



Joshua Slocum

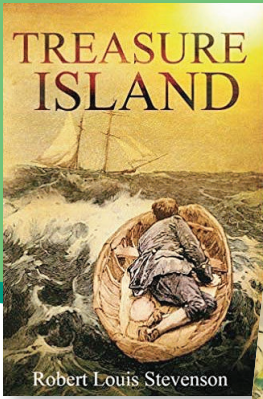


The Vanishing Man

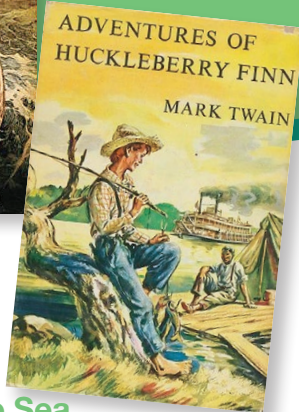
For many people who know anything about sailing he is the greatest sailor who ever lived. Simple as that. It's hard to argue with them because what he achieved is truly remarkable. And what happened to him is still one of the great mysteries of the sea.

His name is Joshua Slocum. Born in a place called Nova Scotia, now Canada's second smallest province. Joshua's first inspiration came from his grandfather who had, what seemed to an eight-year-old Joshua, an unbelievably exciting job as the lighthouse keeper at South Point. No doubt he told Joshua more than one or two tales of adventure at sea.

At home, too, Joshua loved to look at passing ships whilst he was forced to work in his father's boot shop instead of going to school. Joshua took great pride in his own ship's model that he carved out of wood.



What could Joshua do now? He loved the adventure and travel books of Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain – books like Treasure Island and Huckleberry Finn – so he thought he would try writing about his own exotic sailing travels and make some money that way.



The Call Of The Sea

When his cruel father found the model he smashed it on the ground and punished Joshua for not working. Joshua loved his mum but when she died he lost the only person he loved at home. Having reached the grown-up age of 16 it was time, he decided, to escape from his father and go to sea.

Joshua left home and got his first job as a cook on a type of sailing ship with two masts called a schooner. Happy to be at sea, but not wanting to remain a cook, he learned all he could about the skills of seamanship, especially navigation.

Within ten years, Joshua had worked his way up to the top job. Not only that, he was so admired for his seamanship that he became captain of some of the finest sailing ships in the world at that time. It was the 1880s. These ships carried goods from America all around the world, from South America to China to Australia.

All the while, Joshua built his knowledge of the sea and kept up what was, even then, an old-fashioned skill of being able to navigate by the moon. In spite of his achievements and everything he knew about sailing, Joshua was a sad man because sailing ships were no longer as important. They had literally been overtaken by faster and more efficient steamships.

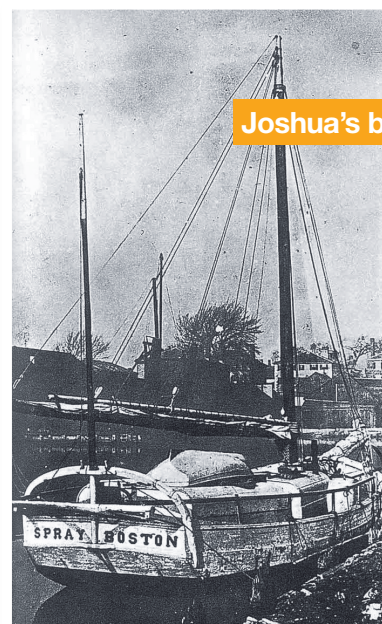
The Big Decision

What could Joshua do now? He loved the adventure and travel books of Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain – books like Treasure Island and Huckleberry Finn - so he thought he would try writing about his own exotic sailing travels and make some money that way. It didn't work. His books didn't sell. Try again. That's when he made the decision that would make him one of the greatest sailors of all time if not the greatest. In 1892, he started to build his own boat with the idea of sailing her around the world entirely on his own.

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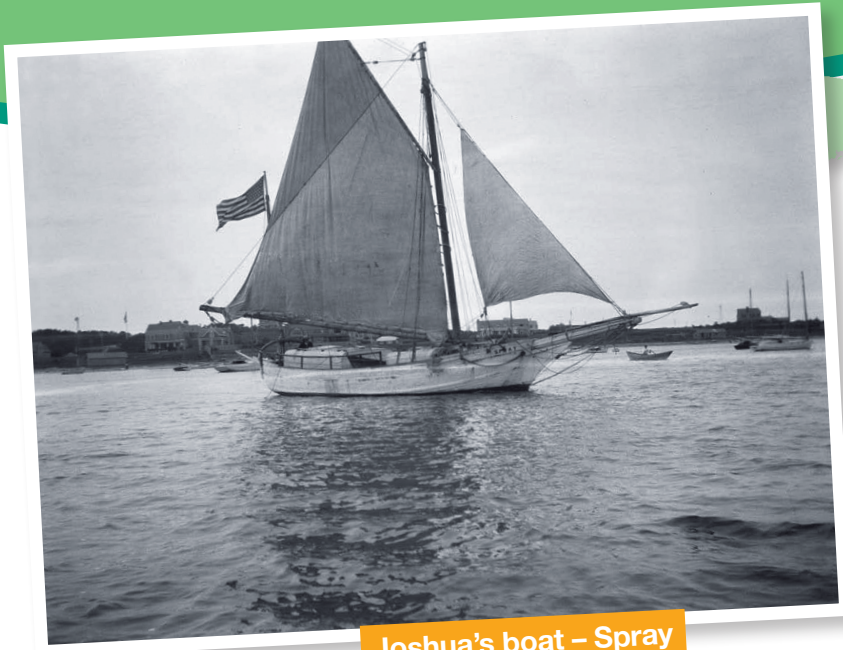


