

August 30 to October 27/28, 1682

In August of 1682, the ship *Welcome's* trip from Deal, England to Pennsylvania meant a hazardous and, at best, unpleasant voyage of about 58 days on this very small wooden ship.

The “*Welcome*”, that carried William Penn to his new colony, was an average size ship for that time. She was likely around 120 feet in length, 24 feet wide and weighed 300 tons. Robert Greenway was her Commander, and she was manned by a crew of about 36. She carried 100 passengers, mostly Friends, from Sussex, England.

When they left London they could have no idea how long they would be on board the ship, as these ships were “slow sailers”. Although they could go as fast as ten miles per hour when there was a fair wind and a smooth sea, they rarely maintained this speed. The length of the voyage might vary from 49 to 128 days. Sometimes ships that left London at the same time might arrive in America as much as eight or nine weeks apart.

Conditions on the *Welcome* were likely far from ideal, even for those times. The ship was over-crowded with passengers, and private cabins were available only to the ship's captain and perhaps William Penn. All the others slept on the floor on the deck below the main deck. There was very little light or air. During the rains and rough seas water would pour in through cracks and joints, drenching the passengers and their belongings below. There were no bathrooms on board. If they wanted to wash, they had to wash in salty water from the sea. Most likely they may have worn the same clothes for the entire voyage.

Although, from time to time, fresh fish or turtles might be caught if weather permitted, meals usually consisted of “salt horse” (salted beef, pork, or fish) and “hardtack” (hard, dry biscuits). There were dried peas and beans, cheese and butter. Weather permitting; food was cooked over charcoal fires in metal boxes called braziers. But it was often too dangerous to have a fire and so the food was eaten cold.

Food became infested with bugs, the biscuits got too hard to eat, the cheese got moldy, butter turned rancid and even the beer began to go sour by the end of the voyage. Even though a large amount of water would have been taken on board, after standing in barrels for a while, it was neither pleasant nor safe to drink. Everyone, even the children, drank beer instead.

Storms were a great danger, and the Atlantic had many, especially in the fall and winter when the “*Welcome*” sailed. The tossing and rolling of this small ship (in even a minor storm) caused most of the passengers to become seasick. There was the ever-present fear that a major storm could easily capsize a ship of this size or cause it to break apart.

Sickness, other than seasickness, was also a major problem. Even a minor illness could quickly spread among passengers and crew alike. Serious illnesses, often called “ship's fever” (smallpox), killed 31 of the passengers on the *Welcome's* crossing. The Captain was forced to dock at Little Egg Harbor in New Jersey in order to allow for the “fever” to run its course. They were still pretty fortunate as on some voyages as many as half the passengers died before they reached their final destination.