



# Necessities

When my forebears came to the New World in the early 17th century, they found forests, forests, forests.  
by John Train

**Y**OU HAD TO be a skilled woodsman and carpenter to build your house, your roof (wood, not thatched—the Indians liked to set it alight with flaming arrows), your fences, your furniture, your utensils. Hazards included bears and furious Indians, frightful cold, disease, and starvation. If you hadn't brought the necessary tools or didn't possess the necessary skills, you were in real trouble.

The English authorities issued printed instructions for what a family of six should bring across, or expect the worst:

- 5 tree-felling axes
- 2 broad axes (for trimming logs)
- 4 hoes
- 3 shovels
- 2 spades

- 2 hand-saws
- 2 two-hand saws—(for cutting logs into boards)
- 1 whip-saw with file
- 2 augers
- 6 chisels
- 2 pickaxes
- 1 grindstone
- a large variety of nails

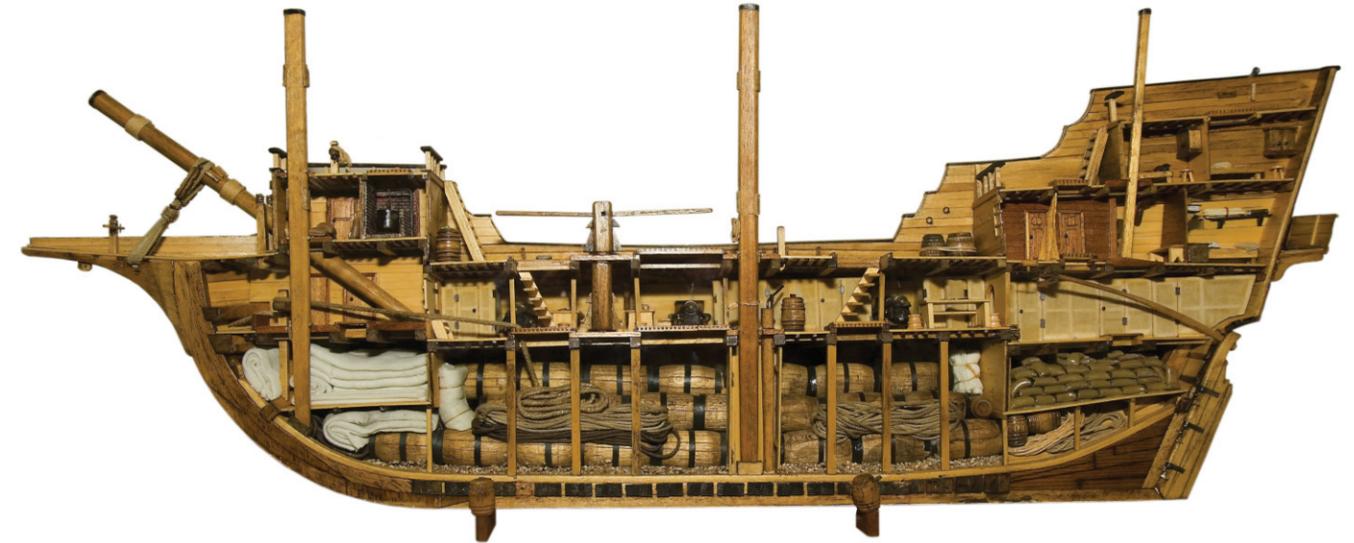
Was not all this a bit much? Scarcely. Remember that half the Pilgrims died in their first year in this promised land. Orthodox, no doubt, in religion, but light in survival skills.

In the late 16th century, Queen Elizabeth commissioned Walter Raleigh to colonize the New World. The great geographer Hakluyt (pronounced Hakle-wit) told her to send brickmakers and

bricklayers, tilemakers, spring-finders, well-drillers, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths and doctors, plus medical supplies. But the Queen and Raleigh may have been impulsive in this matter. Anyway, Raleigh's colony of Roanoke failed. In due course everybody was lost.

My aforementioned forebears (who spelt the name Trayne at that time) survived all this, and in the 1800s created a line of square-riggers to bring later immigrants over. Here is what a printed form instructed everybody to bring along if you took passage to Boston on one of our ships:

- 28 pounds of bread
- 70 pounds of potatoes
- 10 pounds of ham or bacon
- 10 pounds of dried fish



Above: Model of a 17th century English merchantman ship.

- 3 pounds of butter
- 3 dozen eggs
- 1 pound of coffee
- beds and bedding
- utensils for cooking, eating and drinking
- box or barrel to hold provisions and cooking utensils, including
- boiler
- saucepan
- frying pan
- tin porringer
- tin plate
- tin dish
- knife, fork, spoon
- tin water bottle

The ship, in turn, provided 3 quarts of water daily for each passenger, plus, weekly:

- 2 ½ pounds of bread
- 5 pounds of oatmeal
- 1 pound of flour
- 2 pounds of rice
- half a pound of sugar
- half a pound of molasses
- 2 ounces of tea
- 1 pound of pork

I add: Please do *not* light a cooking fire on deck! This was done by a passenger on a Train Line ship called *Reporter*, which burned to the waterline in sight of land.



Incidentally, the Train Line packets were considered among the most comfortable in that trade.

This whole question of necessities leads us to a favorite man-woman issue; having left a complete summer kit up here, I travel back to Maine every June with one small under-the-seat suitcase. My beloved consort Francie finds indispensable a pile of bags, sacks and boxes galore, from which emerge all sorts of everyday stuff—blue jeans, sneakers and such. Why not leave it all here, I ask. Impossible, I'm told. New needs emerge, styles change, eventualities arise, you never know. But does one have to carry back and forth ancient sweaters and well-worn shirts?

Could they not perfectly well stay here over the winter?

No, never. Out of the question. 

*The publishers of the Social Register Observer wish to express their appreciation to John Train for his sage advice. By stocking up in advance with 5 tree-felling axes, 2 two-hand saws and 70 pounds of potatoes, the SR staff was able to survive the fearful New York winter at 14 Wall Street.*

A co-founder and first managing editor of *The Paris Review*, John Train is the author of more than two dozen books and some 400 short pieces that appeared in *Forbes*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times* and other publications.