A Philadelphia Surgeon on a
Slaving Voyage to Africa, 1749-1751

Sometime during the late summer of 1749, probably in the month of September, William Chancellor of Philadelphia sailed as ship's surgeon aboard the sloop Wolf bound from New York on a slaving voyage to the coast of West Africa. His account of that voyage was recorded in a diary, one volume of which has survived and is now in the manuscript department of the Maryland Historical Society.1 Another volume, either lost or destroyed, evidently covered the period from September, 1749, to mid-May, 1750. Chancellor titled the surviving volume "Continuation of a Voyage from New York to the Coast of Africa in the Sloop Wolf Gurnay Wall Command", in the Years 1749-50 & 51."2 The earliest entry in the more than 100-page manuscript is dated May 18, 1750, and the last was recorded on May 10, 1751, when the Wolf anchored at New York City after a slaving expedition that lasted twenty months. Both the pagination and the chronology are incomplete. Six pages are missing, while in other instances Chancellor simply abandons his scheme of pagination—duplicate page numbers and pages bearing no number at all are scattered throughout the diary. Separate daily entries were made until Sunday, September 2, 1750; on that day for the first time Chancellor's remarks extend over a week. The chronology grows even more vague after Sunday, September 30, since Chancellor does not thereafter return to the practice of entering daily comments until March 3, 1751, which he then continues until the end of the voyage, that is, to May 10, 1751.

Though one might wish that the complete Chancellor diary were available for study, nevertheless what has survived is of much value. It provides a fresh and detailed look at the African slave trade as

1 E. A. Williams Papers, Ms. 899.
2 The diary is described by Mr. P. William Filby, the Librarian, as follows: "16.3 cm. width, 20.5 cm. length; full leather; nubbed (calf) contemporary; spine has 6 tooled panels, 'Vol. I' in 2nd panel; c. 1760-1800."
seen through the eyes of a physician whose responsibility it was to maintain the slaves in good health until their arrival at the market for sale. With respect to such problems as the machinery and operation of the slave trade, relations between blacks and whites, and the intense international rivalries associated with the African trade, Chancellor's diary is a storehouse of information. But its primary significance is as an illustration of the horrors, the frustrations, and the precariousness of this branch of commerce. At a time when all trade was at best uncertain and unpredictable, that to West Africa in quest of Negro slaves was most uncertain of all.3

About William Chancellor, very little is known. His educational background and training, as well as his family connections in Pennsylvania, are all rather obscure. The Diary suggests an alert and curious mind, and one which had received more than a mere smattering of what the century had to offer in the way of a medical education. Chancellor knew Latin, for example; and, when the slaves under his care became ill with the flux, he was able to experiment successfully with a "recipe" for counteracting the sickness. With an interest in poetry, which extended even to writing a verse now and then, Chancellor had taken Alexander Pope as his idol. On February 15, 1751, he wrote: "This morning about two o clock I was agreeably amus'd in my Sleep, with the thoughts of being in Company with my Friend Alex'. Pope, who I imagined was paying his respects to a Lady, but extremely melancholy, till the news was brought him, of her determination in his favour." A series of violent jerks, caused by the boom giving way, abruptly ended this brief visit with Pope.

Chancellor married, apparently after his return from Africa, and fathered a son. This son, William Chancellor, Jr., married Salome Wistar, daughter of John Wistar, and their descendants were united by marriage with several prominent Philadelphia families, including the Whartons. William Chancellor the diarist was a friend of Sir

William Keith, one-time governor of Pennsylvania. In 1763, twelve years after returning from Africa, Chancellor died in Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{4} The voyage that began at New York in September, 1749, brought the sloop \textit{Wolf} and Chancellor to the area of the River Gambia by the middle of November. According to Chancellor's "List of the Slaves taken on board the Wolf," the sloop remained in the vicinity of the Gambia until at least mid-January of 1750, purchasing in this two-month period twenty-nine slaves. Nearly six months were consumed in traversing that part of the African coast lying between the River Gambia and Cape Coast Castle, the Castle being reached on June 1, 1750. In the interim, there were stops at Sierra Leone, the Banana Islands, the River Sestos and at the Dutch fort (Brandenburg) at Akwidah on the Gold Coast. More than a month was spent slaving at the River Sestos, where twenty-five slaves were acquired. The second half of the year 1750 was spent in the waters off the Gold Coast, at Cape Coast Castle, Anamabo, and Lagos. It was not until January 18, 1751, after fourteen months on the coast of Africa, that the \textit{Wolf} began her return voyage to New York.

The sloop was owned by Philip Livingston and Sons, merchants in New York City. They had two other vessels slaving in Africa at the same time as the \textit{Wolf}, the sloop \textit{Rhode Island}, Peter James master, and the sloop \textit{Stork}, David Lindsay master.\textsuperscript{5} Both of these vessels are mentioned by Chancellor. Though this may not have been Chancellor's first experience at sea, he was not a professional seaman and the information which he provides on the \textit{Wolf} is sketchy. She was a one-masted vessel, and in Chancellor's view was grossly inadequate for slaving. Relative to other slavers, even other sloops, she must have been of small size, for Chancellor repeatedly commented on the \textit{Wolf}'s lack of space:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Sunday, May 27, 1750 [Brandenburg]:} This 24 Hours very bad and blustering weather which has prevented our Sailing The Sea has continually beat over us and down into the very hold and steerage where the sick are which must make it not dangerous to the sick only but the well also, being obliged to be to the ankles in water.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{4} \textit{The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography}, II (1878), 213; VI (1882), 153; XII (1888), 24; XVIII (1894), 35-36.
\textsuperscript{5} See the Book of Trade of the sloop \textit{Rhode Island}, 1748-1749, New York Historical Society, which identifies the Livingston firm as the owner of these vessels.
Tuesday, May 29: . . . these Sort of Vessels are terrible things to have Slaves in, especially so great a numb'. sick, & none but myself to look after them.

Wednesday, August 8 [Cape Coast Castle]: Tho there is not a vessel in the harbour that carries more than we do, tho there are 5 Ships 3 Snows 1 Brig. & 3 Sloops, yet there is not one so unfit for Slaves, for we have no quarter deck no platform abf [?] aft for Children which we have of 3 & 4 years old, that they lie on Casks & it is no wonder we loose [sic] them so fast.

Tuesday, August 21: This morning hoisted a signal for Sailing which we expect to do in 3 or 4 days, for Nazareth, our slaves yet continue very ill with disorders almost incurable, proceeding from their weakness ever since the Measles and a want of exercise which they cannot have on board so vile a Vessel as this.

Friday, August 31: To my mortification died this morning a Boy Slave, of the Dropsy, likewise one of our own men died this [day], who has been ill of an Odematous swelling ever since we left the River Gambia, these misfortunes are I think sufficient to make me repent my coming to Africa in this Vessel, not that I might live easy but she is no way proper for we are continually wet on our Decks, and our Slaves, to their Ankles often in water.

Wednesday, September 12: There has not been a day for this week past but our decks have been overflown with water and our Slaves to their ankles in it, with the utmost affliction it is I behold it being certain that few of them will escape without violent Colds that they have ever had.

Although poorly equipped for slaving, Chancellor believed the Wolf was properly fitted for warfare:

Saturday, September 29: We are now in earnest expectation of the French Snow I mentioned having this afternoon perceiv’d her with our glasses come to an anchor with the Rhode of Cape Coast, got all our Guns loaded & Shotted ready for an attack being the best fitted Vessel for that purpose here tho’ the worst for Slaves.

