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## Dead Men Do Not Sell Timber: The Sinking of the Snow Owen and Captain Plato Denney's Two Deaths

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By Allen R. Peterson, CG

*Genealogical evidence may conflict with history and tradition,  
but facts trump armchair speculation. Characteristics that  
define identity may set the record straight.*

**H**istory says Captain Plato Denny, justice of the peace on Campobello Island—formerly in Nova Scotia and now part of New Brunswick—deserted the isle in late 1772. Recorded tradition suggests Plato, yielding to homesick indentured servants' demands, boarded the snow *Owen* and headed back to England and he, the crew, and passengers were lost at sea.<sup>1</sup> Thirty years later merchant Plato Denney died in Liverpool, England.<sup>2</sup> Was he the allegedly drowned Campobello justice?

### EARLY HISTORY OF CAMPOBELLO ISLAND

On 30 September 1767 Governor Lord William Campbell bestowed the position of principal proprietary of “the Great Outer Island of Passamaquoddy” upon William Owen, Royal Navy captain.<sup>3</sup> On 28 August 1769 in Warrington, Lancashire, Owen, his brother Edward, and friends met to plan the island's colonization. They proposed dividing it into sixteen shares, with thirteen shares bearing the expenses for the whole. Plato was among the proprietors:

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1. James Bird, “William Owen, Lord of Campobello,” *Courier Weekend*, St. Stephen, St. Croix, New Brunswick, Canada, 18 January 2002, page A-7, cols. 5–6.

2. St. Peter's parish, burial register, 1793–1810, chronologically arranged, Plato Denny, 11 August 1802; reference 283 PET 1/6, Liverpool Record Office (LRO2), Liverpool, U.K.; microfilm 1,656,377, item 3, Family History Library (FHL), Salt Lake City.

3. Court of Doctors Commons, will of William Owen of Shrewsbury, 6 August 1772, first codicil 8 July 1776, second codicil 9 August 1778, proved 20 May 1779; Glansevern Estate Records; reference 10489, National Library of Wales (NLW), Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, Wales. Glansevern was the Owen ancestral home. Owen's will details his grant from Governor Campbell.

Roger Rogerson of Warrington Esq<sup>r</sup>, two shares; M<sup>r</sup> Hodson of Wegan, two d<sup>o</sup>; John Lyons Esq<sup>r</sup>, Ed<sup>d</sup> Pemberton M. D. Rev. Edward Owen A M, and William Turner Esq<sup>r</sup> all of Warrington, and one share each; Mess<sup>rs</sup> Lloyd and Kerfoot of d<sup>o</sup> and d<sup>o</sup>; Thomas Hayward of the Royal Navy, one share; Mess<sup>rs</sup> Samuel Johnson and Rowland Hunter, Merchants of Liverpool, and Plato Denny, Mariner and Ship-master of d<sup>o</sup>, three shares; making in all thirteen shares or 13/16<sup>ths</sup> of the whole.<sup>4</sup>

On 8 February 1770 Owen purchased a two-hundred-ton snow at Salt-house dock in Liverpool and named it the *Owen*. It was brought out of South-dock on 29 March and moored at Slyne, where a group of Warrington artisans and indentured servants boarded.<sup>5</sup>

The pilot came on board on 6 April, “weighed and dropped down abreast of the north part of town. . . . The Pilotage [then] devolved one [sic] Captain Plato Denny who was the master, but in all cases subject to [Owen’s] orders.”<sup>6</sup> They sailed on 7 April, arrived in Halifax in Nova Scotia on 21 May, remained there until 27 May, and finally anchored at Passamaquoddy on 4 June.<sup>7</sup> Owen renamed the island, Campobello, after Governor Campbell and for “the nature of the soil and fine appearance.” He located a site for a town, calling it New Warrington. On 17 September 1770 the *Owen* returned to England.<sup>8</sup>

On Wednesday, 30 January 1771, a London newspaper referred to Plato. An advertisement solicited passengers and cargo for the *Owen* bound for Campobello. Those interested were instructed to apply to Plato Denny, Master; Mr. Thomas Kerfoot, Liver-Street, Liverpool; or Mr. Joseph Green, No. 3

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4. Victor Hugo Paltsits, ed., *Narrative of American Voyages and Travels of Captain William Owen, R.N., and Settlement of The Island of Campobello in the Bay of Fundy, 1766–1771* (New York: New York Public Library, 1942), 111–12. This narrative comprises a transcription of Owen’s journal, along with Paltsits’s comments. On page ix Paltsits states, “In 1920 Dr. Ganong secured for the second time temporary possession of the original manuscript volume from Owen’s great-granddaughter, Mrs. C. R. Cochrane, of Windlesham House, Windlesham, Surrey, England, since deceased, in possession of whose descendants it now remains. In April, 1921, with her consent, he [Ganong] entrusted the manuscript to me for examination and opinion as to its worth for publication *in extenso*. Permission was thereupon granted to The New York Public Library to make a photostat reproduction of the manuscript, publication being restricted for five years, unless by the Library or through another channel authorized by Dr. Ganong. We agreed in February, 1929, upon the plan here adopted, together with a summary of the transatlantic voyages and such other matter as would give continuity to the narration. The documentation is *verbatim et litteratim*.”

5. *Ibid.*, 112. Footnote 460 indicates a snow was “an extinct type of vessel, like a brig but having the fore and aft trysail or mainsail not on the mainmast but on a third smaller mast immediately behind it.”

6. *Ibid.*, 113.

