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CAPE HENRY MEMORIAL SITE
Fort Story, Va.

By
Charles W. Porter
Assistant Historian

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There is ample evidence to prove that the colonists who settled at Jamestown, 13 May, 1607, made their first landing in Virginia at Cape Henry, 26 April, 1607 (old style.) Captain John Smith says in his Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles (London, 1627, reprinted Richmond, Va., 1819) I, 151:

"---But God the guider of all good actions, forcing them by an extreme storme to burl all night, did drive them by his providence to their desired Port, beyond all their expectations, for never any of them had seen that coast. The first land they made they called Cape Henry; where thirtie of them ^{recreating} ~~secreting~~ themselves on shore, were assaulted by five Salvages, who hurt two of the English very dangerously ..."

Samuel Purchas in Purchas His Pilgrimes (5 Vols., London, 1626-1626) IV, p. 1705, says much the same:

"---The first Land they made, they called Cape Henry; where anchoring, M. Wingfield, Gessnoll, and Newport, with thirtie others, ^{recreating} ~~secreting~~ themselves on shoare, Were assaulted by five Savages, who hurt two of the English very dangerously...."

George Percy's "Observations gathered out of a Discourse of the Plantation of the Southerne Colonie in Virginia by the English, 1606", Purchas His Pilgrimes (London, 1625) IV, p. 1585, gives a more detailed account;

"---The six and twentieth day of Aprill, about foure a clocke in the morning, wee descried the land of Virginia; the same day wee entred into the Bay of Chesupioe directly, without any let or hinderance; there wee landed and discovered a little way, but wee could find nothing worth the speaking of, but faire meadows and goodly tall Trees, with such Fresh-waters running through the woods, as I was almost ravished at the first sight thereof.

At night, when wee were going aboard, there came the Savages creeping upon all foure, from the Hills like Beares, with their Bowes in their mouthes, charged us very desperately in the faces, hurt Captaine Gabrill Archer in both his hands, and a sayler in two places of the body very dangerous.

"---The nine and twentieth day we set up a Crosse at Chesupioe Bay, and named that place Cape Henry."

Most of the very early accounts in describing Cape Henry speak of features common to that area today:

"The cape of this bay, on the south side, we call Cape Henry, in honour of that our most royall deceased prince, where the land shewes white hilly sand, like unto the Downes, and all along the shoare grows great plenty of pines and firre." (1)

(1) William Strachey, Gent., (1585-1618) The Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia. Reprint, Hakluyt Society, London, 1849, p. 28; Captain John Smith, The Generall Historie of Virginia, Bradley's edition, Edinburgh, 1910, I, p. 244. The "Downes" or Downs, probably refers to such a place as North Down, Kent. A down can be defined as a hill having a broad, treeless, grass-grown top and down-country as hilly land more or less overgrown with furze and brambles, and with copses along the slopes.

The shore-line of the point of the Cape at Cape Henry is at least three miles long (see map attached to this report). The colonists of 1607 could therefore have landed at a number of places along a three-mile stretch of beach. On the other hand the party went exploring and they penetrated "a little way" inland, far enough perhaps to come across the fresh water creeks and bays, about two miles inland, which may be the "Fresh-waters running through the woods" mentioned in Percy's narrative. The party explored all-day long, and one would naturally expect them to walk up and down the beach first of all. In the course of these wanderings they must at some time or other have come past or close by the location of the present memorial cross, this despite the fact that the original beach line has certainly cut back a great deal since 1607. According to the Chief Clerk at Fort Story, the shore-line of the Cape has receded two or three hundred feet since 1917. It is improbable that this rate has remained constant since 1607, because the lighthouse erected in 1791 is still reasonably far back from the sea; and when the second lighthouse was built in 1881, it was built closer to the water's edge, in front of the older light, as though the encroachment of the waves was not a thing to be feared. Nevertheless, the original landing place of 1607 may well be out in the Bay or out in the Ocean. Counterbalancing this is the fact that the Cape today has the same general outline that it had when the John Smith map was made in 1607; and the present topography simulates the sand hill country that the colonists saw when they landed at Cape Henry

line and the memorial. Or one could "fix" the dune by planting grass on it.