If, on balance, William Chancellor found his voyage to Africa unsatisfactory and unpleasant, this was due in no small measure to his relations with Captain Gurnay Wall. Like Chancellor, Wall seems to have been a Philadelphian, and by 1749 he was acquainted with both the sea and the slave trade. He had been sent by Robert Ellis, a Philadelphia merchant, to Antigua in August, 1740, and told to dispose of his cargo of twenty-one barrels of tar and seven barrels of pitch in return for “good Likely Negroe Boys and Girls if you Can
meet wt them, and if not, in any thing you think Proper for our Best Advantage." Later that year a Philadelphia newspaper reported that Gurnay Wall, commander of the brig Martha, had returned from Antigua with "A VERY likely Parcel of young Negro Men and Women, Boys and Girls. Also Rum, Sugar, Ginger and Coffee." This cargo was being sold, according to the notice, by Edward Jones. In the Diary, Captain Wall is presented as a stubborn and incompetent commander who did not always act in the best interests of his employers. As late as May, 1750, however, Wall and Chancellor were still on friendly terms—**Wednesday, May 23, 1750:** "At 12 o clock last night the Capt. call'd me up to see a violent Trenado coming on"—thereafter relations between them steadily deteriorated, a development that was fueled by Wall's extensive visits ashore:

**Saturday, June 2, 1750 [Cape Coast Castle]:** In the afternoon the Capt. went to the Castle the Slaves being ill I could not accompany him.

**Monday, June 4:** The Capt. has been on shore ever since yesterday morning in hopes no doubt of putting off our Provisions.

**Monday, June 11:** At noon the Capt. went on Shore, having in the morning rec'd a line from the General that he wou'd bargain for our Rum.

**Tuesday, June 12:** This morning sent a Canoe for the Captain but he sent us word back to send Six hhds of Rum ashore to the fort which with pleasure was perform'd.

**Wednesday, June 13:** This morning came a Canoe for another Hogshead of Rum from the Fort which she got, sent the boat for the Captain but she return'd without him he being indisposed on shore.

**Thursday, June 14:** the Capt.' ill on shore.

**Saturday, June 16:** Sent the boat for the Captain but he cou'd not come off.

**Sunday, June 17:** Sent the yawl in the Evening for the Capt. but he did not come off.

**Monday, June 18:** No Captain yet.

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Tuesday, June 19: Here have we lain this 5 days doing nothing but fretting, and not selling a tacku's worth of Rum in a day, and waiting the motion of the Capt. ashore, who says he's sick. . . . In the Evening after a very long stay the Capt. return'd on board.

Wednesday, June 27: I cannot help reflecting on our present unhappy Circumstances, with some kind of terror, seldom a day passes with [out] some most unhappy disquietudes, from the Superior to the inferior person on board, nothing but Discontent. . . . for my part, I must be contented, since I have enter'd on this unhappy Voyage I must go thro' with, tho with such anxiety, yet that I ought to put up with, if I consider that the good of a number of poor souls, depends on me. . . . Shou'd I forsake the Vessel which I have often had an Inclination to do, I certainly at my arrival at New York, shou'd be greatly to blame, especially, if any thing shou'd happen Among the[m] which my presence wou'd have in any measure prevent[ed], but yet it is greatly, that from these motives to stay, I must stay in Misery, and that I cannot receive the Usage due to me from the Captain, which I do not, for this he threatened to turn me out of the Cabbin, because I refus'd to cook his Dinner for him. . . .

Wednesday, July 11: There is no one in this world let his state be ever so independent that can promise unto himself the least happiness, for my part I have had my share this my first Voyage to Africa and everybody on board, on acct. of the chief person on board the Vessel, in short to me it is harder than to others, because the manner in wch. I was bred . . . to mention every circumstance of his ill usage wou'd be mean, and my Spirit scorns to let me complain, notwithstanding my Reasons, I am almost prompted to it but can't.

Sunday, July 29: This morning rec'd what is call'd a Dashee from the King that was a little fresh meat, which God knows we very much want, our Sailors especially who have had nothing but Pork this 2 months, it is impossible to conceive the ill humors of them since surely convinc'd of not going home this fall, and indeed I sincerely believe that some unexpected will happen among them, their daily complaints against the Capt. Vessel & provisions is enough to give any one uneasiness & misery to be in the same Vessel wth. them.

Sunday, August 26: This morning we kill'd a Turtle weighing 198: and had no less than 8 on board to take part, myself from the usage I receive from the Capt. stand as a looker on, and eat when the rest have done, hard fate that we cannot keep ourselves within due bounds, nor remember what we have been however it is sufficiently to show me I have been in Africa, and that I came with G: Wall.

Tuesday, August 28: It is now to be suppos'd I am in the very height of my miseries, not only from the Deaths of the Slaves, but the reflection, that by
the Capt. is cast on me on that acct. I am threatened to be brought to a Trial, of which I am heartily glad as it will, I hope, clear me from any aspersions.

**Wednesday, September 12:** the Capt. is gone to Cape Coast Castle, that place where his Soul seems to be fixt, for he is never easy but when he is there, and when he is I am under most terrible apprehensions for shou'd any thing happen amiss depend upon it 'tis me that suffers most, my fear is the rising of the Slaves, for he will have no Centry kept at the Barricado door, which I must be so free as to say is greatly to be wish'd for. ... In the Evening the Capt. return'd from Cape Coast, and usurp'd his former Authority, with a Countenance as stern as a Saracens head, Oh how I wish for an Alteration in his Behaviour to the men on board, especially the 2d. Mate, the Consequence I cannot tell, but fear it.

**Friday, September 21:** At the return of the Capt. last night we again had words about a mere Trifle, I brought with me from N: York a Mag: for 1747 that had in it the speech of Miss Polly Baker, since our arrival here he has had one of the same date given him which he yesterday sent for seeing 2 Mag: of the same date one I knew to be mine & thereone wrote C———r: It hapned to be this I sent him & because my name was thereon, occassioned our words.

In common with many other Europeans who visited Africa during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Chancellor found the land impressive, with a charm and beauty all its own. He often commented on the striking appearance of the country:

**Friday, May 18, 1750:** These people [along the Ivory Coast, near Cape Palmas] have a very fine & fertile Country and produces every thing for the Sustenance of man. . . .

**Sunday, May 20:** The Land from the River Sestos to Cape Palmas is low but after you get round that Cape, the Land stretches to the Eastward and is agreeably diversify'd with high Lands. . . . In the afternoon pass'd the Redland in length 5 leagues, and in the middle of which there stands a high hill which is entirely red, you are scarce pass'd this red hill before a beautiful Valley presents itself to you, so that in short you have beautifull prospects of hills & dales the whole coast along.

**Sunday, May 27:** [Near Ancobar River, on the Ivory Coast] beheld the Sun shining by Intermission the most beautifull greenhills Rocks & Dales, where grows that by which many a one is happy & many undone, I mean Gold.

**November:** tis hop'd we shall do something, after our long and unhappy stay in this part of that delightfull world Call'd Africa, where tis so falsly said, that Gold grows on the Trees, and for wch. we have paid so vastly dear.
Mid-December: Was I now in love with Africa, It is in my power to sue for chief Surgeon of the Castle but, Afric’s Lands shall not stop me nor shall it’s Riches any more intice me.

January 22, 1751: Having as I have said departed Africa, I this day 22 January once more saw myself in the Ocean and a wide and unbounded [prospect] lying before me, but to my mortification calm on calm, which has drove us in the Latitude of Ferdinando Poo, an Island near the bite, in-habited by Savages and supply’d from the main with them, It is a most charming and beautiful place, but cannot be conquered by any, being themselves determin’d to keep it, they are in nature Cannibals.