7. W. F. Ganong, ed., “The Journal of Captain William Owen, R.N. During His Residency on Campobello in 1770–1771, Together with Other Documents and Notes Upon the History of the Island,” in *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society* (Saint John, N.B.: Daily Telegraph Steam Book and Job Print, 1894), 193–220.

8. Paltsits, ed., *Narrative of American Voyages and Travels of Captain William Owen, R.N.*, 120 and 130.

Tokenhouse-Yard, London. They planned to sail on 20 February 1771.<sup>9</sup> The *Owen* returned to Campobello on 20 May.<sup>10</sup>

“On April 14, 1770 [William Owen], Plato Denny, and William Isherwood were made Justices of the Peace for the County of Sunbury, which then included most of the present Province of New Brunswick.”<sup>11</sup> A “Justices Meeting or Special Sessions of the Peace holden at Warrington in the Island of Campobello” convened on 4 June 1771. Justices Owen, Denny, and Isherwood attested to twenty-eight improvements. The island numbered seventy-three “Souls”—fifty-one males and twenty-two females. Of these, thirty-six were indentured servants from England who had arrived with Owen. Others were from New England.<sup>12</sup>

When war with Spain over the Falklands loomed, Owen embarked his family, servants, and baggage on the *Owen*. They sailed for England on 14 June 1771. He instructed Plato to remain behind to “direct, conduct, and superintend the affairs of the Island.”<sup>13</sup>

In February 1772 a Liverpool broadside inviting “Ten or Twelve Industrious Farmers” to settle Campobello failed to mention Plato but noted other proprietors. Farmers were offered free passage and a loan for six cows, two oxen, and one sow to be repaid with interest “after the Rate of 5 per Cent. per Ann. in 5 years.” William Owen, Esquire, at Munday’s Coffee-House, Round-Court, Strand, London; Mr. Rogerson in Warrington; or Mr. Thomas Kerfoot in Liverpool would accept applications.<sup>14</sup>

William Isherwood, Esquire, clerk and assistant, is first on Owen’s list of those originally indentured on Campobello.<sup>15</sup> Roger Rogerson of Warrington, a grocer and one of the Campobello proprietors, had apprenticed Isherwood in 1767.<sup>16</sup> After Owen left in June 1771, responsibility for recording precipitation, frost penetration, and nature of the soil on Campobello fell upon an individual Owen

9. “Now loading at Liverpool for Halifax,” *The Daily Advertiser*, London, England, 30 January 1771, page 2, col. 2.

10. Paltsits, ed., *Narrative of American Voyages and Travels of Captain William Owen, R.N.*, 152.

11. Ganong, ed., “The Journal of Captain William Owen, R.N.,” *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society*, 213.

12. Paltsits, ed., *Narrative of American Voyages and Travels of Captain William Owen, R.N.*, 153–56.

13. *Ibid.*, 159–60. War with Spain never materialized. Spain realized they could not defeat the British navy without support from France and returned the Falklands to Britain.

14. Liverpool, advertisement for farmers to settle upon Owen’s lands at Campo Bello, broadside, 20 February 1772; reference 14409, NLW.

15. Paltsits, ed., *Narrative of American Voyages and Travels of Captain William Owen, R.N.*, 121.

16. “UK, Register of Duties Paid for Apprentices’ Indentures, 1710–1811,” *Ancestry.co.uk* (<https://www.ancestry.co.uk>), digital image of England, Apprenticeships, 1767, 20 February, line 6, Roger Rogerson.

referred to as “a sober and ingenious young man . . . who was unfortunately lost in the Owen (with all her crew and passengers) on . . . return to England eighteen months after.” Speculating that the “ingenious young man” was Isherwood, chronicler Paltsits does not mention Plato as either captain or passenger on this fatal voyage. Paltsits further comments on the *Owen*’s loss:

No other mention, much less any further details, of the loss of the *Owen*, here recorded, are known to us. The phraseology [of the sober and ingenious young man’s apparent loss with the *Owen*] suggests not so much that [the *Owen*] was wrecked, as that she vanished without a trace. The loss evidently occurred towards the end of 1772 and can hardly have escaped shipping records of the time. It is quite probable that some of the original settlers were among the passengers lost with her.<sup>17</sup>

A summary of *Owen*’s journal says nothing about the sinking: “It is certain that most of the settlers soon left [Campobello], and it is possible that the company finding the venture so unprofitable, carried back Plato Denny and most of the colonists to England on the next voyage of the *Snow Owen* in 1772.”<sup>18</sup> Historian Davies, drawing heavily from Paltsits’s book, does not specify Plato’s demise: “All the passengers and crew of the returning vessel were lost when it sank.”<sup>19</sup>

#### THE TRADITIONAL STORY OF PLATO’S DEMISE

A newspaper article published two hundred and thirty years after the *Owen*’s supposed sinking proposes that early Campobello residents became restless and that, with Plato, they abandoned the island in the early 1770s:

The vast majority of [the] settlers were men who had left their wives and children at home in Lancashire. Several . . . were nearing the end of their indentured period, and were anxious to return to their families. For almost a year these men badgered Captain Plato. Finally, he unwisely decided to sail with them for England. Aboard the *Snow Owen* they set out from Campo Bello in the fall of 1772. They were never heard from again as the ship and its passengers were lost at sea.<sup>20</sup>

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17. Paltsits, ed., *Narrative of American Voyages and Travels of Captain William Owen, R.N.*, 159 and footnote 613.

18. Ganong, ed., “Documents and Notes Relating to the History of Campobello,” *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society*, 214.

