



Journeys across the middle passage

Resource

The voyage from Africa to the Americas usually took between six and eleven weeks to complete. Enslaver ships spent several months travelling to different parts of the coast buying their cargo. The Captains Log of the ship 'Unity', tells us about the length of time spent at port. The ship arrived off the coast of Africa at Cape Coast Castle on 16 November 1769. Two days later they arrived at Whydah and after an unexplained gap of two months, they "went up to Abomey, the capital of Dahomey to wait upon the King", being carried part of the way in hammocks. They departed on 28 April 1770, with 227 enslaved Africans on board, and on their arrival at St Thomas (São Tomé), they received a transfer of 200 enslaved Africans from the ship 'Society', bringing the total to 425, with the loss of a male known only as "slave number 8".

Ship 1 **Essex**

In 1770 Captain William Naylor and a crew of 30 set sail from Liverpool across the Atlantic Ocean. The ship left the home port in Liverpool on the 14/03/1770. From Liverpool the ship sailed to Bassa on the coast of Africa. When in Bassa 270 enslaved people were forced to board the ship. It is unclear how long the ship was at the port in Bassa, however from there it sailed to St. Kitts in the Caribbean in order to sell the enslaved people on board the ship. Of the 270 who boarded the ship, only 220 disembarked. Once the enslaved people were disembarked in Americas the ship made its return to Liverpool, arriving back on the 19/04/1771.

Ship 2 **Dumfries**

This ship captained by Alexander Currie and John Coleman set sail from London and traveled to an unspecified port on Africa's Gold Coast. Enslaved people were taken from this port and Anomabu. The ship set sail with 600 captives on board and travelled across the Atlantic in 1784, making its way to Kingston. Of the 600 captives who embarked on the journey, 550 made it across the middle passage alive. The ship then set sail on its journey home, however it was shipwrecked due to a natural hazard and did not return to London.

Ship 3 **Nelly**

Captain Patrick Fairweather set sail across the Atlantic from Liverpool with 38 crewmembers. When the ship reached the coast of Africa, 429 captives from Calabar were forced to board the ship. The ship then sailed to Jamaica, where only 321 captives disembarked. 108 people died on the journey across the middle passage (25 of captives who embarked). The ship and crew set sail from Jamaica but did not return home due to the ship being destroyed at sea.

Ship 4 **Edgar**

Captain James Forrest and a crew of 22 men set sail from Liverpool to the west coast of Africa. When at port, 246 captives from Gambia were boarded on the ship and the Captain then set sail for Jamaica where 225 of these captives were disembarked. Of the captives on the ship, 64 were men, 29.3 were women and 6.2 were children. Once the captives were disembarked for sale in Jamaica, the ship returned to Liverpool.