As this last remark suggests, Chancellor was more favorably impressed with Africa than with its natives. He insisted that certain parts of West Africa were inhabited by cannibals, and in so doing he was carrying forward a myth that had received wide currency in earlier times but was beginning to break down by the middle of the eighteenth century. As this last remark suggests, Chancellor was more favorably impressed with Africa than with its natives. He insisted that certain parts of West Africa were inhabited by cannibals, and in so doing he was carrying forward a myth that had received wide currency in earlier times but was beginning to break down by the middle of the eighteenth century. His attitude toward the native blacks was generally negative and his remarks about them could be derogatory:

Friday, May 18, 1750 [On the Ivory Coast]: I am now got into a most shocking part of the world, among Savages, and I know not what, It seems as if Providence had ordere’d us to have no communication with these merciless wretches for the part which they have possession off [sic] begins at the River Sanwin and ends at Cape Loho, the length near 300 & 50 miles, but there is but one place on this part but is full of Rocks that is Cetra Crew, and indeed there and here you cannot come to anchor without riding among Rocks, so that this whole coast has very little Trade, tho’ they have the greatest plenty of Ivory, here it is that the Vessels are so often cut off[f] by the Cannibals here & even while they are on board the Vessel we are obliged to have men under arms & under the deck conceal’d, we are so much afraid of an attack, our boats never go ashore, if they do, the men are certain that they will be immediately cut up, broild on the coals, and devour’d, Dogs here sell at a very great price nay sometimes £5 Sterling which they eat, In the very looks of these people you may perceive something that is Merciless and vile, at the very sight of one of them this morning my blood grew cold, their stature which is gigantic their look which is feirce [sic] and the Scars of which they have have [sic] an innumerable sight all over their body’s with the feathers &c hanging about them, I say is enough to terrify any body, A vessel dare not lay here above 2 days, unless they have a mind to be cut off & eat to peieces [sic] for they certainly will make an attempt on you, by

night, and I have been credibly inform’d by some of the people to windward that they often eat their own children, and if they ever get any of the black men to their Country of another nation tho’ not 10 miles from their own and Savages like themselves, they immediately kill them, they are forever at war, and all the people they get that way are devour’d in the same manner, and these people if taken by the opposite side are likewise eat, they being cannibals too . . . but a people that have all their lives been bred up to this miserable way can not be ever thought to be better tho’ the Captain informs me they are more civil than they formerly were. . . .

Saturday, May 19: Early this morning, after a very uneasy night, the wind driving us too nigh the Shore, we pass’d the high lands of the Cannibals, nigh which place is a Village call’d Drewin, where are a number of those wretches settled, in hopes of plundering & taking Vessels more for the sake of the human creatures on board then the goods which if they had they wou’d not wear, you may see them come down on the beach & watch you very narrowly, & no doubt longing for you, their looks in short every way answer the description of one of the furies, how dreadful then must be the situation of the men who pass this way, when they know their fate, if they run ashore, and having at this time of the year, violent Tranados which with the currant set right on the shore it makes it more so. . . . these people (which makes them more frightfull) shave their heads, Beards, & cut their Bodies especially their faces in different forms their woman [sic] when grown old or any way defective they immediately put to death, and Eat.

Monday, May 21: at night pass’d Cape La Hoe the land from St. Andrews to which is very low, and at a distance the Trees appear like Ships, This place is the utmost limit of the Ivory Coast, and the beginning of the Quaquia Coast and the End of the Cannibal Land.

Saturday, June 23 [At Annamabo]: Of all the Negroes I have yet met with I know of none so very superstitious as they are hereabouts, Th’ fictishes which are the same as the Negroes Domines at Gambia is th’. sole confidence, I was looking at my watch to day, a negro standing by, I put it to his Ear, and told him it was my fictish & that he wou’d immediately die, if he did not wash himself which he wth. the utmost haste immediately did.

Wednesday, June 27 [Near Annamabo]: Nigh this place lies a nation who are by the marks in th’. faces distinguish’d, they are call’d Duncoes, and are hated by every oth’. nation here abouts, they are actually what I have seen of them perfect fools, and are never by the Vessels bought, unless the master be a young Trader, and does not know them but as all the negroes are on the different Coast mark’d. it’s easy to remember them.

Tuesday, July 3: The negroes in these parts tho’ they are very ingenious, yet have not half that honesty and good nature, that the Gambia men are endowed with neither will you receive half that civility from them, indeed
it is not to be wondered at for are constantly drinking that enemy to man I mean Rum—& raw.

Saturday, July 7: The natives of the gold coast are not so black as other negroes but rather yellow, yet have more life and cheerfullness in them of any slaves you get except the Gambia.

Thursday, July 26: The young negro I yesterday mentioned [who though of royal blood had been stolen and sold in Barbados] was not very long ago redeem'd, by Mr. Crayton, one of the chiefs of Cape Coast who carried him to England where he has been made so much off [sic] as to . . . be invited even into the Prince of Wales's appartment, cou'd the Prince but see how we dispise black men nay even his very father, twou'd make him wonder.

Despite Chancellor's obvious antipathy toward the blacks, he was intrigued by their customs and pattern of living. A substantial portion of his Diary was given over to observations on native practices, some of which he viewed with sympathetic awe.⁹

Monday, June 4, 1750: At the end of the Rock whereon is built Cape Coast Castle is another call'd the Tabula against which the water beats with so much force that the noise thereof is hear'd all over the fort. To this Tabula the negroes of this coast repair once a Year to renew what they call their fictish's that is thr Gods, which is nothing but a peice [sic] of paper made into any fold, gold cast into Shape or any such foolish thing, this Tabula is by them thought to be the father of all thr. Gods, they have them likewise on other coasts, which I forgot to mention.

Tuesday, June 5: There is nothing in which the negroes so much differ in Africa as the make of their Canoes & paddles, here they are flat bottom'd every where else on the Coast thr. bottoms are round.

Friday, June 15: It is impossible to imagine how very dextrous the negroes are in catching fish with a net, this morning I watch'd one man throw one of 3 yards deep, and hale it in himself with innumerable fish.

Thursday, June 28 [Gold Coast]: They have here two different ways of burying the dead, by which they are distinguish'd, when a grand person dies they put them into a Chest where they keep them till such time they are ready to bury them, that is till they have Rum & blew balls, for the mourn-

⁹ Europeans had from the beginning exhibited a curiosity about native practices in Africa, and their descriptions grew less antagonistic as the years passed by. For a generally sympathetic treatment of African customs, see Joseph Hawkins, A History of a Voyage to the Coast of Africa and Travels Into the Interior of that Country; Containing Particular Descriptions of the Climate and Inhabitants, and Interesting Particulars Concerning the Slave Trade (Philadelphia, 1797).
ers then they take them out put them in a peice \[sic\] of cloth just as they
died for they never strip them, and Lay them on the ground (not in a Grave)
in a convenient place, there build a hut over 'em & cover it for fear of the
Rain with Indian corn leaves for 3 days then they destroy that hut and dig
a Grave wherein they put 'em and over that build another hut, then for
6 weeks successively mourn, then end.

Saturday, June 30: I yesterday promised to give an acct. in what manner
they bury their kings, it is thus, when they are first dead they keep it a
great secret that the natives may not know it, for the death of a king as in
England makes a great alteration on state affairs, when he first dies, they
make a kind of a something, like our Grid Irons, whereon they lay him and
day after day they make a fire under him which melts him, his fat they ketch
in urns his body they in solemnity inter.

Monday, July 2: The negroes in this part of the world have a day they call
fictish day, which is Friday their Sunday, it is their custom at that time to
dress themselves in greens about their hatts which are straw, knees &
ankles, they likewise whenever they \[sic\] is a scarcity of fish, lay what they
call a fictish, for 6 weeks, during which time no one can catch a fish with a
net but with a hook as many as they please, this they do that there may be
sufficient to stock the vessels that lay here.

Saturday, July 21: Early this morning bought a turtle that weigh'd 200
weight, for 5 Gall Rum, the negroes never eat them, but look on them as one
of their Fictishis, tho they sell them to the English & they are so plenty
that every day you may dine on one of them.

Monday, July 30: Yesterday was reckoned among the negroes what they
call a great fictish day that is a day which day is appointed by the Capu-
cheers [officials] to be kept sacred to their God, it is appointed when the
Capucheer pleases, there are a set of men who are appointed to see no one
walks out but gold takers, till 4 o Clock in the afternoon if any of them are
found either in the publick paths or Streets they are sold for Slaves the next
day, let them be whom they will, thus they keep the poor low creatures in
subjection that they are even afraid to carry Rum on Shore without sending
some to the head Capucheers, whom they call their masters.

