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Archives of American Art

Xanthus Smith diary

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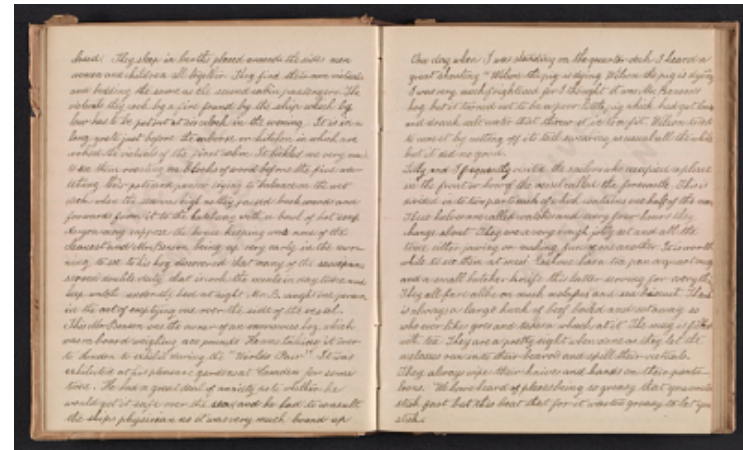
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closed. They sleep in berths placed around the sides men women and children all together. They find their own victuals and bedding the same as the second cabin passengers. The victuals they cook by a fire found by the ship which by law has to be put out at six o'clock in the evening. It is in a long grate just before the caboose or kitchen in which are cooked the victuals of the first cabin. It tickled me very much to see them roasting on blocks of wood before the fire watching their pots and pans or trying to balance on the wet deck when the sea was high as they passed backwards and forwards from it to the hatchway with a bowl of hot soup. As you may suppose the housekeeping was none of the cleanest and Mr Benson being up very early in the morning to see his hog discovered that many of the saucepans served double duty that is cook the meals in daytime and keep watch under the bed at night Mr. B. caught one person in the act of emptying one over the side of the vessel. This Mr. Benson was the owner of an enormous hog, which was on board weighing 1600 pounds He was taking it over to London to exhibit during the "Worlds Fair" It was exhibited at his pleasure gardens at Camden for some time. He had a great deal of anxiety as to whether he would get it safe over the sea, and he had to consult the ships physician as it was very much bound up

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One day when I was standing on the quarter deck I heard a great shouting "Wilson the pig is dying Wilson the pig is dying" I was very much frightened for I thought it was Mr. Benson's hog but it turned out to be a poor little pig which had got loose and drank salt water that threw it in to a fit. Wilson tried to cure it by cutting off its tail swearing as usual all the while but it did no good. Lilly and I frequently visited the sailors who occupied a place in the front or bow of the vessel called the fore-castle. This is divided in to two parts each of which contains one half of the men. These halves are called watches and every four hours they change about They are a very rough jolly set and all the time either jawing or making fun of one another. It is worth while to see them at mess. Each one has a tin pan a quart mug and a small butcher knife this latter serving for everything They all fare alike on mush molasses and sea biscuit. There is always a large hunk of beef boiled and set away so who ever likes goes and takes a whack at it The mug is filled with tea They are a pretty sight when done as they let the molasses run into their beards and spill their victuals. They always wipe their knives and hands on their pantaloons. We have heard of places being so greasy that you would stick fast but this beat that for it was too greasy to let you stick.



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