



Tributaries

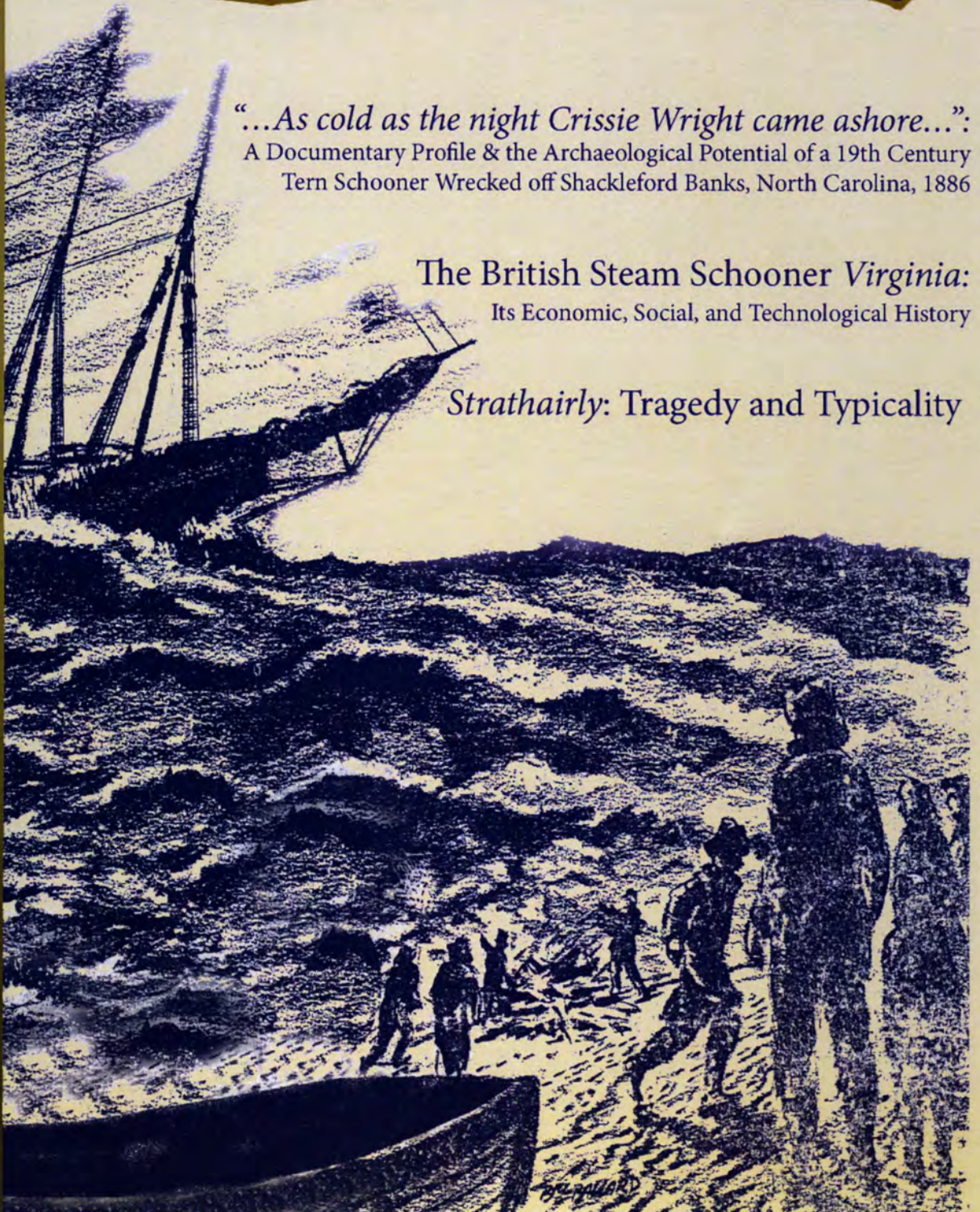
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"...As cold as the night Crissie Wright came ashore...":
A Documentary Profile & the Archaeological Potential of a 19th Century
Tern Schooner Wrecked off Shackleford Banks, North Carolina, 1886

The British Steam Schooner *Virginia*:
Its Economic, Social, and Technological History

Strathairly: Tragedy and Typicality





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Introduction

In January 1886, the 3-masted schooner *Crissie Wright*, hauling a cargo of ground guano from Baltimore to Savannah, ran aground off Shackleford Banks, North Carolina during an extreme winter gale. The incident quickly became ingrained in the minds of many Carteret County residents due primarily to the extraordinarily cold temperatures associated with the loss of the vessel and most of her crew giving rise to popular local folklore that still prevails today. By examining a number of historical documents and other contemporary data, this article will present an operational profile of the ship from its launching in Bridgeton, New Jersey, 1874 until its loss off the North Carolina coast in 1886. This historical documentation includes the ship's tonnage admeasurement certificate, enrollment and registration papers, and various entries from both the *Record of American and Foreign Shipping* and *American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping*. Additionally, shipping news relating to the schooner's mercantile movements was extracted from more than 50 issues of over 20 newspapers from the period. Furthermore, the archaeological potential of the site is examined and prospective keys developed for identification of possible structural remains that may be encountered.