Tuesday, July 31: When 4 o Clock the time I mentioned yesterday comes
they begin a battle with Sticks & Stones in which a number very often get
not only broken bones, but even loose \[sic\] their lives, this brings on a
palabar [meeting or negotiation] which is not settled without a great Sum of
money paid to the Capucheers, by which as this battle is every weak \[sic\]
they get a good maintainence at the Coast of Annamaboo for at other
places there is no such Custom.
Thursday, August 2: The superstition of the negroes here is vastly surprising, they even put at the head of their Canoes, all the Bones of a Goat or any thing they kill, which is one of their fictishes, and in which they firmly believe.

Friday, August 17: I forgot to mention that the day I was at C. Coast was the day the fictish I mentioned was laid against catching fish with a net, was out, the fictish was a goat tail, it was carried in a fine clean bason laid on cotton, by a young woman, to the water side, and at the waters edge they fired one Volley, then danced then put the fictish into the muzzle of a gun and fir'd it away, after which there was rejoicing & firing & above one hundred Canoes out with nets to catch Herring.

Friday, September 14: The Capucheers I have mentioned already, and what they are, that is people in the greatest power Never one of them departs this life without having one or two people kill'd on the Spot in honour to him, and burnt in the manner of the antient's from which they take it.

It is evident from the above passages that native customs had undergone some change as a result of contact with Europeans. Funeral practices, for example, had been modified to the extent that goods obtained from white traders were crucial to the entire procedure. Chancellor noted other instances, too, of the European impact on native culture patterns:

Friday, June 29, 1750 [Gold Coast]: If a poor person dies in these parts, their friends are obliged to keep them till they can either beg money enough, or if they have a Slave sell it to get Rum, or nobody will appear at the funeral, during this time they keep them close lock'd in a chest.

Sunday, July 8: As soon as you arrive at Annamaboo, you will have negroes come off to you to desire you to take their Sons on board, to learn them English, which they generally do, & keep them in the cabbin to wait on you neither is there any thing, the negroes so much esteem as a negro who talks English, and by thr. country men they are very much esteem'd.

Monday, July 9: The negroes here were formerly as ravenous as those mentioned off of Cape Laho, but by the English Vessels being constantly here they are in some measure become naturalized, which has been very much to thr. advantage, for they are now not only acquainted with English Customs, but often send their Sons to England & have them again.

Tuesday, July 17: The negroes in this part of the world were formerly just such as mentioned at the first page of this Volume, but by the trade of the English with them, they are become the most civilized of any on the Coast it is impossible to imagine with what art and cunning they will case
brass even so nice as not to be discovered with the Touch stone, and a person
not well acquainted with their arts looses [sic] often above the one half of
what he buys.

White traders on the coast of Africa had definite advantages over
the natives with whom they conducted the exchange for slaves and
other goods. They fostered a native dependence on rum and Euro-
pean manufactured goods. Their superior technology and fire-power
served them well when disputes arose with the blacks. Yet the terms
of the slave trade, as those terms had been worked out over centuries
of trading, were such as to leave in the hands of the blacks consider-
able power. Chancellor became familiar with the pressures which
Africans could bring to bear on white traders, and he noted how in
countless ways the success of the slave trade was tied to decisions
made by the natives. The African trade was successfully conducted
precisely because it was a co-operative effort, an exchange between
equals:10

Thursday, June 7, 1950: I have forgot to mention that when the Negroes
take of Palabars, they mean counsels or the settling of a disagreement, what
puts me in mind of this a Palabar which the general of the Fort (Mr.
Roberts) and King Cudgjo whose town joins the Fort with his army are
gone to settle, at Dix Cove, the case was this there was some of [sic] English
boys at Dix Cove fishing as fish are on this coast extremely plenty at their
arrival on Shore, some of the Dutch boys insisted on some of their fish,
which they denied, on which blows arose, between them, and from this as
Pope says mighty things arise from trivial causes, so this has, for they have
even come to blows and the firing of great guns between the English and
Dutch forts . . . and on this acct. it is General Roberts and the army of
8 hundred Negroes are gone there, to endeavor to settle it.

Friday, June 22: There is no part of Africa, so plentifull as this Anna-
amboo, for as it is a place for Trade, they have Goats, Hogs Ducks, Fowls
and fish, so plenty Crabs Lobsters, &c. that you need not ever want fresh
provisions, at least those that have a mind to purchase them, At the back
of this lies Jnº. Corantie with an army of 130 thousand men with which he
commands the Country, but their [sic] is now an obstruction to trade, as one
of the kings is lately dead and they know not who to choose.

10 For other contemporary examples of native participation in and control of the slave
trade, see Francis Moore, Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa . . . (London, 1738); and
Axcedents in the Life of Nics. Owen on the Coast of Africa and America from the Year 1746
to the Year 1757"—(London, 1930).
Sunday, June 24: Here they call their Linguisters Gold takers because they attend you and see that you take none that is bad, they have no books here as they have to windward, for if they are ever detected in defrauding you of one penny they are made slaves of for Life, they are very little trusted here, but are obliged to leave a pledge which they often do to pay in such a time, if they do not, the pledge, tho' twice the value is yr. own, here likewise they trust the English very much for they take yr. note, if you can not get at the goods they want, tho' it be for a Slave.

Monday, June 25: This morning had on board the head men of the Towns here for their Customs which on the whole comes to near 100 ackees, you must against their coming on board prepare Beef or pork as much as they can eat and punch as much as they will drink and at their departure hoist your colours and salute them with your Guns, during the time they are on board it resembles an ale house all talkers no hearers, but it is wth. them ever so.

Tuesday, June 26: They have here a very good custom, among the Ships which the negroes have brought them to, for they never will come off to you after 4 o Clock but in the morning by day light, after wch. if any of the masters of the Vessels have any thing good or fresh to eat they at Sun Set hoist a jack & every body repairs there.

Wednesday, July 11: Early this morning the King of the Fantees call'd Jn°. Corantie sent his Canoe wth. 12 negroes for me, deny going I cou'd not, from the Ship to the Shore I was attended with the Singing of them, at my arrival I waited on Tho. Clifton Esq. chief of Annamaboo, and sent to let his Majesty know I was arriv'd, but I cou'd not see him till, in the afternoon, however I spent my time with Mr. Clifton in Contemplating how hard it is to get admission, to great people, his business wth. me on shore was to consult, in order to relieve a disorder he now has on but cou'd give him no hopes of any, it being incurable. . . .

Thursday, July 19: The negroes here have the same ill faculty attending them that other negroes have, Those who live at Annamaboo are call'd the trading men that is those that talk English, and they are sure if they sell a slave to keep one third of the goods from the Bushmen, that is that live in the bush or Country, and are ignorant not only of trade, but English.

Sunday, July 22: A few years ago there was a Vessel here call'd the floating factory, she came out compleatly fitted for 3 years, and sent out her boats or tenders, who brought Gold and Slaves innumerable, every year she sent home a Vessel wth. 4 hundred ounces of Gold, & 4 Hund. Slaves notwithstanding which she never paid any custa. nor any thing to the pond [?] for the vast quantity of water she used which gave the negroes the greatest uneasiness, and they were determin'd one way or other to be revenged, this Vessel was sent out in opposition to Cape Coast Castle.
Monday, July 23: This floating factory I say, carried on this trade near 3 years, with the success above mentioned but see how unstable this human affair was. The continual importunities of the negroes to the Captain of her obliged him to make some promise which he did & it was this that when he came ashore he wou’d give them his Leg, for he had but one, & he never design’d to go on shore, the worms, after they had Sent home the 3 Vessels had well eat her bottom, and She suddenly sunk, the men & master were obliged to take to their boats, and go on shore, where they were safely protected by the negroes, during which time they sent up to Cape Coast to beg for assistance, and the protection of those few things they had saved, this I say this was, something like a revolution of affairs to use for aid from those very persons they came out in opposition to, after having a promise from Cape Coast they were preparing to depart when the Capucheers or head man came to demand his promise which was his leg, and insisted on it or 100 ounces of Gold, the Last of which he chose to part with, then proceeded to Cape Coast, where he was protected.