19. Wayne K. D. Davies, “Capt. William Owen and the Settlement of Campobello: Montgomeryshire’s connection with New Brunswick, Canada; Part II, The Colonization,” *National Library of Wales Journal* 31(Summer 2000):217–41 at p. 233.

20. James Bird, “William Owen, Lord of Campobello,” *Courier Weekend*, St. Stephen, St. Croix, New Brunswick, Canada, 18 January 2002, page A-7, cols. 5–6. Bird’s identity and historical credentials are unknown. Bird wrote the article in the first person, as if Owen were writing a letter. Bird apparently summarized, but failed to cite, information in *Owen*’s journal. Some content differs, perhaps reflecting local traditions. For example, *Owen*’s journal does not contain the quotation or similar information.

## PLATO DENNEY

Plato, born about 1734, was a son of James Denney of Haws near Millom in Cumberland County.<sup>21</sup> James Deny [*sic*] had married Ann Lewthwaite in 1717.<sup>22</sup> Plato had seven known siblings.<sup>23</sup>

Father Jam[es] Denny, buried in Dalton-in-Furness, Lancashire, made his will from Peasholmes, directing that after his wife Agnes's death, his estate be equally divided among his living children. Plato was not specifically named.<sup>24</sup>

No marriage record for James and Agnes exists in Millom or Dalton-in-Furness, but Ann and Agnes may have been the same.<sup>25</sup> A 1788 obituary does not provide her given name: "Lately, aged 99 [should be 90] years 10 months, Mrs. Denny, mother of Mr. Plato Denny, merchant at Liverpool."<sup>26</sup>

Plato first appears in Liverpool as a mariner who wedded, in 1765 by license, Frances Ashburn[er], a widow. Even though surnamed "Denny" on the marriage record, Plato signed "Denney."<sup>27</sup> See figure 1. Plato, a mariner, married (2) Ellen Chadwick, a widow, by license in 1779, seven years after his supposed loss on the *Owen*. Plato's autograph matches that on his 1765 marriage record.<sup>28</sup> Ellen Pickup had earlier married Richard Chadwick, mariner of Liverpool, in 1760.<sup>29</sup> He died in 1775.<sup>30</sup> In 1777 Mrs. Ellen Chadwick lived at 16 Matthew Street.<sup>31</sup>

21. Holy Trinity in Millom parish, baptismal register, 1637–1762, chronologically arranged, Plato Denney, 28 April 1734; reference BPR/10/I1/1/2, Lancashire Record Office (LRO), Preston, Lancashire, U.K.; FHL microfilm 1,471,921, item 27.

22. *Ibid.*, marriages 1637–1762, Deny-Lewthwaite, 28 November 1717.

23. *Ibid.*, baptismal register, 1637–1762, 26 March 1718, John Deny; 5 March 1720, James Deny; 24 August 1724, Anne Deny; 2 October 1726, Isabel Denny; 14 January 1737, Thomas Denny; and 14 January 1737, Margarat Denney. Also, Dalton-in-Furness parish, baptismal register, 1692–1746, chronologically arranged, 7 February 1739, Myles Denny of [P]esholms; reference BPR/1/I1/1/4, LRO; FHL microfilm 1,471,899, item 4.

24. Bishops' Transcripts for Dalton-in-Furness, burials 1750–1780, chronologically arranged, 21 September 1752, Jam[es] Denny of Peshoums; LRO; FHL microfilm 1,040,303. Parish registers are unavailable. Also, Archdeaconry of Richmond, Deaconry of Furness, will of James Denny of Peasholmes, 15 September 1752, proved and inventory taken 2 October 1752; reference W/RW/F/R365A/10, LRO; FHL microfilm 99,126.

25. Patricia Wagley (Montgomery, Tex.), untitled notes; author's files.

26. "Died," *Whitehall Evening Post*, London, England, 18 March 1788, page and col. unknown.

27. St. Nicholas parish (Liverpool), marriage register, 1659–1812, p. 266, entry 866 in 1765, Denney-Ashburn[er], 14 February 1765; reference 283 NIC 3/2, LRO2.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 65, entry 98 in 1779, Denney-Chadwick, 21 August 1779; reference 283 NIC/3/5, LRO2.

29. "Liverpool, England, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1659–1812," *Ancestry.co.uk*, digital image of St. George parish (Derby Square, Liverpool), marriage register, 1659–1812, chronologically arranged, Chadwick-Pickup, 13 December 1760.

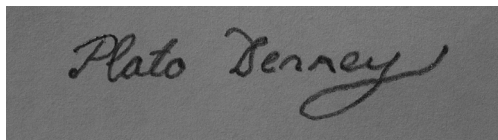
30. St. Peter's parish (Church Street, Liverpool), burial register, 1765–1776, chronologically arranged, Richard Chadwick, 8 December 1775; reference 283 PET 1/4, LRO2; FHL microfilm 1,656,377, item 1.

31. John Gore, *Gore's Liverpool Directory for the Year 1777: Containing an Alphabetical List of the Merchants, Tradesmen, and Principal Inhabitants of the Town of Liverpool with Their Respective Addresses* (Liverpool: John Gore, 1777), 17.

Figure 1

### Three Plato Denney signatures

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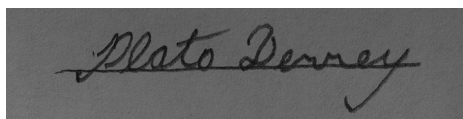
1765 marriage to Frances Ashburn[er] in Liverpool

St. Nicholas parish (Liverpool), marriage register, 1659–1812, p. 266, entry 866 in 1765, Denney-Ashburn[er], 14 February 1765; reference 283 NIC 3/2, Liverpool Record Office (LRO2), Liverpool, U.K.



