



Alexandria Times

Established in 1797 as *The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

Out of the Attic

The schooner 'Enterprize'

Alexandria Times, July 15, 2021

Image: The schooner 'Enterprize' arrived in Alexandria on or around Jan. 2, 1802.

Built in Glastonbury on the Connecticut River in 1801, the schooner 'Enterprize,' sometimes spelled 'Enterprise,' was a 63-foot-long, 20-foot-wide, 89-ton, two-masted, ocean-going vessel and was owned by several Alexandria merchants, including Robert B. Jamesson, William Yeaton and Robert Young.

It left the shipyard in Connecticut sometime prior to Nov. 21, 1801, and arrived in Alexandria by way of New York and Philadelphia on or around Jan. 2, 1802.

Captained by William Mitchell, the 'Enterprize' cleared port for the West Indies on Jan. 30 and returned from Martinique more than two months later, on April 8.

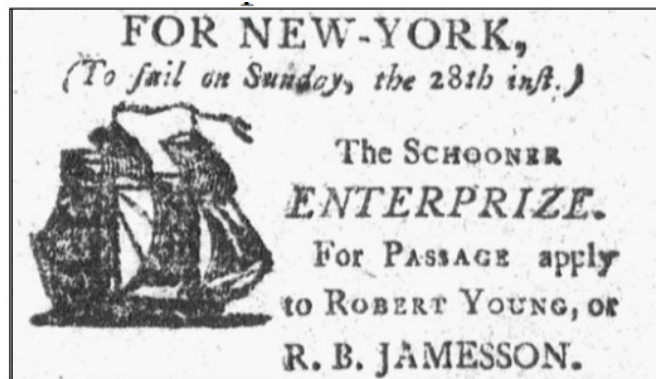
This voyage between these American ports and the Caribbean was typical of the trips the 'Enterprize' would make over the next three-and-a-half years. Surviving U.S. Customs manifests, newspaper advertisements and court records tell us how the schooner was loaded in Alexandria with commodities like flour, bread, beans, pork, beef, and, of course, tobacco. It returned from the Caribbean with sugar, rum, brandy, wine, coffee, oranges and even French passengers fleeing the Haitian revolution.

In addition to these records that help us document the 'Enterprize,' one of the schooner's logbooks also survives, having been entered into evidence as part of an 1805 court case. It documents four voyages the schooner made between January 1803 and October 1804: three to the Caribbean under Capt. William Manning and one to Spain, France and England under his successor, Ebenezer Eveleth.

The logbook contains bihourly entries that record the schooner's heading, speed and the prevailing wind direction, as well as daily observations of the ship's latitude and estimates of its total distance traveled. The logbook notes arrivals and departures from ports, cargos bought and sold, bad weather, outbreaks of disease and even a close run-in with a French privateer.

It describes the daily operation of the ship and life on board it, including entries about the schooner's rigging, ongoing ship maintenance and repair, other ships sighted and rations for the crew. This document provides rich historical context and detail not just for the 'Enterprize,' but also for similar ships like the ones found during archaeological excavations along Alexandria's waterfront in recent years.

The final entry in the logbook of the Schooner 'Enterprize' was made on Oct. 24, 1804, after it had returned to Alexandria from Europe. After a short trip to Philadelphia later that autumn under a new captain, William Lewis, it returned to the Caribbean in the spring of 1805. On July 19, the 'Enterprize' was





Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

boarded, and this time captured, by two French privateer vessels, who had papers from the French government authorizing them to seize any ship trading with the former French colony of Santo Domingo – now Haiti.

They took the 'Enterprize' to Baracoa on the neighboring island of Cuba, where it and its cargo were sold. Some of the cargo of sugar and logwood was purchased by an American merchant and resold in Charleston, South Carolina – the subject of another lawsuit – but the fate of the Schooner 'Enterprize' after its capture is currently unknown.

"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.

These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria and invited guests.