Friday, August 10: There are two nations here one call’d Shantees the other Fantees, the former extending as far as the kingdom of Morocco, but the passage down to the Fantees has been stop’d this 7 years by Poco the King, but he being dead the Capucheers have made a peace, and imagine the passage will be open in 6 weeks, and his army of 150,000 depart, by wch. Slaves will be plenty and got everyday. . . . The news of it’s being soon to be opened came this day.

Thursday, August 16: We now have no trade here on acct. of a palabar between the towns here, the reason thus, The men of Cormantine seiz’d a Canoe of C. Coast, & kept the men The men of Agar saw them & did not hinder it, therefore the men of Annamaboo seized them, which has caused a palabar & stopt the Trade.

Saturday, August 18: This boat [a long boat] was sent away to Barsaw there to settle a palabar Capt. Rolison had occasioned by paniaring [stealing] some old Capucheers, the negroes thereon seized some of his people, but he went away and left them to the rage of the negroes, who every day gave them the Bastinado, when Capt. Boats, whose long boat was then absent, came down they paniard some of his people too, as Capt. Boats, cou’d not make up the palabar then, but when his long boat returnd sent her wth. the value of 10 Slaves, who settled it and redeem’d the poor white men, who wou’d have been sold as Slaves in the back parts of the country, this affair will tis suppos’d occasion bloodshed between Capt Boats & Capt. Rolison.

Wednesday, September 12: To endeavour to lower the price of the Slaves we came to a Resolution to let the Negroes have no Rum, and they in their turns will let none of us have any water, or Corn so that we seem to be de-
termin’d on something but believe they will weather us out, for they can better go with out Rum then we without Corn or Water. . . .

November 23: This day determin’d to fall the price of Slaves which provokes the Negroes so much that they will neither let us, have Water nor Corn.

Relations with native Africans, pivoting around the exchange of goods, were often turbulent, and ranged from the use of economic pressure to the seizure of individuals. The mechanics of trade between blacks and whites could be confused and chaotic, the more so because on neither side were there well-defined organizations or lines of authority. In 1749, when Chancellor reached the coast of West Africa, the English trade to that continent had been open to private traders for fifty years, since 1698. Further, the African trade had long been characterized by rivalry and competition between various European nations. In Chancellor’s Diary there is mention of Dutch, Danish, Portuguese and French slaving vessels, to say nothing of those ships from England and the various American colonies. The result was a very complex situation, involving unstable and changing conditions of trade. Chancellor gave much attention to the international aspects of the African trade:

Wednesday, May 23: When you are here you may [see] a Castle standing upon a rising ground, at the End of a red hill, This Castle is call’d Brandenburg & belongs to the Dutch Netherlanders, coming from Sea in a Sunshiny day the Castle affords a beautifull prospect but when you are abreast of it, it cannot be seen at all on acct. of a great high rock that lies before it. In the Evening we were obliged to come to an anchor on acct. of a Trenados coming on, tho’ within 3 or 4 leagues of the Fort at which place we design to stop to put off some of our Provisions.

Tuesday, May 29: After you get around Cape 3 Points the Land again trenches to the Eastward . . . about 4 leagues round the Cape lies a Dutch castle at A quedah off which place in the Evening we anchor’d and sent our boat to the Castle to see if there was any trade.

June 1: The Castle [Akwidah] is situated at the bottom of a hill on the top of which where the General resides is a small battery they are both well fortified by art and nature have 900 soldiers, 4 bridges which at any time they draw up, and prevent your getting in, these bridges with 200 soldiers have come to hand since the war, they being afraid of an Invasion from the French.
Saturday, June 2: 3 or 4 days ago arriv'd 4 French men at Annamaboo, which is a place they have not liberty to Trade at which the English Ships [sic] let them know, by driving them away after the exchange of a few Shot.

Wednesday, June 6: Disposed of great part of our flower to some french Vessels that now lay here, for Gold.

Saturday, June 16: In the afternoon a Dutch Ship arrived here bound to Annamaboo, which will make the 17th Sail there, 4 here at C. Coast, and 2 at the mine all which places are in sight of one another, so that there is scarce any trade at all, and some of the Vessels have lain here 10 months, and have not 100 Slaves.

Wednesday, August 29: This day at noon, carry'd 5 men Slaves, on board the long boat, bound to Widah there to trade with the Portuguese for Tobacco and then to proceed to Accra where we meet her.

Sunday, September 2, to Monday, September 10: Some Vessels seeing no Trade are gone to Leward and windward, others not meeting with success to windward are come here, so that all Africa is at present overrun with Ships, and no trade to be had.

Sunday, Sept. 16: There has lately been a grand palabar here between a Dutch Capt. the Dutch and English Capt. Le gard & Capt. Rust had a palabar who sh'd. be Commodore but cou'd not agree, words arose between them, on wch. Le gard left his Vessel on wch. he was then on board, and went on board the English the next day wch. was yesterday he hoisted English colours made an Entertainment for all the English Capts & fired under English colours. The whole Fleet of English saluted him 7 Times & this day he was entertain'd on board an English Vessel, with firing of Guns wch. he return'd and hoisted a broad pendant, at mast head.

Saturday, September 22: This morning the Commanders of the British and American fleets rec'd advice from the General of C. Coast Castle, that there was a frenchman to windward coming down to intercept our Trade. In the afternoon a Sail appear'd on wch. every Englishman in the Rhode got ready for an Engagement & myself got all our guns on bre [sic] side The Captain being on board the Commodore. [The vessel turned out to be a Dutchman.]

November 14-19: [On November 14] came down 2 Frenchmen to Fort Maure, the Ship is that I mentioned p. 147 Vol: 1 they are come determined to Trade at Annamaboo, several messages have pass'd from Cape Coast to the Commanders here but Capt. Wall was this day Nov 18 1750 sent up to deny them coming into this Rhode, in whose absence I got every thing ready for an Engagement. Novr. 19th The Capt. return'd with this answer, that the King of France cou'd spare powder and ball, & they wou'd use it, this reply provok'd us, and in the night in Company with Capt. Darbyshire,
Capt. Powers (of which I was Lieutenant) and Capt. Boats we weigh'd Anchor, in order to come to an Engagement, in the morning by day light we came to, Capt. Darbyshire on the Starboard side of the Ship Capt. Boats at her Stern, Capt. Powers on the Starboard Side the Snow, and the Wolf Sloop at her Stern, Orders were sent for them to depart which was answer'd with a Shot, and the Engagement began, with all the force and Resolution of Englishmen and having play'd away with the loss of our rigging and Sails for two hours we came to a Cessation of Arms, but they like cowardly Dons, only did it to prepare for a brisker attack, wch. exasperating us to the greatest Degree, we again began with red hot shot, determin'd to die or conquer, In the midst of it our Topmast was Shot away, and our maintopsail yard, went over the side, two or three of our men ran below, but I brought them up, and fix'd them on the Arning in the very heat of the Battle, one of them got behind a large Copper while the Shot were continually playing against it tis true I was much intimadated at first, but the whistling of the Shot carryd my fears away Our Slaves being confin'd below, there was little danger of their being hurt, The last broadside we gave the Ship which was not nighest to us, which she return'd with equal fury with her small arms, and in which I rec'd four small Shot in my Legs, but I did not feel it, till it was over. At ½ after 7 they struck, upon these conditions that we wou'd let them fill their water, which we consented to, and in the Evening a noble Entertainment was made on board the Ship, to which the Capts. & Officers were invited and having well sousd ourselves with their Claret, they made each of us a present of a lac'd hat, & the next morning having saluted us with 13 Guns, and departed to Leward, we to our Stations at Annamaboo, and rec'd the Compliments of the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, for this peice [sic] of Service, but this was poor Satisfaction to my wounded Legs.

[Sometime in December, 1750]: The affair with the French men did not end on our driving them from Mauree but Capt. Darbyshire drove them from thence [to] the Mine where they anchord tho' fir'd at by the fort this fort has given orders to the war canoes to take all private trad'r8 so that our long boat every day expected is in danger of being taken.