The Memorial itself consists of a large granite cross on a granite block base, which in turn rests on a flag-stone pavement bordered with a granite wall about two and a half feet high. The inscription is accurate:-

Here at Cape Henry First Landed in / America, upon 26 April 1607,
those / English Colonists who, upon 13 May 1607, / Established at James-
town, Virginia, the / First Permanent English Settlement / in America /
Erected by National Society Daughters / of the American Colonists /
April 26, 1935.

"Here at Cape Henry", I take it, means somewhere along the Cape, not the exact spot on which the monument stands.

While the granite base, the inscription, and the granite cross are quite appropriate, the writer doubts the wisdom of the encircling wall, which will probably act as a sand trap unless the dune is grassed.

Superintendent E. Floyd Flickinger by letter to the Director dated January 24, 1938, has asked that the Memorial area be added to the Colonial National Historical Park, and that the Service report favorably upon the Senate and House resolutions now pending, the effect of which would be to transfer the custody of the Memorial from Fort Story to Colonial. In this we concur. The area is too small to present problems of an administrative nature--it will be merely a matter of maintaining a small granite monument. There will be a small maintenance cost, due to stern

damage to the dune and to the granite wall and flagstone paving around the base of the monument, and grassing of the dune and a short section of sand fence may be needed as added measures of protection and maintenance. The Memorial completes the story of the Jamestown settlement and on that account is almost an essential appendage to the Colonial National Historical Park. While no one can say absolutely that the Memorial rests on the exact landing spot of April 26, 1607, or on the precise location of the cross of April 29, 1607, it certainly must be within the general area explored, April 26-29, 1607. Finally, the wording of the Memorial is such that it commemorates not a spot, but the historic landing at the Cape, wherever that may have been. The site is at least as good as any other memorial site that could be chosen to memorialize the same event.

The distance of the Memorial site from Yorktown is forty-one miles and from Jamestown by water it is about fifty-five miles. Since only a marker is contemplated, the distance is perhaps not excessive.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles W. Porter

Charles W. Porter,
Assistant Historian.



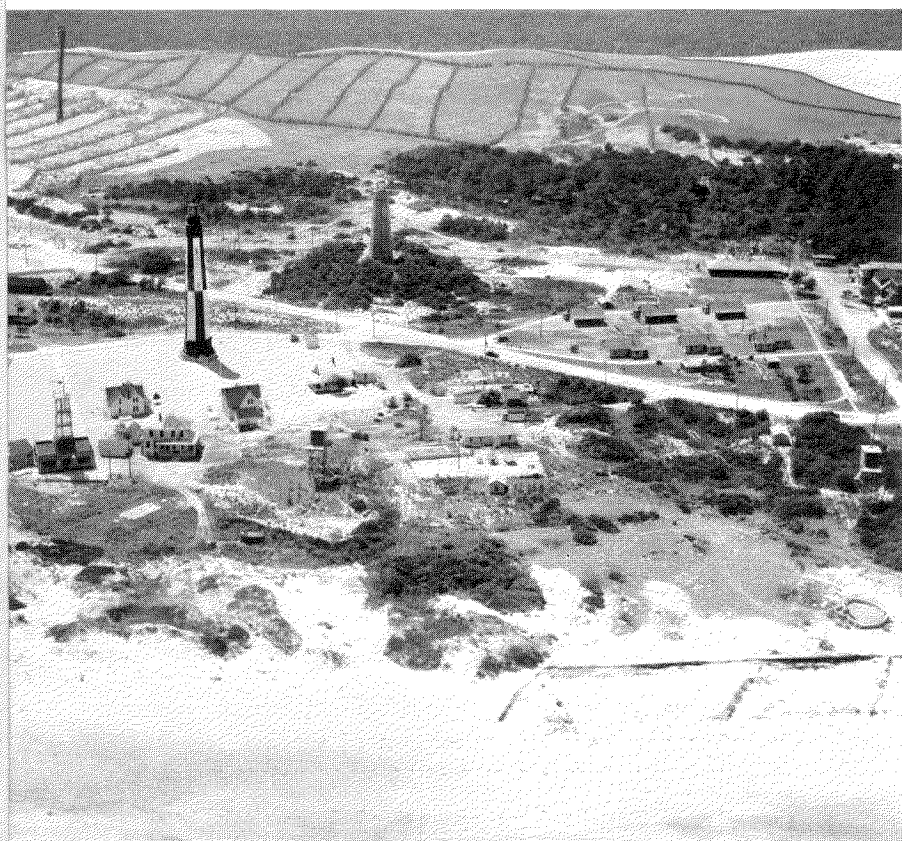
The Cape Henry Memorial Cross, Fort Story, Virginia