Launching of *Crissie Wright*

In January 1874, the newspaper *New Jersey Patriot*, published in Bridgeton, mentioned with little fanfare “...a fine three-mast

schooner being built at the Blew and Phillips shipyard in Bridgeton...”¹ Six months later the paper added a brief announcement relating to the vessel's completion:

The schooner “*Chrissie* [sic] *Wright*” was launched at the ship yard of Messrs. Blew & Phillips, on Saturday evening last [July 4]. Her dimensions are one hundred and twenty feet lower hold, and five feet between decks. She is in every respect a staunch and graceful vessel, and has been built with a view of speed.²

Just a few months later that same year, Lehman Blew was injured while working on another Bridgeton-built schooner, *Mabel Rose*, in Philadelphia. “Capt. Lehman Blew, of Bridgeton, who had his hand mashed while putting a mast in the schooner *Mabel Rose* at Philadelphia a short time ago, is in a precarious condition. It was found necessary to amputate the hand at the wrist.”³

The fact that Blew was working on the schooner himself, that she had been built and launched in Bridgeton, NJ within weeks of *Crissie Wright*, and the vessel's similar dimensions and tonnage, all suggest that she was a sister ship to *Crissie Wright* and possibly built in the same shipyard.⁴ Ironically, *Mabel Rose* would end up wrecking in 1903 just up the North Carolina coast from the final resting place of *Crissie Wright*.⁵

The Delaware Bay area where *Crissie Wright* was constructed has been steeped

1874-75.															Cro	
INDEX	VESSEL'S NAME AND MASTER.	RIG.	Tonnage	PORT	Tonnage on Deck	DRAFT.	BUILT.		OWNERS.	REMARKS.	TANK.	LIVE.	LAST SURVEY.			
							Year.	Where.								
141	Crescent City Williams, H.	Sch Br	Liverpool	2105	20	70	Glasgow, Scot.	Taylor, Tipper & Co.	6:4BlkH		1	N O	12, '70			
142	Crested Wave Rowley, J.	Bk Br	Guernsey	245	16	67	Guernsey, Eng.	Carrington & Co.	O,T;Cf;YM1,70		1	Boat	2, '72			
143	Crest of the Morris, J. (Wave)	Bk Dr	London	176	19	53	Sunderland, Eng.	A. Wright & Co.	O,T;Cf;YM10, 72;rsps,74		1	Boat	0, '72			
144	Crockett Eaton, J.	Bk Aco	Baltimore	405	14	64	Baltimore, Md.	H. Jenkins, Md.	O;Cf; rps, YM 11,72		1	Balto	11, '72			
145	Crinoid Grew, J.	Bk Br	Liverpool	586	17	64	P. E. Island	Suter, Mc-Nedega & Co.	M;Cf;YM10,73; 1rsps,70			Lynl	10, '73			
146	Crinoline Davis, Thos.	Trn Br	Liverpool	169	11	67	Liverkeith, Scot.	S. Wilde	1:2BlkH		2	N Y	6, '69			
147	Crinoline Cooper, W.	Sch Aco	New York	87	7	58	Edenton, N. C.		O,P;I;S; rps,6,69			N Y	10, '69			
148	Crisis Brown, J. S.	Sch Aco	Gt. Egg Harbor	132	8	66	Milville, N. J.		O,P;I;S; rps10, 50(Canal)			N Y	6, '73			
149	Crissie Wright Clark, T. P.	Trn C B	Philadel	386	13	74	Bridgetown, N. J.	Bartlett, Shepard & Co.	WO;G;I;S		7,74	Phila	7, '74			
150	Criterion Levie, W.	Bk Br	Arbroath	238	15	68	Sunderland, Eng.	D. Shearer	O;Cf;YM8,73			*				
151	Criterion Sheldon, G. D.	S Aco	Boston	1546	22	65	Damariscotta, Me.	F. Nickerson & Co.	WO;YP;I;Cf;YM 5,72;rsps,0,6,74		5,72	Phila	7, '72			
152	Criterion Robinson, O.	Sch Aco	Baltimore	55	9	49	Somerset, Mass.	J. Meekins & Co.	O,P;I;Cf;S			Balto	12, '68			
153	Crocus Chambers, Oliver.	B Am	Gardiner	193	12	48	Gardiner, Me.	W. Bradstreet	M;I;S; rps10,67			Boat	3, '71			
154	Cromwell Hutchinson	S Aco	Boston	391	20	49	Medford, Mass.	Wm. Perkins & Co.	WO;I;Cf; rps,0 2,69; rps,YM12,72			Boat	12, '72			
155	Crono Zunisch	Bk Aus	Fiume	657	17	71	Fiume, Aca.	Francesco G. Mitocci	O;Cf;YM6,71			N Y	2, '74			
156	Cronometer	B Sp	Barcelona	150	12	50	Barcelona, Sp.		O;Cf;YM(6			*				
157	Cronstadt Armstrong, John.	Bk Br	Windsor	380	18	73	Summerville, N. B.	Geo. Armstrong & Co.	M;Cf;S			Lynl	4, '74			
158	Crosby Deyser, J.	Sch Br	London	1497	21	70	Newcastle, Eng.	J. & W. Smith	6:4BlkH, 2C, 18rs			N Y	2, '73			
159	Croton Hannond, Jas. E.	B Am	Newport	110	9	46	Richmond, Me.	H. A. Brightman & Co.	M;Cf;Wah66			Boat	5, '70			
160	Crown Auble, C.	Bk Br	Jersey	298	13	62	Jersey, Eng.	Dealandes & Co.	O;Cf;YM68			N Y	9, '68			

The -S- signifies that the vessel has been built under supervision. Rating in Red signifies that the vessel holds a Certificate of Safety and is from a Special Survey only.

Figure 2. Typical page from *Register of American and Foreign Shipping, 1875*, revealing data related to the schooner *Crissie Wright*.

The certificate was simply a form that was filled out by a local ship surveyor in Philadelphia after recording numerous measurements within the hull of the new schooner in order to determine the vessel's tonnage or carrying capacity. The measurements were in fact, so detailed, that one could use the various dimensions to plot a fairly accurate lines plan for a ship so measured and recorded.¹² A project is currently underway to apply this interpretative exercise to the *Crissie Wright* data contained on her admeasurement certificate.

