clock (noon/midnight or 4 a.m./p.m.) depending on the watch period; the bell system adds one stroke every half-hour up to eight.

40 A 'bill of lading' is the commercial and legal document issued by a carrier listing goods shipped, serving as a receipt of cargo and evidence of the contract of carriage and of the consignee's rights to the goods.

41 A maritime-insurance term meaning an unjustified departure from the agreed or usual course of a voyage (including unusual delay), which changes the risk insured against and historically could render a policy void even if the subsequent loss was unrelated.

42 A formal written declaration made by the ship's master (usually soon after arrival at a port) recording accidents, losses, or other incidents for use in courts or insurance claims; it was commonly attested by local authorities or notaries.

43 A state official posted in a foreign port to protect and assist a nation's commercial interests and citizens (e.g., certifying crew lists, aiding deserter reclamation, arranging relief for destitute seamen); specific powers and procedures varied by country and period.

44 An old sailing phrase describing a vessel on the starboard tack (with the wind coming over its starboard/right side); the passage rules in the text give right-of-way to the vessel so trimmed in many encounter situations.

45 A legal phrase (Latin for 'against the person') referring to an admiralty action brought against an individual (e.g., the