[Late December, 1750]: The quarrel between us and the Dutch at Butters has occasioned great bloodshed, Our long boat, in his passage to Assine was attack'd by the war Canoes but after an Engagement of 8 hours, she got clear & proceeded on her Voyage the day after which Capt. Darbyshires boat & Capt. Boats that went with provision to Dixcove were attack'd and a most bloody Engagement they had Capt. Darbyshire's boat had one man kill'd Capt. Boats mate shot in the head but they did not come away before they had landed their Provision and burnt a small Dutch negro town, Our own mate was shot across the neck.

Within the context of this keen competition and jockeying for position the purchasing of slaves proceeded. Trade could be dulled by
the presence of too many vessels in a particular area, African politics might temporarily disrupt the acquisition and sale of slaves, or trade could be halted by failure to agree on prices or trading rights. Fourteen months were necessary for the *Wolf* to get in its complement of slaves, which, as Chancellor emphasized, was a long time indeed:

*Thursday, May 24, 1750 [At the Dutch Fort Brandenburg]:* I have now as much to do as I can well manage, having no less than 11 Slaves ill of the measles, & two of the dropsy which were bought by the mate at the River Sestos, and will no doubt depart soon, it is very odd that the negroes can in a few days can [*sic*] patch up a dropsical child as if nothing [ailed] him & sell him for sound, which they often do, & these two have had some time, tho he didn’t see it.

*Wednesday, June 6:* our Gold we buy by weight our Rum sells for a Tacku a quart which is the weight of a pea, 4 Taku makes 5 Shill:

*Thursday, June 7:* This afternoon sold some of our Provision to a French Ship here for 2 Slaves.

*Tuesday, June 19:* As to Slaves there are none, and 7 Rum Vessels yet we are here, without any thoughts of going further unless to Annamaboo.

*Thursday, June 28:* This morning had the good fortune to get a Slave for a hhd. of Rum half water.

*Saturday, June 30:* This morning bought 3 boys of a very good size.

*Friday, July 13:* This morning rec’d on board 2 boy Slaves for Rum from Annamaboo.

*Saturday, August 4:* A Person of any sagacity may easily penetrate into the negroes they imagine the English have a fictish that lies in their heads, & I have even known an Instance since I have been here, of a Captain’s not having his Rum mix’d, told them, his fictish wou’d not let him buy the Slave that was offered but he wou’d think for his head, which is the saying against the next day, at wch. time his Rum was ready.

*Wednesday, August 22:* It is very remarkable that no Slaves have died this year on the Coast, but those bought at the river Sestos, Capt. Harrison who has lost 70, were those purchased there, ... Capt Boats, who lost 35 the same our own, that were purchas’d there have died, and what is more remarkable is that they have all died of the same disorders.

*October 23, 1750:* we purchas’d 2 very Young Slaves.

Those slaves purchased and placed on board the *Wolf* required care—they had to be fed and kept reasonably clean—and almost con-
stant surveillance. The threat of a slave uprising was always present, especially while vessels remained near the coast where a successful mutiny would permit the captured Negroes to return with relative ease to the mainland. Chancellor was haunted by the fear of a slave uprising and, in fact, before the Wolf got safely off the coast, she was the victim of an abortive uprising:

**Wednesday, June 6, 1750:** The chief of provision that is got here for our Slaves is Indian Corn which is severall ways dress’d, that ground is call’d by the negroes Cankee, this is the third time we have changed our Provisions since we came on the Cast [sic], which all Ships do.

**Monday, June 11:** Going into the Steerage this morning found a little girl dead, she went down last night very well which made me suspect some foul play, and on turning about found her right ear bloody got my Instruments and open the part where I found the Temporal Bone fractur’d, on an Inquary among the Slaves found one of the women had beat her in the night.

**Tuesday, July 24:** It is the greatest mystery to me that can be on what account we stay here especially as we have 60 Slaves, near 200 ounces of Gold, & 40000 wt. of wax, & lime enough to get home but rather than do any thing for the interest the Captain came on I think we are loosing [sic] every day.

**Tuesday, August 7:** Our Slaves by their long continuance on board the Vessel, where they are obliged to set still all day long are so cramped that this day I was obliged to bath 7 of their knees, with warm water before they cou’d walk, this they are not subject to in other Vessels.

**Thursday, August 30:** By the departure of the long boat we are depriv’d of a number of our hands so that there only remains 2 on board before the mast, and this day the Capt went to Dinner & Supper on board the Sylvia of Bristol, and left me only 2 men on board and 44 Slaves, that during his absence I am oblig’d to see my pistols prim’d & loaded & not stir before the Bulkhead.

**Monday, September 17:** This is the fifth day that we have had the weather excessive bad, with the water over our decks, which I imagine to be the reason of 3 [slaves] being now ill of the pleurisy, The Capt out of the Vessel & this day not a white man on board but myself unless 2 that are ill.

On October 5, 1750, the Wolf left Annamabo and sailed easterly along the Gold Coast bound for Lagos. At two in the morning on

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October 11 the vessel turned westward to return to Annamabo, but because of unfavorable winds she did not reach Annamabo until the twelfth. Sometime between October 5 and October 10 the slaves on board the Wolf tried to overpower the ship's crew and regain their freedom. The whole episode is unclear because at this crucial point four pages are missing from the Diary. Chancellor does provide some evidence on the mutiny, however, and indicates that the second mate, Thomas Gelston, was the ringleader. The passage which follows picks up at the point where the Diary resumes:

timely assistance that ever took up Cutlass or pistol, and I cannot help admiring how great my resolution of forbearance was, when I saw the second mate come out of the women's Room, for had I not just recall'd myself, in less than a second of time, I had certainly annihilated [sic] the nothing less of his Soul & Body, for his Cowardice but we cannot without the greatest reason be perswaded but that he is deep in the plot, how happy was it, they did not rise the day before when the Capt. was ashore at the fort. . . . I cannot help mentioning that during the time of this action one of the little boys to whom I had taken a liking and he to me, attended me with Balls Pistol and Cutlass, & during the time that I was fainting with the loss of blood got me some water to wch. I attribute my being able to keep myself up, nor can I mention without being affected how one of our Slaves that jump'd over board drowned himself, for finding that in spite of himself he swam he pull'd his frock over his head, & there held it while he had strength, which effectually finished him, & this unhappy affair. . . . Having safely anchor'd in Annamaboo Rhode & rec'd the congratulations of our preserved lives from the British and American Commanders, the first thing to be thought off [sic] was the refitting our much damaged Vessel . . . [Concerning the second mate] we have discover'd that he has been the only instigation to the Slaves rising having perswaded them to it, with a promise of carrying them home again, so that it appears why he was not concern'd with us in the defence of the Vessel, but was secur'd below, While affairs were in this I may say unhappy condition, we rec'd an acct. that the Slaves that got away in the yawl were taken so that we may every day with the vile man before mentioned (& concern'd in the plot) expect them. . . . Having some conversation with the rebel negroes last night they unfolded the whole mystery of the Insurrection which was contriv'd by the second mate in revenge to the usage he rec'd from the Capt, since the loss of the long boat, as he told them, a notion of their being to be eat in Europe he had likewise instill'd into them, they were to put thr. design in Execution the day we departed from this but they wou'd not consent till part by his promise and part by thr. fear of being eat in Europe he prevail'd, The other white man concern'd will soon be here, & if he turns kings Evidence, the second mate will
take his Trial on board a man of war expected daily . . . [Oct. 30] on wch. day I went to Cape Coast and return'd the next with the white man that went away in the yawl he having walk'd there from the Fort at Winnebah, and the next day he being extremely ill, in a Salivation, discovered me an acct. of the whole affair whose deposition I took, The second mates intention was to procure the Gold dust to himself, and then by putting to death the white men, turn pirate with the Vessel, and was the very person that gave the Cutlass they had got to them, face to face they were brought but he denied every circumstance they upon oath positively declared to his face, How this unhappy affair will end, Heav'n & the Sovereign director can only tell, the Capt. recover'd of his wounds myself able to put my foot to the ground & the Cooper is likewise recovered of his fracture. . . . This morning January 16th 1750/1 we sent on shore to the Castle our troublesome Gent. that caused the Insurrection among our Slaves, Thos. Gelston, native of Belfast in Ireland, to be sent to the man of war with our accusations against him, there to take his Trial, oblig'd again to put our Slaves into the chain immagining that they have some thoughts of renewing their attempts on us.