Among the numerous measurements for the hull are also dimensions for the ship's long poop, cabin, house, and galley. In addition to this data, the certificate also reveals that the schooner had a counter stern and scroll head. A counter stern, very typical of the period, would be one that overhangs the stern of a ship and projects

somewhat above and beyond the position of the rudder. A scroll head would be at the upper peak of the bow where a figurehead might normally be positioned. It was a simple carved decoration and curved much like the scrollwork on the head of a violin, hence the reason this particular decoration was often called a fiddlehead.

It probably would also have been at this time in Philadelphia that *Crissie Wright* was assigned her permanent official number and signal letters, 125277 and J.P.S.C. respectively.¹³

Shipping Registers

There is much information to be found in the various shipping registers that were compiled and available through most of the nineteenth century. Two such registers are available for the period of operation of *Crissie Wright*. Both the *Record of American and Foreign Shipping (RAFS)* and *American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping (ALRAFS)* contain data from throughout the schooner's entire eleven and a half year career from 1874 to 1886.¹⁴

The registers list ships by alphabetical order and each page is subdivided into numerous columns containing basic information about each vessel such as name and captain; tonnage, dimensions, and rig; when and where built; homeport; owner(s); miscellaneous data; date of last survey; etc. Among other data, these registers reveal that *Crissie Wright* was constructed of white oak and pine; was fitted with a centerboard and a long half poop; was secured with galvanized iron fasteners; and was re-caulked in 1877, 1882, and 1884. The registers also list the places and dates where the ship was surveyed, helping to fill in gaps in the vessel's operational profile.¹⁵ Figure 2 is a typical page from the *RAFS* one year after *Crissie Wright* was launched.¹⁶ Tables 2 and 3 illustrate the data available from *Crissie Wright* entries in all available volumes of both the *RAFS* and *ALRAFS*, respectively.¹⁷

CRISSIE WRIGHT
Record of American and Foreign Shipping Entries

Number (Year)	Vessel's Name and Master	Rig	Length	Nat'l	Port of Brth	Tons and Decks	Draft	Built		Owners	Remarks	Years	Rate	Last Survey
								When	Where					
1449 (1875)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 8.8	386 DD	13	74	Bridgetown N.J.	Bartlett, Shepherd & O.	WO, Gif, S	7 7, 74	1	Phila 7, 74
1519 (1876)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 8.8	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	Bartlett, Shepherd & O.	WO; Gif, S	7, 74	1	NY 6, 75
1573 (1877)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 8.8	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	Bartlett, Shepherd & O.	WO, Gif, S	7 7, 74	1	Bost 6, 76
1660 (1879)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 8.8	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	Bartlett, Shepherd & O.	WO; Gif, S; clk 6.77	7 7, 74	1	Phila 6, 77
1751 (1879)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 13	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	Bartlett, Shepherd & O.	WO, Gif, S; clk 6.77	7 7, 74	1	Boston 7, 78
1857 (1881)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 13	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	G. W. Shepherd & O.	WO; Gif, clk 6.77	7 7, 74	1	Balt 7, 80
1760 (1882)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 13	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	G. W. Shepherd & O.	WO, Gif, clk 6.77	7 7, 74 Ex	1	NY 9, 81
1794* (1884)	Crisse Wright Clark, T.P.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 13	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	G. W. Shepherd & O.	WO; Gif, rps, clk 10.82; S.S. 10.82	6 10, 82	1	Phila 10, 82
1838** (1885)	Crisse Wright Lake [sic]	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 13	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	G. W. Shepherd & O.	WO, Gif, rps, clk 10.82; S.S. 10.82	6 10, 82	1	Phila 4, 84
1818** (1886)	Crisse Wright Clark, Thos.	Tm	CB	Am	Phila 34 / 13	386 DD		74	Bridgetown N.J.	G. W. Shepherd & O.	WO; Gif, rps, clk 10.84; S.S. 10.82	6 10, 82	1	Balt 6, 85

CB – centerboard rps – repairs S –
 WO – white oak clk – caulked DD – Double deck
 Gif – Galvanized fastenings S.S. – special survey

Table 2.
Compilation of Available Data on *Crisse Wright* from entries in the *Record of American and Foreign Shipping*.

CRISSIE WRIGHT
American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping Entries

Date	Name and Captain	Rate	Tons	D.B.B.	Draft	Material	Keel	When Metal'd	When Built	Where and by Whom Built.	Port Belonging to.	Owner or Consignee	Dimensions	Model	Remarks and Place and Date of Special Survey.	Place and Date when last seen
1876	Crisse Wright Clark	1'	386	2'	12	o	i		7 74	Bridgetown, NJ	Phila	Clark & O	120' 33' 9"	F	LHP TC	Phila 9, 75
1877	Crisse Wright Clark	1'	386	2'	12	o	i		7 74	Bridgetown, NJ	Phila	Clark & O	126' 34' 14"	F	LHP TC	Bos 7, 76
1878	Crisse Wright Clark	1'	386	2'	12	o	i		7 74	Bridgetown, NJ	Phila	Clark & O	126' 34' 14"	F	LHP TC	NY 6, 77
1879	Crisse Wright Tm TP Clark	1'	386	2'	*	o	gi		7 74	Bridgetown, NJ	Phila	Clark & O	126' 34' 14"	F	LHP TC clk 6 77	NY 6, 77
1881	Crisse Wright Tm TP Clark	1'	386	2'	*	o	gi		7 74	Bridgetown, NJ	Phila	Galvanized & o	126' 34' 14"	F	LHP TC clk 6 77	Bos 7, 79
1882	Crisse Wright Tm TP Clark	1'	386	2'	*	o	gi		7 74	Bridgetown, NJ	Phila	Galvanized & o	126' 34' 14"	F	LHP TC clk 6 77	NY 6, 81
1883	Crisse Wright Tm TP Clark	1'	386	2'	*	o	gi		7 74	Bridgetown, NJ	Phila	Galvanized & o	126' 34' 14"	F	LHP TC clk 6 77	NY 9, 82

LHP – long half poop TC – trunk cabin i – iron fastenings o – oak o p – oak & pine
 2' – 2 decks F – full model gi – galvanized iron clkd – caulked
 * Apparently this column discontinued in 1879.
 ** Apparently this column discontinued in 1882.