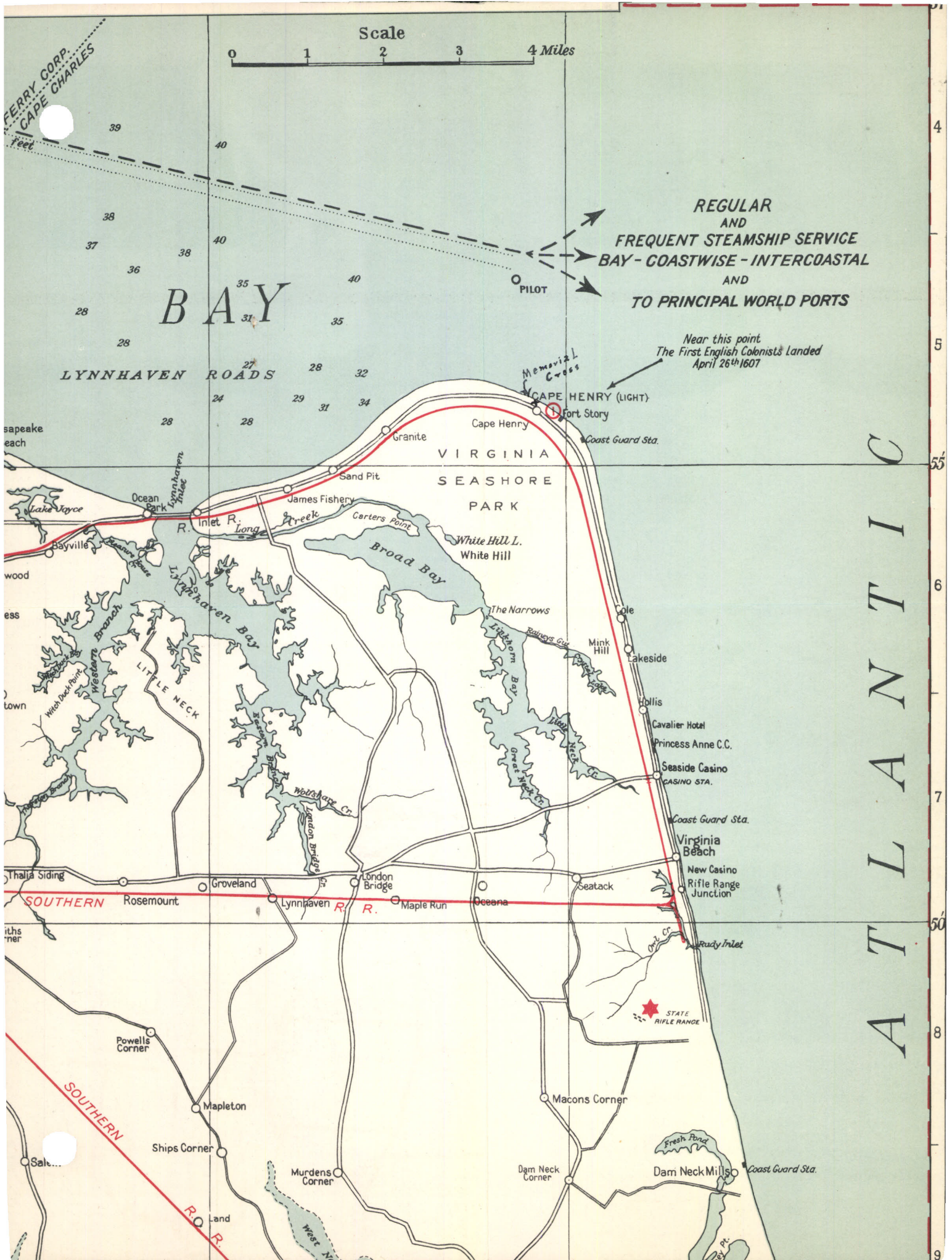
The Cape Henry Memorial Cross, Showing Its Relation to the Old and New Lighthouses at Cape Henry. Note How the Encircling Stone Wall Acts As a Sand Trap.



