
**A Further Note on De Peyster's
Rebecca Logbook, 1818-1824**

Doug Munro

*Bond University
Gold Coast, Queensland*

The unexpectedly eventful Pacific crossing of the merchant ship *Rebecca* in 1819 coupled with its being relatively well documented have resulted in a comfortable niche in Pacific historiography for this particular voyage. Indicative of this was the notice in the November 1986 issue of *Pacific Studies* (vol. 10, no. 1: 146) concerning the hitherto little-known logbook of the brigantine's master, Arent Schuyler de Peyster, which in itself was prompted by an earlier article in *Pacific Studies*. Since then it has come to my attention that portions of de Peyster's logbook were published exactly one hundred years ago as an appendix to a family history compiled by J. Watts de Peyster, entitled *Miscellanies by an Officer: Col. Arent Schuyler de Peyster British Army, 1774-1813 with original letters of Col. de Peyster; Brig. Gen. Sir John Johnson, Bart; Col. Guy Johnson; and others from 1776 and 1813, never before published; also discovery of de Peyster Islands, &c., in the Pacific Ocean, &c.; and biographical sketches of the de Peyster, Watts, and affiliated families since their settlement in the present United States* (New York; C. H. Ludwig, 1888), lxxiv-lxxx.

The extracts from the logbook cover the period in Tokelau and Tuvalu

waters in May 1819. The high point of this part of the voyage occurred in the hours before daylight on May 17 when the *Rebecca* came desperately close to being wrecked at Funafuti atoll. These forty-five minutes of fear, when the brigantine's crew took evasive action, are graphically described. The dark-haired de Peyster was so shaken by the experience that his forelock reportedly had turned white before daybreak.

The appendix also contains an extract from the *New York Mail and Express* of 18 September 1888, which indicates that portions of de Peyster's logbook were published "years ago." The place and date of publication are not specified and await further research.

I am grateful to Mr. Mark Jerome Seidenberg of Arlington, Virginia, for drawing my attention to these published extracts from de Peyster's *Rebecca* logbook.