Table 3.
Compilation of Available Data on *Crisse Wright* from entries in the *American Lloyd's Register of American and Foreign Shipping*.

Certificates of Enrollment and Registry

A number of Certificates of Enrollment and Registry were located in the United States National Archives for the schooner *Crisse Wright* and while each are similar, all reveal information pertinent to the ship's operational profile, such as locations of the vessel on particular dates, change in ownership, etc.¹⁸ Figure 3 provides an observation of a typical certificate from near the end of the vessel's career in 1885.¹⁹

As noted, the Certificates of Enrollment and Registry disclose a number of details regarding the schooner *Crisse Wright* including the names of her owners. A total of twenty two owners are revealed, most continuing their ownership throughout

the entire operational life of the ship. Their collective ownership followed the normal process of fractional shareholding based on the age-old system that dictated that all registered merchant ships were divided into 64 shares by law. As late as the mid-20th century, British ships continued to follow this "ancient custom", last expressed in the Merchant Shipping Act of 1896; as have their American shipping counterparts.²⁰

The owners of *Crisse Wright* were quite diverse professionally and as one might expect of a vessel registered in Philadelphia, were from that city or around the vicinity of the Delaware River estuary. Most of the ship's investors held shares in the vessel throughout her career. Individual shares of *Crisse Wright* varied from as much as

6/16ths to as little as 1/64th. The ship's captain, Thomas P. Clark (1829-1886), from Berlin, New Jersey, controlled the largest share that, at least initially, was 5/16ths.²¹

The next largest share (1/8th) was owned by the Philadelphia shipping firm of Captain Ezra S. Bartlett and George W. Shepherd, Jr., trading as Bartlett and Shepherd.²² They were also listed as "Ship Owners and Managers",²³ and "Ship Chandlers".²⁴ Bartlett (1849-1901) was also a director with the Philadelphia insurance firm of Security Trust and Life.²⁵ Among other posts, Shepherd (1843-?) was elected to the Board of Directors of the Vessel Owners and Captains' Association of Philadelphia in 1878.²⁶

A number of owners held 1/16th shares including Charles B. Wright (1822-1898) of Philadelphia.²⁷ This wealthy financier was a banker and merchant in western Pennsylvania early in his career, and was instrumental in pushing the railroad across the country, and in so doing, helped to establish and develop the city of Tacoma, Washington. He directed and managed both the Philadelphia and Erie, and Northern Pacific Railroads, but continued to consult with the latter long after his retirement.²⁸

Other 1/16th share owners included Jacob E. Ridgway; the builders of *Crissie Wright*, Blew and Phillips; and one Jesse S. Clark.²⁹ Jacob Ridgway (1824-1909) was very much involved with business and politics in Pennsylvania and Philadelphia particularly. He was a member of the Philadelphia Common Council as well as both a Pennsylvania state representative and senator. Ridgway also served as a president of the Quaker City National Bank and the Ridgway-Bishop Coal Company.³⁰

Information is limited concerning Lehman Blew (1810-1890),³¹ but even less is known about Henry Phillips, his partner in their shipbuilding business. The Cumberland County, New Jersey census recorded a 20-year-old ship carpenter

named Henry Phillips living in the Blew household in 1860 suggesting that Blew possibly went into business with an apprentice.³² One source states that Blew and Phillips established their shipyard on the east side of the Cohansey River in 1863 at Bridgeton.³³ Blew was born in Deerfield, N.J., but moved to Bridgeton with his family as a young boy. He was married three times and was heavily involved with both building and operating vessels. He also maintained a financial interest in many of these ships making it unsurprising that he was part-owner of *Crissie Wright*.³⁴ Blew would have been 64 years old when *Crissie Wright* slipped down the ways in Bridgeton in 1874.

The identity of owner Jesse S. Clark has proven difficult to ascertain. One source suggests that he may have been related to Captain Thomas P. Clark. A June 27, 1878 newspaper brief mentioned that one John W. Jessop had recently attended the funeral of his brother-in-law Jesse S. Clark in Yates County, mid-western New York.³⁵ This death might explain why one month later the July 1878 Certificate of Enrollment and Registry shows Jesse Clark's 1/16th share marked through and *Crissie Wright's* captain picking up the share.³⁶ The two men having the same surname suggest a kinship and might add credence to the hypothesis although this has to remain somewhat circumstantial, particularly when the ship's registry certificates indicate that both men were from Camden County, NJ.³⁷ One source mentions a Jesse Clark in Gibbsboro (near Berlin in Camden County) who opened a general store in 1881 and became postmaster in 1883.³⁸

A.C. Bournonville (1824-?), owning 1/32nd share of the schooner,³⁹ was a well known physician in Philadelphia. During the Civil War he held posts as surgeon in charge at both the Fifth Street and Mower Hospitals,⁴⁰ and was also a member of the executive committee of the Alumni Association of his alma mater Jefferson Medical College.⁴¹

Ernst Hexamer (1827-1912) owned a

Benjamin Lanning (1840-?), another 1/32nd shareholder from Cumberland County, N.J. ⁶⁰, was appointed as a commissioner with the Bridgeton Gas Light Company in 1853. ⁶¹ According to the 1878 Certificate of Enrollment and Registry, Lanning gave up his share that year, ⁶² but the reason has not come to light.