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Joshua's boat – Spray

Mysteries Marvels and Miracles at Sea



Joshua's boat – Spray



The Vanishing Man

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Sailing Into History

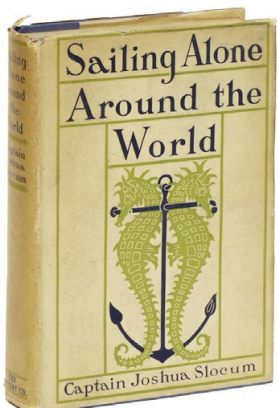
Three years later, as captain, first officer, navigator, cook, ship's carpenter and look-out, Joshua Slocum, at the age of 51, set sail alone from Boston, Massachusetts, on his 37 foot (11 metre) boat, Spray. Just by doing that, he invented single handed sailing.

Surviving all of that, Joshua Slocum did not go mad. He coped with the loneliness and the solitude. On his return he wrote a book that did sell and it is still considered a classic of travel writing today: *Sailing Alone Around The World*.

A Strange Disappearance

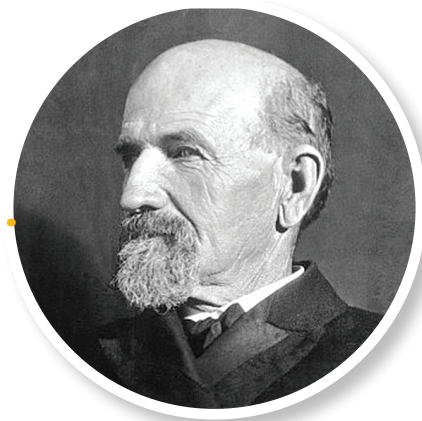
You would think that by then Joshua would have had enough, if not of sailing, then at least of long, dangerous voyages. Not Joshua.

He sailed again, heading for the Bahamas, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. In 1908 he told his friend President Roosevelt of the United States of America that he planned to sail to Venezuela in South America. Joshua set off, but neither he nor his beloved Spray were ever seen again.



What happened next on his extraordinary 46,000 mile three year epic voyage is astonishing by any standards, past or present. One man alone on a small wooden sailing boat with none of the special clothing, or long-life dried food, or satnav that we take for granted today. He was just one man; one man who ran aground, who endured the fiercest storms, the highest waves, and a goat who ate his only chart of the Caribbean.

The Bermuda Triangle covers a sea area of one and a half million miles, from Bermuda down to Miami in Florida and across to Puerto Rico.



Was he sunk in a storm? Or possibly struck by a huge passing steamship? Joshua Slocum simply vanished. To this day nobody knows how, why, where, or exactly when. He had planned to sail to South America as he told the President, up the Orinoco River, all the way to the Amazon River. He then intended to sail down the Amazon.

In 1909 for a 65 year-old man alone in battered, weather-beaten wooden boat it was a very ambitious trip, no matter how good a sailor he was. What happened to Joshua Slocum is a mystery. What we do know, though, is that just before he disappeared he sailed into an area known as the Bermuda Triangle.

The Bermuda Triangle covers a sea area of one and a half million miles, from Bermuda down to Miami in Florida and across to Puerto Rico. Over the last century more than a thousand boats, yachts and ships sailing in the triangle have been reported lost. Light aircraft go missing in the same airspace too.

The most famous mystery concerns five United States Navy Avenger planes, called Flight 19, on a routine training flight from Fort Lauderdale in Florida in 1945. A few hours into the flight they sent radio messages to say that their instruments and compasses must be wrong and that they were lost. Then silence. They were never seen again and no wreckage was found.

Stranger still, the US Navy Mariner seaplane that was sent to find them also disappeared and has never been found. Scientists are still trying to grasp what is happening in the Bermuda Triangle. The explanation may be a unique natural phenomenon that occurs in that area, but nobody is one hundred per cent certain yet.

As for Joshua Slocum, the man who sailed alone around the world, we will never know how or why he vanished in the Bermuda Triangle.

Written by Laurence Brady



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