William Chancellor was unable to limit his activities to those directly involving the care of the slaves. He was forced by the very nature of the African trade to serve in numerous capacities—as soldier, trader, and negotiator. Yet his major responsibility was to oversee the slaves, to nurse them when they became ill and to strive to maintain them in good health so that their sale would bring maximum prices. It is not surprising, therefore, that his Diary should focus on the health of the slaves. He worried and fretted as he watched over them, and often seemed to express a genuine humanitarian concern. His reputation as a professional surgeon, however, was always close to the surface; dead or sickly Negroes would cast reflections on his competence:

_Saturday, May 26, 1750 [At the Dutch Fort Brandenburg]:_ At 12 o Clock last night it began to rain and continued this whole day, however we hoisted out the yawl, and sent her to the Castle in the midst of it, it wou'd have came to my share to have gone in her, had not we so great a number of the Slaves ill, which are 37 in number, besides the Capt. and two of the Sailors, Judge how I am perplex'd now.

_Tuesday, May 29:_ On the 26th of this month I mentioned 37 of the young Slaves being ill of the measles the whole number makes now forty three, and this very Evening a Girl of about 5 years old departed with them, and imagine that more will tip off.
Wednesday, May 30: This morning early going down among the Slaves, I found a boy dead, at noon another, and in the afternoon, another. Oh Reader, whoever thou art, it is impossible for you to conceive or me to describe the Torture I sustain at the loss of these Slaves we have committed to a watry grave one of wch. boys was to have been my own.

Saturday, June 2 [At Cape Coast Castle]: Going down into the hold this morning, found one of the boy Slaves dead, whom we committed to a watry birth, I may truly say unhappily for me, the uneasiness it has gave me has almost distracted me oh how great a misfortune was it to loose [sic] the long boat had she been saved we shou'd not have come this far, to see 29 come on deck and hardly able to crawl must be affecting to one who has the care of them.

Tuesday, June 5: Early this morning found a little girl about 3 years old dead, whom I opened immediately and found in her Intestines 7 Worms some of the[m] 12 & 13 Inches roll'd up together in a bundle, she had had the flux & Measles.

Saturday, June 9: At 3 o Clock this morning going down among the Slaves found one of the girls dead.

Wednesday, June 13: at noon dyed the girl I have mentioned of Worms, whom I opened and found the Pylorus or neck of the Stomach chock'd full of them, this makes the twelfth Slave we have lost since our fatal day of beginning sickness May 1.

Thursday, June 21: This morning hoisted our Jack and pendant (ne'er which time died a girl Slave of that vile disorder the Flux,) and at noon a boy of the Dropsy.

Sunday, July 1: This morning died a boy ... my medicines with the Sickness I have had on board are near expended neither had I any proper for his disorder, for he died of Stone in his Kidneys & which after he was dead I opened and took out, it is very affecting thing that I who have the Sole care of the Slaves and know what is proper must see them suffer & even die.

Friday, July 13: at noon threw over a boy Slave who died of the white Flux.

Wednesday, July 18: There is scarce a day now passes without my being in the utmost anxiety the reflection of the Slaves we have lost (which wou'd not have been sick had not the Capt. gone on board a Vessel where the infection was,) on the other hand the dread of having the Small Pox among them which is now in the Rhode and on board which Vessel the Capt very often is, this if it shou'd it shou'd [sic] get on Bd. among our little creatures, now on the recovery from the Flux will I am afraid, cause us to repent the having staid so long to no purpose on the Coast of Africa.
Friday, July 20: I forgot to mention that yesterday to add to many misfortunes we threw over board a child of 3 years old, she first had the Measles, then Green flux, then white then bloody in 3 months, which made her so very weak as to be [un]able to lift her hand to her head. At my departure from York, I was ignorant that any children were to be purchased so that my medicines are very harsh for them.

Monday, August 6: This morning went on board Capt Rowes a Ship belonging to Bristol to see if I cou'd by any means get medicines for those now on board that are sick, but notwithstanding all my Endeavours cou'd not, In short it is a very melancholy prospect to see every body sick and not have a medicine to help them and the thoughts of being out 6 months longer with* medicines is a miserable thought.

Thursday, August 9: This morning went on board Capt Boats, who has lost 35 Slaves, nor is there a Vessel on the Coast, but what have lost 20 owing to the Rains going off so soon, and that excessive foggy bad weather we have had, 4 Slaves I now have one of which is choak'd with worms, but I have not that to give her, to kill them, my case is hard to see Young Creatures suffering in this manner in short it renders my life a misery to me.

Saturday, August 11: This Evening died a girl Slave from which before her death I took 12 large worms.

Sunday, August 12: This morning saild our Commodore Capt. Meadows for Jamaica wth. 250 Slaves, about which time died a little girl who has within this month had 3 different sorts of Fluxes, I took from her likewise some worms, nor have we one now on board of the Slaves but what have them, owing to the bad water we are obliged to drink.

Monday, August 13: I can not here once more help regretting that loss I am at for Medicines, and the uneasiness it must consequently give me to see the Slaves in want and even die, never since May have I had either Astringent, Cathartick, Sudonsick or anadyne that with what can I practice, but ill natured people will be apt to censure me, for thr. deaths tho I can give them nothing but good nursing. To my mortification died this morning a girl of the Dropsy, of which we now have 4 ill.

Tuesday, August 14: The loss of the Slaves above mentioned, tho' I had not medicines to practice, as I knew, it wou'd be a reflection on me, threw me into the utmost uneasiness I therefore sent a book wth. thr. disorders Symptoms & Medicines apply'd to the Surgeon of the Commodore to peruse who sent me an answer greatly to my satisfaction & somewhat eas'd me.

Monday, August 20: That no censure whatever might fall on my actions in regard to the sick slaves I sent a Copy of their disorders to the Surgeon of the Snow Sylvia who now lies here, to know wether any thing more cou'd be done for their preservation but at my return from Cape Coast found a
Letter from him, in which he told me that had he the care of them he cou'd
do no more, and that according to the disorders he saw them inflicted with,
he thought I did what was just.

Thursday, August 23: Early this morning went to Cape Coast to return
some bad gold I had rec'd there and imprudently left it again at 11 o Clock
in the very heat of the Sun so impatient I was to see how my Slaves went on,
but tho I suffered for it in having all the skin off my face, by the Sun, yet at
my arrival on board found a girl Slave dead of the Dropsical number, con-
cerning whom I had some talk with Mr. Hipsly Surgeon of Cape Coast
Castle, but he cou'd say no more then that I was right in my prescriptions.

Friday, August 24: This morning I had the grief to see another of the
dropsical number thrown overboard, for whom I again today had a con-
sultation with the Surgeon of the Burne of Liverpool, but he to my satisfac-
tion, approved too of my proceedings which in due time shall be mentiond.

Monday, August 27: I did not imagine that it was in the power to alter so
very much as the deaths of the Slaves I mentioned have, in short their loss
has thrown me into a melancholy out of [which] I shall not easily recover, an
Account of their disorders & medicines apply'd I am now writing in order to
present to the owners at my arrival in America.

Wednesday, August 29: At night died a boy of the Dropsy.

From Sunday, September 2, to Monday, September 10: Ever since the day
above mentioned have we been laying here, without the least prospect of
purchasing any Slave Those on board continue well and hope to keep them
so, having bought a Chest of Medicines.