1772 letter from Liverpool to John Munrow in Campobello

Plato Denney to John Munrow, letter, 26 August 1772; Glansevern Estate Records; reference 8094, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, Wales.



1779 marriage to Ellen Chadwick

St. Nicholas parish (Liverpool), marriage register, 1659–1812, p. 65, entry 98 in 1779, Denney-Chadwick, 21 August 1779; reference 283 NIC/3/5, LRO2.

In Liverpool Plato advanced from captain to gentleman merchant:

- 1767—Denny, Patrick [Plato], Capt., Benn's Garden<sup>32</sup>
- 1769—Denny, Patrick [Plato], Capt., Benn's Garden<sup>33</sup>
- 1773—Denny, Plato, Capt., Benn's Garden<sup>34</sup>
- 1774—Denny, Plato, Capt., 13 Richmond Street<sup>35</sup>
- 1781—Denny, Plato, Capt., 15 Richmond-street<sup>36</sup>
- 1790—Denny, Plato, merchant, 11 Islington<sup>37</sup>
- 1796—Denny, Plato, gent., 11 Islington Shaw's brow<sup>38</sup>
- 1800—Denny, Plato, merchant, 11 Islington<sup>39</sup>

Plato's primary residence on Islington was taxed in 1798.<sup>40</sup> Five people occupied his rental properties, including a former residence called Benn's Garden:

- Sarah Brannin—Ben[n]'s Garden<sup>41</sup>
- Cathl Adgett—Drury Lane<sup>42</sup>
- Jn<sup>o</sup> Babe—Strand Street<sup>43</sup>
- Jane Flemming—Dock Side<sup>44</sup>
- Benj: Thomas—Goree<sup>45</sup>

Plato died in 1802.<sup>46</sup> His trustees Thomas Pickop of Liverpool, merchant; James Okill of Lee in Littlewoolton [in Liverpool], gentleman; and nephew Thomas Denny of Manchester were ordered to sell Plato's Islington dwelling house, his Goree warehouse, and his Drury Lane dwelling house. Proceeds would provide an annuity for his wife, Ellen. Four nephews including Thomas,

32. John Gore, *Gore's Liverpool Directory for the Year 1767* (Liverpool: William and Nevett and Co., 1767), 12.

33. John Gore, *Gore's Liverpool Directory for the Year 1769*, 13.

34. John Gore, *Gore's Liverpool Directory for the Year 1772[3]* (Liverpool: J. Gore, 1772[3]), 15. The title page says: "This Directory was re-bound in 1941, the earlier binding having been damaged through enemy action on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 1941." The title page says the year 1772, but the first page shows 1773.

35. John Gore, *Gore's Liverpool Directory for the Year 1774* (Liverpool: John Gore, 1774), 15.

36. *Ibid.*, 1781, 26.

37. *Ibid.*, 1790, 46.

38. *Ibid.*, 1796, 44.

39. *Ibid.*, 1800, 38.

40. "UK, Land Tax Redemption, 1798," *Ancestry.co.uk*, digital image of UK Land Tax Redemption Office: Quotas and Assessments, 1798, vol. 3, fo. 280r, Plato Denny.

41. *Ibid.*, fo. 296r, Plato Denny.

42. *Ibid.*, fo. 275v, Plato Denny.

43. *Ibid.*, fo. 295r, Plato Denny.

44. *Ibid.*, fo. 293v, Plato Denny.

45. *Ibid.*, fo. 277r, P. Denny.

46. St. Peter's parish, burial register, 1793–1810, chronologically arranged, Plato Denny, 11 August 1802; reference 283 PET 1/6, LRO2.

son of Plato's brother Thomas, received one hundred pounds apiece. Additional beneficiaries included goddaughter Maria Williamson, daughter of Reverend Samuel Williamson of Congleton (in Cheshire), and godson Edward Ward, son of merchant Robert Ward of Liverpool. The bequests mention no Campobello holdings.<sup>47</sup>

The Drury Lane dwelling house probably was the rental property Adgett occupied. Benjamin Thomas may have occupied Plato's warehouse on the Goree. In May 1809 an estate notice requested claimants against Plato's estate to notify one of the three trustees or Mr. Leigh.<sup>48</sup>

Ellen, "widow of the late Plato Denney of Liverpool Merchant," made her will in 1807. Beneficiaries included daughter Betty, wife of merchant Robert Ward of Liverpool, and Betty's two daughters, Elizabeth and Jane. Ellen's daughter Mary Williamson, wife of Reverend Samuel Williamson of Congleton, received the rest of Ellen's money. After Mary's death the residue would go to Mary's two daughters, Margaret and Maria. Susanna Hird, Anna Hird, and Margaret Bridge witnessed; John Houghton of Wavertree, gentleman, and merchant William Calton Rutson of Liverpool proved the will.<sup>49</sup> Widow Ellen Denney, of Islington, died at seventy-three in 1808.<sup>50</sup> Houghton and Rutson paid the death duty in 1809.<sup>51</sup>

Thomas Denny of Broughton-in-Furness in Kirkby Ireleth Parish, Lancashire, left a 1817 will that stated his children William, Abraham, and Bella held money from Thomas's "brother Plato Denny, deceased." A daughter of the testator's late son Thomas, was mentioned.<sup>52</sup> "[L]ate son Thomas" probably was Plato's nephew and executor Thomas Denny of Manchester. Thomas Denny died at eighty-one.<sup>53</sup> The death duty was paid on 8 May 1820 for Thomas, who had expired on 11 October 1819.<sup>54</sup>

47. Archdeaconry of Richmond, Diocese of Chester, will of Plato Denny of Liverpool, 25 June 1802, proved 21 August 1802; FHL microfilm 88,941.

