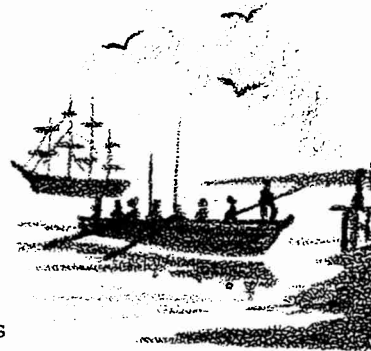


SETTLERS CROSS THE ATLANTIC

There were many reasons why people in Europe wanted to come to America. Some wanted to own their own land. Some wanted to be able to worship as they pleased. Others wanted to make their own laws instead of obeying a king. And some people came to America simply for adventure and a chance to make a better life for themselves.



Ships owned by trading companies usually carried the settlers across the Atlantic Ocean. A fast trip took about seven weeks, but most voyages lasted between eight and twelve weeks. During these weeks at sea, the people often suffered terribly. There were many kinds of sickness, usually caused by spoiled food and filthy water. The people had to endure hunger, thirst, heat, cold, dampness, and lice. Storms made conditions even worse. During a bad storm passengers would become frightened and wonder if their ship was about to sink. Sometimes high winds and towering waves would toss the ship so wildly that people could not walk, sit, or lay down in one place. They might be thrown against each other or against the side of the ship. The settlers were not ready for these hardships and many died during the ocean crossing.

As the days and weeks wore on, the miserable conditions took a toll on the passengers. Nerves became strained and people sometimes got angry with each other. Lost tempers occasionally led to fights between settlers.

During the voyage to America, many young children suffered greatly from hunger, a lack of fresh water, and sickness. Some died and their bodies were thrown overboard into a watery grave. It is not surprising that so many people became sick. Warm food was served only about three times a week. Servings were small and the food was often dirty. The water was sometimes black and had a strong smell. The settlers could not drink the sea water because it was too salty. Biscuits, which were often served instead of a meal, became spoiled and full of bugs. The hungry people had no choice except to eat the spoiled food and drink the dirty water. They could not help but think of better days back home when their water was clean and their bread was fresh.

Many families were saddened by the death of a loved one during the voyage. Sometimes whole families died. Besides sickness, people might be crippled by accidents. The most common kind of accident was falling while the ship was being bounced around by rough waves. It was not unusual to hear people crying day and night all over the ship. Many wished they had never left Europe for America. But when the ship finally came in sight of land, everyone gathered on deck. They sang and cried and thanked God for arriving in America alive. They were the lucky ones who could now look forward to a new life in a new land.

Assignment Pretend that you have recently arrived in America from Europe. You crossed the Atlantic Ocean with your family and 100 other settlers from England. Write a story about the experiences of your family and the other passengers during the voyage. Also tell about your first year in America. Your story should have 100 or more words and should include:

1. Your reason or reasons for leaving England.
2. The month, day, and year that you left England for America.
3. Your feelings as the ship started the dangerous voyage across the Atlantic Ocean.
4. A description of conditions on board ship.
5. An unfortunate event that took place during the voyage.
6. Your feelings upon arriving in America.
7. The month, day, and year that you arrived in America.
8. The name of the colony in which you settled, and a reason why the people on your ship chose this colony in which to live.
9. A brief description of what your family did during the first year in America.