Tuesday, September 11: This afternoon a Snow arriv'd here belonging to
Liverpool, who has met with the same ill success that has attended every
body, that is in her Slaves for she has lost 75 of the measles only, out of 120,
for my part I cannot, nor shall not till at my arrival in America I make it
appear that the manner in wch. I proceeded with the Slaves was according
to the Rules of Physick.

Monday, September 24: Notwithstanding the Dutch are thought the most
unpolite people, yet they are very complaisant for this 6 days running every
morning, Six different Dutch Ships have had their coulours half mast, for
some of their Officers dead, So very fatal is Guinea to some, my Slaves now
all well except 3 which number I have ever had ill since the first of May.

Saturday, September 29: In the Evening threw over old Dick of 65 years
bt. at the Searces, hardly able to walk when purchas'd he died of pure old
age, and nothing else.

November 23: Have now great Success with the Slaves having not lost one
this 2 months, I have discover'd a Recipe for that Vile Disorder the Flux.
January 29, 1751: This morning to our Satisfaction found we had got into the Trade winds, which will in some measure hasten our so tedious voyage, and relieve me from Slaves most of whom are now very sea sick, & trouble enough to me, of Consequence I remember and it may be seen that in Physick I have had anxiety enough, and I think Surgery has now a mind too to try me, for I have no less than 14 with Imposthumes, Tho I hope to overcome them, and 3 women with bad humours in their right Breasts, one with a small cancer which I have dissected and is on the Recovery.

Chancellor left no doubt about his own feelings regarding this African voyage. On January 18, 1751, the day the Wolf began her homeward journey, he wrote: “At day light the Capt. on board and at 8 oClock we weigh’d anchor, in order to leave the Coast of Africa, thanks to God bound to New York, and in Company with Capt. Powers bound to the West Indies and I think I can now say that few in their first voyage have met with the misfortunes I have since my departure from America.” He was moved to put his thoughts into verse:

Safely departed Afric’s shore at last,
I feel nor think on Dangers I have past,
And hope in time, to reach my native shore,
And never think of these dread voyages more.

Several days later, again considering the events of the past months, he wrote: “Nor do I think I can possibly have satisfaction for the miseries I have undergone this voyage.” And true it was that Chancellor had experienced nearly all that a slaving voyage to Africa had to offer: disputes with his captain, slaves who were sick and frequently died, a serious slave mutiny, and bloody encounters with foreigners, all stretched over more than a year of slaving on the coast.

But this combination of events did not turn him against the trade. Indeed, he hardly felt it necessary to justify the man-stealing and transportation of slaves across the Atlantic. There are few Diary entries that touch on this issue, but those that do reveal that Chancellor was not a critic of the slave trade:

Thursday, September 13, 1750: It is accounted by numberless people that a voyage to Africa in regard to the purchasing Slaves is very vile, but in my opinion and I think I know, it is not in the least so, tis redeeming an unhappy people from inconceivable misery under which they continually labour, and from those miseries of life into which they are every day precipitated. . . .
Saturday, September 15: A king very often takes it into his head to kill any body, when he dies numberless poor unhappy creatures are sacrificed to him, out of whose skulls they drink Rum as soon as clean’d, since I have been here Jno. King of the Coranties whom in his Illness I attend has sacrificed several on his recovery from it, and will soon will [sic] more go, that I say they are better in being servants to the English than in this continuall dread of Death.

The passage home was long and tedious, lasting 113 days. In the fourteen months of slaving 135 slaves had been purchased at various places between Gambia and Annamabo. Of these, sixty died or were traded on the coast before the Wolf even departed Africa, leaving seventy-five slaves for the middle passage. Only two slaves were lost on the voyage to New York. One of these was a Negro man who during a strong wind was put to holding the gaff: "unluckily struck him overd. we put about immediately . . . then threw over a small yard but our Endeavours to save him were in vain, for he was soon drowned." The other was a boy slave who died on May 5 "of a long and Lingering Illness . . . Consumption."

The slaves who survived the Atlantic crossing did so despite short provisions and long periods without fresh air or airings on deck. Chancellor wrote on May 2 that "Our condition in short is very deplorable . . . and our Slaves grown excessive weak, some not able to stand so very low with cold & want of Provision & water, & shd. we not have a fair wind in a few days we shall lose [sic] some of them having been confind 22 days below & never on Deck." Fortunately, at noon the next day they saw a sail which we spoke with and found it to be the Peggy Capt John Douglass from Philadelphia to Antigua, he was so kind as to hoist out his boat, and bring on board of us, we having acquainted him with our successless condition 95lb. of Bread 2 Hogs, 2 Barrels of flower, 2 ps. of Beef some Rum, Water & Butter, the latter of which was actually May butter to us, this happy favour thank God will keep us up till our arrival, By him I heard of the welfare of my Friends in Philad. . . .

At this time the Wolf was in the area of latitude thirty-eight, south of Delaware Bay. When the Wolf left Cape Coast Castle for home, she had been blown by contrary winds to the southeast, in the latitude of Fernando Po. The vessel had dropped south of the equator on February 12, 1751, recrossed it moving north and then once more
sailed under the line on February 14. The equator was crossed for the last time on March 8, with the Wolf steering away to the northward. By March 23 the sloop was in the latitude of Barbados, where Captain Wall had originally intended to put in, but at the time provisions were still holding up well and he decided to sail by the island. This caused Chancellor to write with evident disappointment that he had “lost all hopes of seeing that beautiful place and to my grief tho not stopping hastens me home.” The tropic of cancer was crossed the morning of March 31, “on the strength of which barbicu’d a very pretty pig, and drink’d the health of all our Friends that love us, and all that we love.” Two weeks later, on April 13, the Bermudas were sighted: “It was very pleasant to sail by the whole South side of it and take a view not only of the Land Houses but people on horseback, boats a fishing but much pleasanter to think I really saw, a part inhabited by white men, after my so long Absence.”

Gale winds had been encountered in the West Indies and the Wolf had suffered extensive damage. As the sloop moved northwesterly toward New York, contrary winds from the northwest prolonged the voyage. A northwest wind on April 22, for example, drove them 30 miles to the south. And on April 26 Chancellor wrote that “This morning a strong N.W. came on, and is now driving us to the Southward, where as we shou’d have been in soundings this night, unhappy us. . . .This N W lasted 48 hours 53 miles drove to the Southw’d.” But on May 6 he could relate that “This Evening to our great Satisfaction got Soundings 28 fathom water Black Sand.” The next day they had “a joyful sight of the Long wish’d for Land,” though again a northwest wind “came on in an hour after and drove us out of sight of it.” Finally, on May 10, “at 4 in the afternoon anchor’d with a Salute of 7 Guns of the City of New York, I now sincerely think that if ever I said with sincerity, I ought to say now Glory be unto thee O Lord God.” “Thus,” Chancellor wrote on the last page of his diary,

have I given a succinct account of a Long and tedious voyage of 20 months and a passage of 113 Days, by which it is plain, that as some men are distinguish’d by Riches, Honours, and the Like, others may be as remarkable in the degrees of thr. Affliction, and may be forced to pass not only days but years of that which we call Life in such a manner, that if it were not for higher considerations, it wou’d be far better not to be, that in the very best
of man’s years, in the time of hopes, prospects and advantages a man be so wretched as to be debarr’d the Capacity of making use of them, and in a sense buried alive, but thro’ all afflictions there is a comfort which is, that a generous Education administers infallible remedies under the greatest of our miseries, and tho’ fortune may sometimes stagger the Virtue of such as have been so educated in times of Prosperity, yet she cannot take from them that Serenity & Resolution which never forsakes them in the days of their greatest Adversity.

For William Chancellor the adventure was climaxed by a notice which appeared in the *New York Gazette* on May 13, 1751; for the Negroes the same announcement presaged a new adventure, a life of bondage in America. To be sold, the announcement read, “on Friday the 17th Instant, at 10 o’clock in the Morning, at the Meal Market. A Number of likely Negro Slaves, lately imported in the Sloop *Wolf* directly from Africa. Those that are not disposed of on that Day, will be sold at Publick Vendue the Friday following.”

**Oregon State University**

**Darold D. Wax**

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