48. "All persons who have any Claims for Debts," *London Gazette*, London, England, 16 May 1809, page 700.

49. Archdeaconry of Richmond, Diocese of Chester, will of Ellen Denney of Liverpool, 25 November 1807, proved 23 May 1809; FHL microfilm 89,010.

50. St. Peter's parish, burial register, 1793–1810, chronologically arranged, Ellen Denney, 30 May 1808; reference 283 PET 1/6, LRO2.

51. Chester, death duty register, letter D in 1809, no. 304, Ellen Denney of Liverpool, widow, date of will and its proving not given; reference IR26/308, The National Archives (TNA), Kew, Richmond, Surrey, U.K.; FHL microfilm 1,817,961.

52. Archdeaconry of Richmond, Deanery of Furness, will of Thomas Denny of Broughton-in-Furness, 16 May 1817, proved 1 January 1820; reference W/RW/F/R380b/43, LRO; FHL microfilm 99,141.

53. Broughton-in-Furness parish, burial register 1813–73, p. 22, entry 170 in 1819, Thomas Denny, 13 October 1819; reference BPR/6/14/1, LRO; FHL microfilm 1,471,921, item 10.

54. Lancashire, Lancaster, death duty register, letters C–D in 1820, vol. 2, fo. 347, will of Thomas Denny of Broughton, Ulverston 16 May 1817, proved 1 January 1820; reference IR26/817, TNA; FHL microfilm 1,562,621.



## LIVERPOOL ASSOCIATES AND RELATIVES

Between 1782 and 1799 Plato participated in thirty-three slave voyages.<sup>55</sup> His slave trade probably commenced with his marriage to Ellen (Pickop) Chadwick in 1779, by association with brother-in-law Thomas Pickop. Thomas, born about 1731 in Kirkham, Lancashire, to John and Elizabeth Pickop, witnessed Ellen's marriage to Richard Chadwick in 1760.<sup>56</sup> Ellen—Thomas's sister and Plato's second wife—was born about 1734.<sup>57</sup> Thomas was Plato's trustee.

Pickop sponsored thirty-two transatlantic slave trips between 1769 and 1799.<sup>58</sup> He began a cooper and ascended to merchant:

1766—Pickop, Thomas, cooper, Moore-street<sup>59</sup>

1767—Pickop, Thomas, cooper, James Street<sup>60</sup>

1774—Pickop, Thomas, cooper, 13 James Street<sup>61</sup>

1781—Pickop, Thomas, cooper, Goree Causeway<sup>62</sup>

1790—Pickop, Thomas, merchant, 15 Union-street and Cooperage, 9 George's Dock<sup>63</sup>

1800—Pickop, Thomas, merchant, 32 Union street, Oldhall Street<sup>64</sup>

Pickop died on 29 April 1822. On 25 November 1831 James Aikers of Liverpool and John Leigh paid taxes for Pickop's effects valued under ten thousand pounds.<sup>65</sup> Among a multitude of bequests Pickop included annuities to his nieces Mary, wife of Reverend Samuel Williamson of Congleton, and Elizabeth Ward, wife of Robert Ward, merchant late of Liverpool. Pickop bequeathed money to those nieces' children. One of them—William Ackers, son of Elizabeth the deceased widow of James Ackers—received two thousand pounds for the loss of

55. David Pope, "Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool's Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz, and Anthony Tibbles, eds. (Liverpool: National Museums Liverpool, 2010), appendix I, "Liverpool's leading slave merchants, 1750–99." Pope verifies that Plato was born in Millom, Cumberland, to James Denny.

56. Bishops' Transcripts for Kirkham, births 1731–1745, chronologically arranged, [–?] April 1731, Thomas Pickop; reference DRB 2/104, LRO; FHL microfilm 1,502,433.

57. *Ibid.*, 9 February 1734, Ellen Pickop.

58. Pope, "Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool's Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, appendix I.

59. John Gore, *Gore's Liverpool Directory*, 1766, 17.

60. *Ibid.*, 1767, 20.

61. *Ibid.*, 1774, 43.

62. *Ibid.*, 1781, 69.

63. *Ibid.*, 1790, 127.

64. *Ibid.*, 1800, 113.

65. Cheshire, death duty register, letters N–R in 1823, 4:1407, will of Thomas Pickop of Liverpool, gent., dated 20 April 1814, first codicil 2 November 1815, second codicil 4 November 1817, third codicil 18 April 1821, fourth codicil 6 June 1821, proved 3 March 1823; reference IR26/924, TNA; FHL microfilm 1,494,409.

a “certain Adventure in trade to the West Indies.” Executors Leigh and Aikers received leasehold, mortgages, and other property to sell for legacies.<sup>66</sup>

Others appear to have associated closely with Plato. A Liverpool merchant, Robert Ward married Betty Chadwick in 1788.<sup>67</sup> Betty was Thomas Pickop’s niece Elizabeth, mentioned in his will, and daughter of Ellen (Pickop) Chadwick, Plato’s second wife. Ward’s son Edward was a beneficiary of his godfather, Plato, in 1802. In 1790 Robert lived next to Plato at 13 Islington but moved to 10 St. Anne Street, Richmond, before 1800.<sup>68</sup> Born in Liverpool to grocer John Ward, Robert invested in twenty-eight slave expeditions between 1786 and 1799.<sup>69</sup>