General View of the Cape Henry Memorial Cross, Showing Sand Dunes and the Sea.



Monumental
Cross



Scale

0 1 2 3 4 Miles

FERRY CORP.
CAPE CHARLES

BAY

LYNNHAVEN ROADS

REGULAR
AND
FREQUENT STEAMSHIP SERVICE
BAY - COASTWISE - INTERCOASTAL
AND
TO PRINCIPAL WORLD PORTS

Near this point
The First English Colonists Landed
April 26th 1607

Memorial
Cross

CAPE HENRY (LIGHT)
Fort Story

Coast Guard Sta.

VIRGINIA
SEASHORE
PARK

White Hill L.
White Hill

Broad Bay

The Narrows

Little Neck

Seatack

Oceana

Maple Run

London Bridge

Groveland

Rosemount

Thalia Siding

Powells Corner

Mapleton

Ships Corner

Murdens Corner

Dam Neck Corner

Dam Neck Mills

Fresh Pond

Coast Guard Sta.

Rifle Range

New Casino

Virginia Beach

Seaside Casino

Princess Anne C.C.

Cavalier Hotel

Hollis

Lakeside

Mink Hill

Rainey's Gut

Carters Point

Sand Pit

Granite

Cape Henry

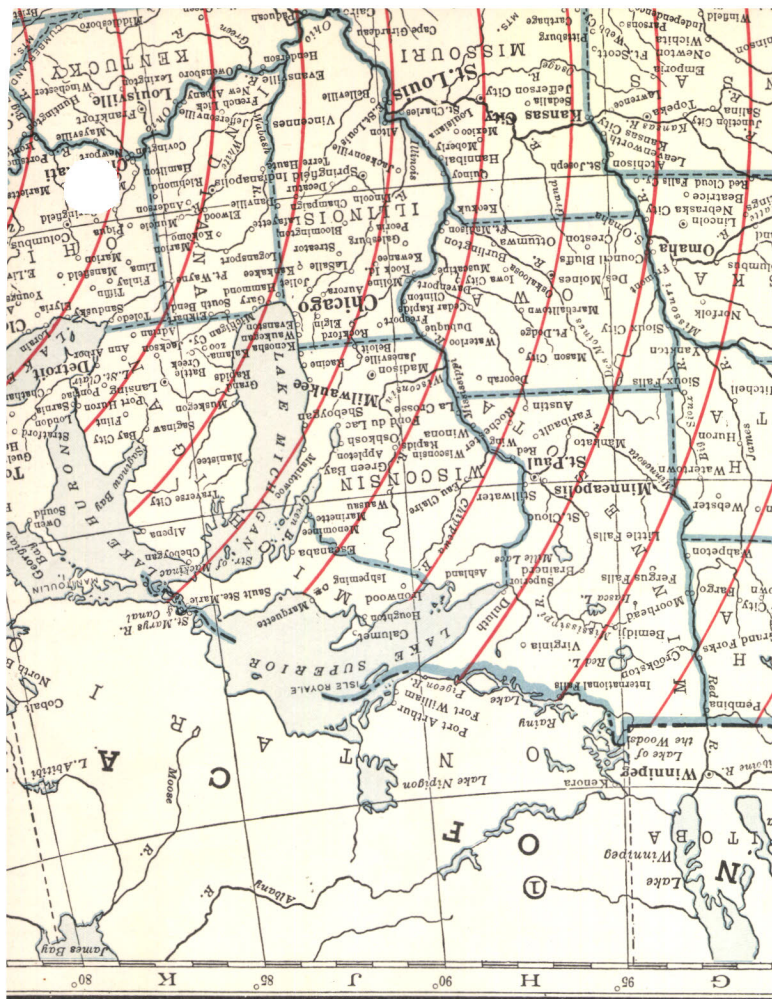
PILOT

Coast Guard Sta.

Coast Guard Sta.

Coast Guard Sta.

ATLANTIC



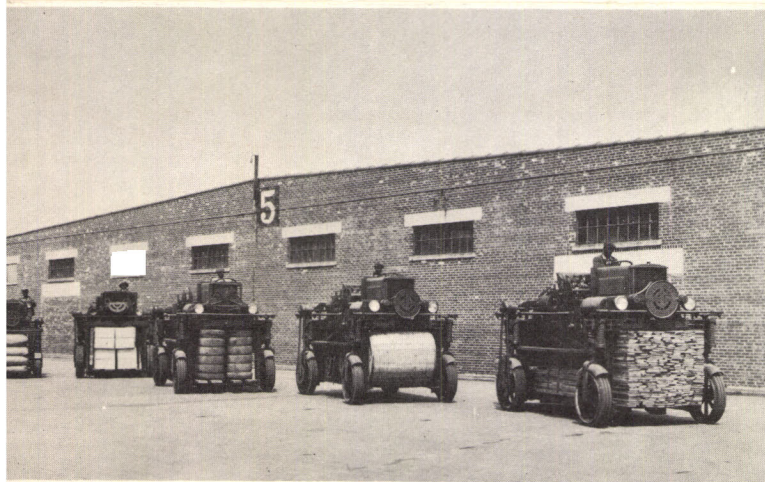
Description of

ave a 4,500-car capacity. A dispatch freight service is in operation between Norfolk and the West in connection with the New York Central route.

Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. The Norfolk terminals at Pinner's Point comprise 138 acres with 5 miles of trackage and 1,500 feet of deep water wharves improved with piers and warehouses for the handling of foreign and coastwise traffic.

Norfolk Southern Railroad. The Berkley (Norfolk) terminal has 1,640 feet frontage on Elizabeth Avenue, covers 30 acres and has 7½ miles of trackage. Covered lighters and car barges are maintained.

Seaboard Air Line Railway. Its principal terminal is situated in Portsmouth. Its water-



of the best and charges most moderate. Recently readjusted freight rates into the Central Freight Association territory created an added magnet.

Ore.—Manganese, Chrome and Others—Import. Ores are moving through this Port in increasing volume, assisted largely by the recent addition of special facilities for the discharge from vessels and the wide territory of distribution.

Distances to Principal World Ports

	Nautical Miles
Amsterdam, Netherlands.....	3,575
Antwerp, Belgium.....	3,557
Baltimore, Maryland.....	172
Boston, Massachusetts.....	518
Bremen, Germany.....	3,793
Buenos Aires, Argentina.....	5,824
Callao, Peru.....	3,168
Cartagena, Colombia.....	1,658
Colombo, Ceylon.....	8,769