The last two owners to take shares, David P. Mulford (1815-1891) and William Dare (1817-?), both from Cumberland County and holding 1/64th shares, ⁶³ were at one point in business together as the firm of Dare & Mulford trading in coal, fertilizer, produce, grain, and seed from 1853 to 1877. Mulford was active for many years operating vessels between Bridgeton and Philadelphia and other ports in the northeast; and owned shares in numerous ships carrying cargos from Bridgeton. He was a member of the city council and a director of the Cumberland National Bank until his death. ⁶⁴ Mulford and Dare undoubtedly took over and split Benjamin Lanning's 1/32nd share as indicated in the 1885 Certificate of Enrollment and Registry. ⁶⁵

Unfortunately, no information has been located regarding *Crissie Wright* owners R.C. Wilkins (1/32 share) or Lewis (Louis) Smith (1/32 share), but research efforts continue. The enrollment documents do record that Wilkins was from Camden County, N.J. and Smith from Cape May County, N.J. ⁶⁶

Operational Profile from Newspaper Entries and Accounts

A brief synthesis of newspaper source material compiled thus far should help to illustrate the extreme value of these sources in helping to tell the story of *Crissie Wright's* operations. Although this research continues as more newspapers are perused, so far approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of the schooner's movements over her ten and a half year career have been established by the various

entries and clearances primarily contained in the marine or shipping sections of various newspapers.

Forty-one different ports have been identified where *Crissie Wright* would moor and off load and/or take on cargo. The schooner traveled to every state bordering the Gulf of Mexico and every state along the American eastern seaboard with the lone exception of Delaware. Delaware was probably omitted due to the close proximity of Wilmington to *Crissie Wright's* homeport of Philadelphia. The vessel traded in Bath, Kennebec, and Gardiner in Maine; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Boston, Fall River, Coles River, Vineyard Haven, and Somerset in Massachusetts; Providence, Dutch Island Harbor, and Apponaug in Rhode Island; New Haven and Allyn's Point in Connecticut; New York, New York; Hoboken, Newark, Perth Amboy, and South Amboy in New Jersey; Baltimore, Maryland; Washington D.C.; Georgetown and Alexandria in Virginia; Wilmington, North Carolina; Charleston, Bull River, and Beaufort in South Carolina; Savannah, Brunswick, and St. Mary's in Georgia; Key West, Apalachicola, and Pensacola in Florida; Mobile, Alabama; Pascagoula, Mississippi; New Orleans and Pass-a-l'Outre in Louisiana; Galveston, Texas; and two ports in Cuba, Sagua and Trinidad. Of course she was in and out of her homeport of Philadelphia more than any other, at least 46 times at this point in the research.

Unfortunately, cargos are rarely detailed in the sources, but several bulk cargos are mentioned occasionally, including sugar, coal, ice, lumber, railroad iron, plaster, and on her final voyage, guano.

Numerous shipping and trading firms are mentioned however, and often these provide clues as to the cargo carried by the vessel: Lathbury, Stearly & Co.; H.L. Gregg & Co.; Graeff, Rothermel & Co. (coal); Berwind, White & Co. (coal); George W. Jones & Co. (coal); J.F. Cummings & Co. (coal); Cummings & Irelan; Penn Gas Coal Co.; William A. Levering (lumber); Gillingham, Garrison & Co. (lumber);

New Haven Saw Mill Co.; J.E. Hoffman & Co. (railroad iron); McCauley & Goucher; W.H. Johns & Co.; Adams Brothers & Co.; LeClere & Son; C.P. Foster; French, Richards & Co.; R. & A. Heckscher & Co.; Henry D. May & Co.; Knickerbocker Ice Co.; and Eugene Borda & Son.⁶⁷

Apart from the many times she went through her homeport of Philadelphia, *Crissie Wright* seemed to favor a handful of ports more than others including Baltimore (at least 25 times), Savannah (19 times), Providence (17 times), Boston (12 times), and New York (11 times). As noted, these numbers will likely significantly increase as research continues.

The Loss of *Crissie Wright*

The official Wreck Report dated July 6, 1886 and signed by part owner George W. Shepherd, Jr. in Philadelphia six months after the loss of the schooner, supplies valuable information about the loss of the vessel. The report reveals January 11, 1886 for the loss of the schooner, an erroneous date which is rather common among many accounts of the ship's demise.⁶⁸ The ship ran aground on Friday evening January 8 and it was not until Monday January 11 that a lone survivor and three frozen crew members were recovered from *Crissie Wright*.⁶⁹

This report and other documents confirm that the master was Thomas P. Clark. The owner is listed as Jacob E. Ridgway from Philadelphia who was, in fact, one of numerous owners of the schooner as discussed previously. The ship was sailing from Baltimore to Savannah with a 600 ton cargo of ground guano valued at \$30,000. *Crissie Wright* had an estimated value of \$20,000. Both the ship and cargo were listed as total losses. The cargo of guano was fully underwritten, but the vessel itself only insured for \$7,000. The ship was reported as having neither a deck load nor being overloaded. According to the wreck report, *Crissie Wright* sprang a leak during a snow storm after dark and sank off Rough Point, North Carolina. Not

surprisingly, a heavy sea was running as a result of a 60 mile per hour wind. Only one member of the seven man crew survived. A "steamer from Newbern" provided assistance following the disaster.⁷⁰

The reason for *Crissie Wright's* demise was, to put it simply, the horrendous weather. Newspaper accounts of the weather over the weekend that the ship came ashore paint a vivid portrait of high winds and bitterly cold temperatures from the Midwest to the East Coast and stretching down as far south as Cuba. The weather report in Boston on January 4, only four days before the schooner came ashore, recorded temperatures in the low to mid-50s throughout the Mid-Atlantic States. The forecast called for a "slight cold wave" through the region.⁷¹ Four days later this "slight cold wave" was blowing a gale and temperatures had dropped in most places to well below freezing, and into single digits and even below zero in many areas.