Robert Ward, Esquire, of Liscard, Chester, gave Belmont, a home in Hawkeshead, Lancashire, to executors Samuel Newton of Croxton Park near Caxton in Cambridgeshire; Joseph Ward of Liverpool, a brewer; and Edward Blackstock of Liverpool, a gentleman.<sup>70</sup> Death came to Robert on 3 February 1830. Daughter Jane Monk, wife of John Boughey Monk of 48 St. Anne Street in Liverpool, clerk, paid the estate duty.<sup>71</sup>

Robert’s suspected brother, Joseph Ward, was born in Colton, Lancashire, to John, a grocer. He backed fifty slave voyages between 1777 and 1799.<sup>72</sup> Captain Joseph Ward lived at 6 Derby-square in 1777 with Jane Ward, a grocer.<sup>73</sup> Joseph, a merchant, still lived at 6 Derby-square in 1781 but by 1796 had moved to 9 Richmond Row, Everton Road.<sup>74</sup> Two directory entries appear in 1803: Joseph Ward, merchant, 13 Richmond Row, St. Anne’s; and Joseph Ward and Co., 13 Richmond Row, Office, 28 Old Dock.<sup>75</sup>

Joseph’s will, proved in London in 1812, devised his estate to wife Catherine, brewer Joseph Ward of Liverpool, and banker John Moss. Vessels and shares in vessels would be sold as soon as they returned from voyages. He asked that messuages, warehouses, lands, freehold, copyhold, and tenements (except for

66. Prerogative Court of Canterbury, will of Thomas Pickop of Liverpool, 20 April 1814, first codicil 2 November 1815, second codicil 4 November 1817, third codicil 18 April 1821, fourth codicil 6 June 1821, proved 3 March 1823; reference PROB 11/1668, TNA.

67. Richmond St. Anne’s parish (Liverpool), marriage register 1777–1797, chronologically arranged, entry 1542 in 1788, Ward-Chadwick, 26 May 1788; reference 283 ANN 3/2, LRO2.

68. John Gore, *Gore’s Liverpool Directory*, 1790, 162; and 1800, 147.

69. Pope, “Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool’s Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century,” *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, appendix I.

70. Archdeaconry of Richmond, Diocese of Chester, will of Robert Ward of Liverpool, 17 April 1815, renounced 9 January 1831, proved 26 February 1831; FHL microfilm 89,284.

71. Cheshire, death duty register, letters U–Z in 1831, 2:199, will of Robert Ward of Liverpool, merchant, 17 April 1815, proved 26 February 1831; reference IR26/1276, TNA.

72. Pope, “Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool’s Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century,” *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, appendix I.

73. John Gore, *Gore’s Liverpool Directory*, 1777, 83.

74. *Ibid.*, 1781, 87; and 1796, 176.

75. *Ibid.*, 1803, 156.

the house on Richmond) be sold to pay legacies.<sup>76</sup> Catherine, Joseph, and John Moss paid the duty on Joseph's estate, valued less than ten thousand pounds.<sup>77</sup>

Relatives Plato Denny, Thomas Pickop, Joseph Ward, and Robert Ward owned shares in slave vessels:

- Thomas—*Renown*, prize taken from the Americans.<sup>78</sup>
- Plato—*Christopher*, prize taken from the Americans in 1780.<sup>79</sup>
- Thomas—*Ned*, prize taken from the Americans in 1781.<sup>80</sup>
- Thomas, Plato, Robert, and Joseph—*Fancy*, prize taken from the Americans in 1781. J. Perkins sold his share to Robert in 1788, P. Denny sold his share to Thomas Pickop in 1791, and Thomas sold his share to Joseph Ward in 1791.<sup>81</sup>
- Thomas—*Colonel*, prize taken from the Americans in 1781.<sup>82</sup>
- Joseph—*Robust*, prize taken from the French in 1781.<sup>83</sup>
- Thomas—*Iris*, built in Liverpool in 1783.<sup>84</sup>
- Thomas, Robert, and Plato—*Peggy*, built in Folkstone in 1783. J. Galley sold his share to Robert in 1789.<sup>85</sup>
- Joseph, Plato, and Robert—*Little Joe*, built in Liverpool in 1784. Robert, the first master, purchased an additional interest from J. Perkins in 1787.<sup>86</sup>
- Joseph, Plato, Robert, and also William Rutson—*Joseph*, built in Liverpool in 1786.<sup>87</sup>
- Joseph, Plato, and Robert—*Rose*, built in Lancaster in 1783. P. Denny and R. Ward sold interests to Joseph Ward in 1791, J. Ward sold a one-quarter share to John Knox in 1791, J. Carruthers sold his interest to Joseph Ward in 1794, J. Ward sold a one-eighth share to William Forbes in 1794, and J. Ward sold a one-sixteenth interest to Francis Holland in 1794. The *Rose* was captured by the French in 1794.<sup>88</sup>

Insurance records further document Plato's late-eighteenth-century presence in Liverpool. Plato, Robert, and Thomas insured several properties:

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76. Prerogative Court of Canterbury, will of Joseph Ward of Liverpool, 21 September 1811, proved 24 December 1812; reference PROB 11/1539, TNA.

77. Cheshire, death duty register, letters U–Z in 1812, 3:383, will of Joseph Ward of Liverpool, merchant, 21 September 1811, proved 18 June 1812; reference IR26/565, TNA.

78. Robert Craig and Rupert Jarvis, *Liverpool Registry of Merchant Ships* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1967), 4, entry 1 in 1786, 12 August, registered *de novo* (RDN), no date.

79. *Ibid.*, 28, entry 94 in 1786, 6 October, RDN 21 March 1789.

80. *Ibid.*, 82, entry 113 in 1787, 20 April, RDN 13 March 1790.

81. *Ibid.*, 87, entry 138 in 1787, 7 June, RDN 31 May 1791.

82. *Ibid.*, 107, entry 221 in 1787, 24 September, RDN 4 August 1790.

83. *Ibid.*, 111, entry 236 in 1787, 27 September, RDN 16 February 1793.

84. *Ibid.*, 62, entry 38 in 1787, 29 January, RDN 1 April 1790.

85. *Ibid.*, 116, entry 252 in 1787, 24 October, RDN 26 August 1790.

86. *Ibid.*, 16, entry 48 in 1786, 15 September, RDN 24 October 1789.

87. *Ibid.*, 125, entry 32 in 1788, 1 April, RDN 21 April 1790.

88. *Ibid.*, 133 and 134, entry 68 in 1788, 7 August, RDN no date.

- 1790—Plato, his dwelling in Islington, a house on Richmond Street in tenure of Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Johnson, a house on the east side of Dry Pier in tenure of Owen Warmingham, and a house behind it in tenure of Ann Brice.<sup>89</sup>
- 1791—Thomas, two brick and slated warehouses “situated on Goree Causeway in tenure of [—?—] McKnight.”<sup>90</sup>
- 1791—Plato, a brick and slated house on Islington in the tenure of Mrs. Herd.<sup>91</sup> She may have been either Susanna or Anna Hird, witnesses to Ellen Denney’s will.
- 1792—Plato and Robert, two warehouses on Goree Causeway.<sup>92</sup>
- 1792—Thomas, a warehouse on Goree Causeway.<sup>93</sup>
- 1793—Plato and Robert, two adjoining warehouses on Goree Causeway.<sup>94</sup>
- 1794—Brokers William Ewart and William Calton Rutson insured Plato’s “Utinsils, Stock & Goods in trust . . . in M<sup>r</sup> Myer’s Warehouse on the north side of Waterstreet.”<sup>95</sup> Rutson was an executor of Ellen Denney’s will and part owner of the *Joseph*.<sup>96</sup>

#### CAPTAIN DENNEY AND THE CAMPOBELLO SETTLERS?

Plato was in Liverpool in late August 1772 when he wrote to Campobello agent John Munrow.<sup>97</sup> His signature on the letter matches those found in the records of his marriages, in 1765 and 1779. They link the twice-married Liverpool man to the Campobello justice. See figure 1.

Plato was in no hurry to return to Campobello. He revealed to Munrow, “I cannot help letting you know of my Safe arival at Liverpool[,] M<sup>rs</sup> Denney and

89. Royal and Sun Alliance Insurance Group, Plato Denny, Liverpool, merchant, 1790; reference CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/367/565526, London Metropolitan Archives (LMA), London, U.K.

90. *Ibid.*, Thomas Pickop, Liverpool, cooper, 22 January 1791; reference CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/374/578954, LMA.

91. *Ibid.*, Plato Denny, Liverpool, merchant, 4 January 1791; reference CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/375/578176, LMA.

92. *Ibid.*, Plato Denney and Robert Ward, Liverpool, merchants, 20 August 1792; reference CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/388/604324, LMA.

93. *Ibid.*, Thomas Pickop, Liverpool, merchant, 6 November 1792; reference CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/391/607809, LMA.

94. *Ibid.*, Plato Denney and Robert Ward, Liverpool, merchants, 12 November 1792; reference CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/390/607982, LMA.

95. *Ibid.*, Insurers: William Ewart and William Calton Rutson, Liverpool brokers, 27 May 1793; reference CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936/395/615211, LMA.

96. Archdeaonry of Richmond, will of Ellen Denney of Liverpool, 25 November 1807, proved 23 May 1809. Also, Robert Craig and Rupert Jarvis, *Liverpool Registry of Merchant Ships*, 4, entry 32 in 1788, 1 April, RDN 21 April 1790. William Rutson, born in Kendal, Westmorland, son of Robert, a “Shearman dyer,” participated in at least forty-two slave voyages between 1780 and 1793. See Pope, “Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool’s Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century,” *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, appendix I.

97. Plato Denney to John Munrow, letter, 26 August 1772; Glansevern Estate Records; reference 8094, NLW. Plato likely arrived on the *Owen*. See “Owen, Brown, from Campo Bello, at ditto [Liverpool],” *Public Advertiser*. London, 7 August 1772, page 4, col. 1.

all frends well<sub>[,]</sub> I thought it Nedles[s] to Com this voyage [the trip back to Campobello] as the Stay will be Short. . . . This Don[e] in heast as I am going on a [three] [w]eek gorney to the Contrey."<sup>98</sup>

The demise of the *Owen*, her crew, and passengers is puzzling. Davies writes, "Little is known of the circumstances of the loss of the *Snow Owen*. However, it seems more than coincidental that a vessel called the *Campobello*, obviously owned by William Owen and his company, was stranded and abandoned in Cardigan Bay [in Wales] in late 1772."<sup>99</sup>