The temperature was 30 below zero in the Dakotas by January 7th; below zero and falling in Nebraska; 15 below zero in Missouri; and one paper proclaimed that "... the storm which has prevailed all day on the plains is one of the most severe ever known."⁷²

On January 12, *The New-York Times* featured a story entitled "The Trail of the Storm" discussing trains stuck in snow or having to burrow through drifts, river towns threatened by floods and ice flows, and the coldest weather ever known in the South. Chicago recorded a temperature of 24 below on January 11th; four people froze to death in Missouri; it was 34 below in Minnesota; 6 degrees in Baltimore and Augusta, Ga.; 12 degrees in Mobile; and as low as 0 to 8 degrees in Charleston. The



Figure 4.
Crissie Wright Captain Thomas P. Clark's tombstone in Berlin, N.J. Photo by Rick Rickards.



Figure 5.
Present *Crissie Wright* grave marker. Photo by David Moore.

Figure 6.
Earlier *Crissie Wright* grave marker
(note erroneous date). Photo by
David Moore.



Potomac River between Washington D.C. and Alexandria froze solid with ice from two to four inches thick; and twenty-one vessels wrecked with the loss of 65 lives in Cuba.⁷³

News of the loss of the schooner *Crissie Wright* and indeed as many as 200 other ships during the January 1886 storm event was carried in newspapers across the country and even abroad.⁷⁴ Perhaps the most succinct testimony of the events surrounding the loss of the vessel and most of her crew was reported in a New Bern, N.C. newspaper a week after the incident.

Further particulars of the wreck of the schooner *Cressie* [sic] *Wright* are given. The vessel went ashore Friday night six miles west of Cape Lookout light. The steward was swept away soon after the vessel struck, one sailor was drowned in attempting to get ashore and another was knocked overboard and lost on Sunday by the breaking of the mizzen-mast. The captain and mate froze to death on Sunday night at 8 o'clock. Another sailor—the only one of the crew left—was rescued about 10 o'clock by a crew of natives. The steamer *Nellie B. Dey*, of Beaufort, Capt. Dudley, brought off the three frozen men. The rescued man is named Charles Tayt. Although badly frost bitten, he is doing well. The natives, to the number of fifty men, with several boats that they carried across the banks, stayed on the beach from Saturday until Monday, and made every effort in their power to reach the sufferers, but the wind was blowing a gale right on the beach, making a tremendous sea in which no boat could live. The rescued man did all in his power to keep his companions from freezing. He beat and kicked them constantly, but to

no purpose. They would sleep, and sleep brought death. The rescued man is from Buffalo. The crew of the schooner were without anything to eat or drink from Wednesday night, the 7th inst.⁷⁵

Only three of the seven *Crissie Wright* crew are known by name: the captain, Thomas P. Clark; Charles Tayt, the ship's cook and lone survivor; and crewman Phillip H. Rickards. The identity of Clark as the ship's captain shows up in numerous documents and is therefore well known and acknowledged.

The cook's name, Charles Tayt, appears in just a few sources. In addition to the article quoted above, Tayt was mentioned in a brief news passage revealing that he was traveling north through New Bern, N.C. with H.J. Clark who had come down from Berlin, N.J. to retrieve his brother's body for burial back home. The news piece also revealed that Tayt was from Buffalo, N.Y.⁷⁶ Figure 4 is an image of the captain's tombstone in the Berlin cemetery where he was interred.⁷⁷

The information on the identity of crew member Phillip H. Rickards comes from his great grandson Mr. C.G. "Rick" Rickards of Delran, N.J. Mr. Rickards became interested in the story a few years ago when he came across a short newspaper article in an old family bible about the loss of the schooner *Crissie Wright* and the date entered into the bible of his ancestor's death in January, 1886. Rickards and the writer have corresponded several times over the past decade exchanging research.

Visual Reminders of *Crissie Wright*

Several of the schooner's crew were interred in a common grave in the Old Burying Ground in Beaufort, N.C. not long after the disaster. The grave is currently marked as shown in Figure 5. Figure 6 illustrates an earlier grave marker that was acquired by the North Carolina Maritime Museum a number of years ago. It is interesting to note both the erroneous date on the



earlier marker and the fact that the marker mentions “approx. burial site” suggesting that the precise location of the sailor burial is, in fact, unknown. The erroneous date of 1869 may be the reason why the marker was replaced.

Simka Simkhovich (1893-1949)

Another significant vestige of the *Crissie Wright* shipwreck still available for viewing in Beaufort is a large mural painted just over 70 years ago. During the Great Depression when fully one quarter of all Americans were out of work including some 10,000 artists, Franklin Roosevelt promised “A New Deal” in his 1932 campaign for president. the following year President Roosevelt signed the Federal Emergency Relief Act which in turn created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1935 and various federal art projects. One of some forty artists hired by this effort to create works for federal buildings was Russian immigrant and United States citizen Simka Paul Simkhovitch. Simkhovitch painted four murals that were installed in the United States Post Office at the corner of Pollock and Front Streets in Beaufort, North Carolina in 1940. One, completed in Simkhovitch’s studio in Connecticut, was entitled *The Wreck of the Crissie Wright*⁷⁸ (Figure 7). All four paintings still reside in the old post office building.