On Tuesday, 1 December 1772, "The *Campo Bello*, [with Captain] Bone, from *Campo Bello* for Liverpool, [was] lost in Cardigan-bay [;] part of the cargo [was] saved."<sup>100</sup> On 6 January 1773 William Owen in Aberystwyth, Mr. Joseph Green in London, and Mr. Thomas Kerfoot in Liverpool advertised the sale of salvaged cargo described as over twenty thousand [square] feet of pine, a quantity of black birch, and other wood, along with the hull of the seven-hundred-ton ship. Saying nothing about the loss of crew or passengers, they confirm that John Bone from *Campobello* was master, not Denney.<sup>101</sup> Roger Edwards, however, paid Denny for black birch from the *Campo Bello*.<sup>102</sup> Dead men do not sell timber; *Campobello* Plato was alive in England in early 1773.

Owen purchased a small, eighteen-ton cutter, the *Slipper*, from Sir Thomas Rich on 13 September 1770. He renamed it the *Campobello Packet*.<sup>103</sup> At eighteen tons, she was too small to have been the ship lost in Cardigan Bay. The two-hundred-ton *Owen* likewise was smaller than the *Campo Bello*. Perhaps tonnage of the *Campobello Packet*, *Campo Bello*, and *Owen* were inaccurately reported.

Owen's claim that "a sober and ingenious young man" was lost "in the *Owen*" on return to England eighteen months after he left *Campobello* in June 1771 coincides with the *Campo Bello*'s sinking in December 1772.<sup>104</sup> Informants may have confused the *Owen*'s and *Campo Bello*'s names.

98. Denney to Munrow, letter, 26 August 1772.

99. Davies, "Capt. William Owen and the Settlement of *Campobello*," *National Library of Wales Journal* 31(Summer 2000):233.

100. "The Marine List," *Lloyd's List*, no. 3829, London, England, 1 December 1772, p. 2, col. 3. For more information on *Lloyd's List*, see Christopher T. and Michael J. Watts, *My Ancestor Was A Merchant Seaman: A Guide to Sources for Family Historians* (1986; reprint, London: Society of Genealogists, 2011), 114–15. The shipwreck occurred on 24 November. See, "Information," *Public Advertiser*, 7 December 1772, page 2, col. 4.

101. "For Sale by AUCTION," *London Evening Post*, 30 December 1772–1 January 1773, page 5, col. 3.

102. "1773 Particulars of the sale of the ship *Campo Bello* and her materials and a cargo of timber," lot 8, Roger Edwards to Captain Denny; Glansevern Estate Records; reference 14406, NLW.

103. Paltsits, ed., *Narrative of American Voyages and Travels of Captain William Owen, R.N.*, 130.

104. *Ibid.*, 159. The *Campobello* suffered misfortune earlier in the year. See "The *Campo Bello*," *Bingley's Journal* (London), 15–22 February 1772, page 2, col. 3. "The *Campo Bello*, Bone, from Liverpool to Halifax, is put into Antiqua, dismasted."

A November 1773 letter from proprietor Samuel Johnson to agent Benjamin Yoxall names Denney. The letter suggests settlers did not demand the proprietors take them back to Lancashire, as Plato was supposedly forced to do in late 1772. Instead the Campobello venture would be dismantled in an orderly fashion:

I find we have been grossly imposed on by M<sup>r</sup> Owen, Deney, & others respecting the Island. We are now much obliged to you for telling the truth which is confirmed by my Kins man & others, And apprehend it our intrest to get rid of it in the best manner we can, & We therefore desire that you'd let any of the Settlers go when they will, though they may be indebt for they never will be able to pay, & that you will indeaver to dispose of the Salt & Stoars as soon as posable and Collect in all the debts you can, & We shall send a Ship in the Spring [1774] for you & whoever may be with you that intends to come here and so finish that unhappy adventure but if any of the Settlers will go to Boston or up the Bay werr at your expence it will be adviseable to get quit of them as soon as posable, as bringing them home will be attended with still more expence.<sup>105</sup>

Yoxall responded to Rogerson in Spring 1774. Again no evidence suggests the settlers coerced the proprietors. Instead, protesting the proprietor's failure to fulfill obligations, they removed themselves to Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, not England:

People on the Lots are a Set of idle Drunkards both men and Women, and Would not clear any Land, I would not find them Meat Drink & Cloaths any longer upon which They protested Against the Owners of the lland for not fulfilling their Lease in Supplying them w<sup>th</sup> Cattle &c and are gone to Anapolis to live which I think a good riddance of Such a Lazey Crew, who Strove to get more into your debt than they ever intended to pay.<sup>106</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Historical and traditional views of Plato's alleged death at sea do not match the evidence. His signatures in 1765 and 1779 match the autograph in his letter from Liverpool to Campobello in 1772. Directories and the 1765 marriage record document his residence in Liverpool before the Campobello venture. A multitude of sources including business records, directories, tax records, insurance records, and probate account for his presence in Liverpool after 1772.

The Owen's fate remains a mystery. Her sinking probably is confused with that of the *Campo Bello* in Cardigan Bay in late 1772. Plato was not among the drowned: he sold timber salvaged from the *Campo Bello* in 1773, when he lived in Liverpool.

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105. Samuel Johnson to Benjamin Yoxall, letter, 20 November 1773; Glansevern Estate Records; reference 8102, NLW.

106. Benjamin Yoxall to Roger Rogerson, letter, 26 April 1774; Glansevern Estate Records; reference 8089, NLW.