Another potential visual remnant of *Crissie Wright* that unfortunately no longer exists, at least in an intact condition, was an anchor once on display in front of the

Crissie Wright Masonic Lodge in Smyrna, N.C. As a graduate student in the Maritime History and Nautical Archaeology Program at East Carolina University, the writer traveled to the area in 1982 and took the opportunity to record the anchor. Some locals maintain that the anchor, recovered off Shackleford Banks in the 1960s by fishermen may have originated from the wreck of *Crissie Wright*. Over the years the anchor oxidized and fell apart. Several years ago the Lodge replaced the

Figure 7.
The Wreck of the Crissie Wright mural painted by Russian artist Simka Simkhovitch. Photo by David Moore.

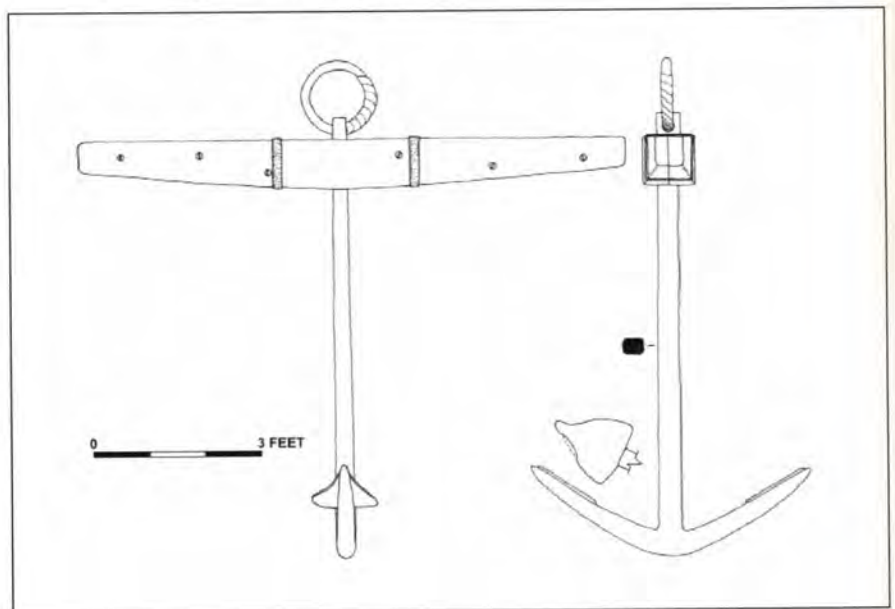


Figure 8.
Anchor Recorded at the *Crissie Wright* Masonic Lodge, Smyrna, N.C., in 1982. Illustration by David Moore.

anchor with a modern sign and moved the ailing artifact to the tree line behind the building. When observed just a few years ago, the anchor was in several pieces and severely oxidized or rusted

In 1982, the anchor exhibited a typical split wooden stock fastened in place



Figure 9.
Model of *Crissie Wright* by Jim Goodwin. Photo by Jim Goodwin.

around the shank by six wedged trunnels (treenails), three per arm. Two iron straps, one per arm, were also used to clamp the stock together. The ring was still partially wrapped or parceled with strips of tarred canvas, covering approximately 1/3 of the ring, originally designed to prevent chafing of the anchor cable. Figure 8 illustrates the anchor as recorded some three decades ago.

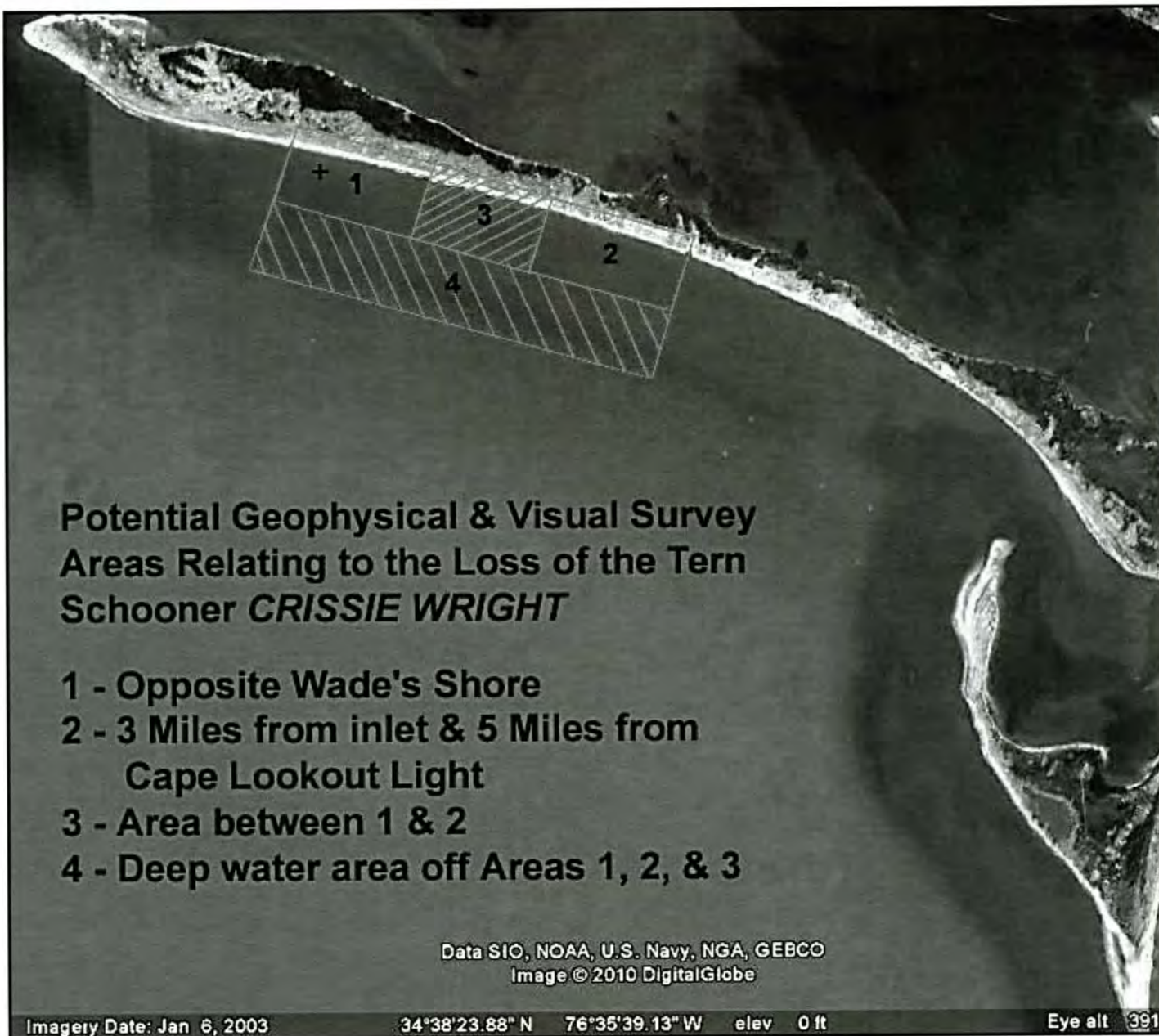
***Crissie Wright* Model**

In 2008, James Goodwin, a model builder from Charlotte, North Carolina, constructed a scale representation of *Crissie Wright* (Figure 9). The model was loaned to the North Carolina Maritime Museum for temporary display. Coordinating research with Museum personnel, much of the layout and structural characteristics were taken from the ship's original tonnage admeasurement certificate.⁷⁹

Potential Archaeological Profile of *Crissie Wright*

Personnel from the North Carolina Maritime Museum and a local avocational nautical archaeology group, Surface Interval Diving Company (SIDCO), have been discussing plans for looking for physical remains of *Crissie Wright* for several years.

The same documents that provide historical data for recreating the schooner's operational profile also provide structural data for possibly identifying any remains of the vessel. Both the *RAFS* and *ALRAFS* registers include "Rules for the Construction of Wooden Vessels" as well as tables of numerous dimensions, numbers, and other structural characteristics for a wide range of various tonnage ships. *Crissie Wright* at 385 tons comes closest



to the 400 ton categories covered in these available tables and hence is only a matter of extracting all of the variables for this particular category to create an archaeological profile with which to compare any structural remains that may be located in the project area. Examples of this data would include dimensions of all the major structural elements on a ship, i.e., keel, keelson, and frame dimensions; interior and exterior planking and wale dimensions; the sizes of all major fasteners used to connect structural elements together; chain and anchor sizes, etc. Table 4 provides selected dimensions taken from the *RAFS* and *ALRAFS* register tables for a 400-ton vessel. The dimensions

included are those that might be more apt to be encountered on the lower hull remains of a wooden sailing ship constructed in 1874.⁸⁰

According to the register documentation, a normal complement of anchors for a 400 ton vessel would be 2 bowers (16 hundredweight [cwt] or 1600 pounds), 1 stream (5½ cwt or 550 pounds), and 1 kedge (3¼ cwt or 325 pounds).⁸¹ The anchor in Figure 8 and purportedly from *Crissie Wright* is far too small to have been a 1600 pound bower, but only a bit heavier than an appropriate stream anchor would have been at c.700-750 pounds. The anchor once on display in front of

Figure 10. Probability Areas for Geophysical Surveying for structural remains associated with *Crissie Wright*. (Base image courtesy of Digital Globe/Eurimage)

Table 4.
Structural Components and Their
Dimensions on a 400 ton ship
constructed in 1874.

Component	Dimensions
Keel	13½ X 15½ inches
Keel bolts	1 inch (diameter)
Floor timbers	9 inches sided X 11 inches moulded
Room & Space	24 inches
Keelson	13½ X 26½ inches
Keelson bolts	1¼ inches
Garboard plank	6½ X 12 inches
Bottom planks to bilge	3 5/8 inches thick
Ceiling planks	3½ inches thick
Treenails	1 3/8 inches (diameter)

the Crissie Wright Masonic Lodge could very well have been associated with the site of the lost schooner, but due to its deterioration, this may never be proven. Its size, while not exactly matching the recommended anchor sizes for a 400 ton ship, could nonetheless have been used aboard the vessel. Ship operators would not want to use underrated equipment, but utilizing a somewhat oversized anchor would certainly have been within the confines of safe operation.

It now remains to conduct a survey and locate the actual physical remains of the schooner. By compiling all the known data relating to the loss of the ship, including local folklore, a high probability area for the potential of locating *Crissie Wright* remains has been established. It is known that the ship came ashore, at least initially, across from the Shackleford Banks settlement of Wade's Shore (now abandoned) and possibly in close proximity to the cemetery associated with the settlement. Figure 10 illustrates this probability area in red, divided into four separate zones, Zone 1 being the highest probability based on historically recorded positions, offshore Zone 4 in deeper water, the least likely area.

Conclusions

This article is offered as a practical example of how to create operational and archaeological profiles of a typical 19th century three-masted schooner. Although a great deal of research remains to be done, much has been accomplished over the

past decade. Various historical documents and newspapers have permitted the compilation of a brief portrait of *Crissie Wright*, her owners, and operations. Other documentation allows an archaeological profile to be assembled that can be used to help identify and interpret any wooden structural remains that may be located. This is an ongoing research project that will continue and in the future include a geophysical survey designed to locate any physical remains of the tern schooner *Crissie Wright*. When completed, hopefully another valuable page will have been added to the maritime and nautical history of Carteret County specifically, and North Carolina in general, not to mention the Delaware River estuary where the ship was built and from where she was operated.

Acknowledgements

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Footnotes

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