

= Mary Celeste =

Mary Celeste ( often misreported as Marie Celeste ) was an American merchant vessel brigantine that was found adrift and deserted in the Atlantic Ocean , off the Azores Islands , Portugal , on December 5 , 1872 , by the Canadian brigantine Dei Gratia . She was in a dishevelled but seaworthy condition , under partial sail , with nobody on board , and her lifeboat missing . The last log entry was dated ten days earlier . She had left New York City for Genoa on November 7 , and on discovery was still amply provisioned . Her cargo of denatured alcohol was intact , and the captain 's and crew 's personal belongings were undisturbed . None of those who had been on board , the captain and his wife , their two @-@ year @-@ old daughter , and the crew of seven , were ever seen or heard from again .

Mary Celeste was built in Spencer 's Island , Nova Scotia and launched under British registration as Amazon , in 1861 . She transferred to American ownership and registration in 1868 , when she acquired her new name , and thereafter sailed uneventfully until her 1872 voyage . At the salvage hearings in Gibraltar , following her recovery , the court 's officers considered various possibilities of foul play , including mutiny by Mary Celeste 's crew , piracy by the Dei Gratia crew or others , and conspiracy to carry out insurance or salvage fraud . No convincing evidence was found to support these theories , but unresolved suspicions led to a relatively low salvage award .

The inconclusive nature of the hearings helped to foster continued speculation as to the nature of the mystery , and the story has repeatedly been complicated by false detail and fantasy . Hypotheses that have been advanced include the effects on the crew of alcohol fumes rising from the cargo , submarine earthquakes ( seaquakes ) , waterspouts , attacks by giant squid , and paranormal intervention .

After the Gibraltar hearings , Mary Celeste continued in service under new owners . In 1885 , her captain deliberately wrecked her off the coast of Haiti , as part of an attempted insurance fraud . The story of her 1872 abandonment has been recounted and dramatized many times , in documentaries , novels , plays and films , and the name of the ship has become synonymous with unexplained desertion .

In 1884 , Arthur Conan Doyle wrote a short story based on the mystery , but spelled the vessel 's name as Marie Celeste . This spelling has now become more common than the original in everyday use .

= = Early history = =

= = = Amazon = = =

The keel of the future Mary Celeste was laid in late 1860 at the shipyard of Joshua Dewis in the village of Spencer 's Island , on the shores of the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia . The ship was constructed of locally felled timber , with two masts , and was rigged as a brigantine ; she was carvel @-@ built , with the hull planking flush rather than overlapping . She was launched on May 18 , 1861 , given the name Amazon , and registered at nearby Parrsboro on June 10 , 1861 . Her registration documents described her as 99 @.@ 3 feet ( 30 @.@ 3 m ) in length , 25 @.@ 5 feet ( 7 @.@ 8 m ) broad , with a depth of 11 @.@ 7 feet ( 3 @.@ 6 m ) , and of 198 @.@ 42 gross tonnage . She was owned by a local consortium of nine people , headed by Dewis ; among the co @-@ owners was Robert McLellan , the ship 's first captain .

For her maiden voyage in June 1861 , Amazon sailed to Five Islands to take on a cargo of timber for passage across the Atlantic to London . After supervising the ship 's loading , Captain McLellan fell ill ; his condition worsened , and Amazon returned to Spencer 's Island where McLellan died on June 19 . John Nutting Parker took over as captain , and resumed the voyage to London , in the course of which Amazon encountered further misadventures . She collided with fishing equipment in the narrows off Eastport , Maine , and after leaving London ran into and sank a brig in the English Channel .

Parker remained in command for two years , during which Amazon worked mainly in the West Indies trade . She crossed the Atlantic to France in November 1861 , and in Marseille was the subject of a painting , possibly by Honoré de Pellegriin , a well @-@ known maritime artist of the Marseilles School . In 1863 Parker was succeeded by William Thompson , who remained in command until 1867 . These were quiet years ; Amazon 's mate later recalled that " we went to the West Indies , England and the Mediterranean ? what we call the foreign trade . Not a thing unusual happened " . In October 1867 , at Cape Breton Island , Amazon was driven ashore in a storm , and was so badly damaged that her owners abandoned her as a wreck . On October 15 , she was acquired as a derelict by Alexander McBean , of Glace Bay , Nova Scotia .

= = = New owners , new name = = =

Within a month , McBean sold the wreck to a local businessman , who in November 1868 , sold it to Richard W. Haines , an American mariner from New York . Haines paid US \$ 1 @, @ 750 for the wreck , and then spent \$ 8 @, @ 825 restoring it . He made himself her captain , and in December 1868 registered her with the Collector of Customs in New York as an American vessel , under a new name , Mary Celeste .

In October 1869 , the ship was seized by Haines 's creditors , and sold to a New York consortium headed by James H. Winchester . During the next three years , the composition of this consortium changed several times , although Winchester retained at least a half @-@ share throughout . There is no record of Mary Celeste 's trading activities during this period . Early in 1872 , the ship underwent a major refit , costing \$ 10 @, @ 000 , which enlarged her considerably . Her length was increased to 103 feet ( 31 m ) , her breadth to 25 @. @ 7 feet ( 7 @. @ 8 m ) and her depth to 16 @. @ 2 feet ( 4 @. @ 9 m ) . Among the structural changes , a second deck was added ; an inspector 's report refers to extensions to the poop , new transoms and the replacement of many timbers . The work increased the ship 's tonnage to 282 @. @ 28 . On October 29 , 1872 , the consortium was made up of Winchester , with six @-@ twelfths ; two minor investors with one @-@ twelfth apiece , and the remaining four @-@ twelfths held by the ship 's new captain , Benjamin Spooner Briggs .

= = = Captain Briggs and crew = = =

Benjamin Briggs was born in Wareham , Massachusetts on April 24 , 1835 , one of five sons of sea captain Nathan Briggs . All but one of the sons went to sea , two becoming captains . Benjamin was an observant Christian who read the Bible regularly and often bore witness to his faith at prayer meetings . In 1862 , he married his cousin Sarah Elizabeth Cobb , and enjoyed a Mediterranean honeymoon on board his schooner Forest King . Two children were born : son Arthur in September 1865 , and daughter Sophia Matilda in October 1870 .

By the time of Sophia 's birth , Briggs had achieved a high standing within his profession . Nevertheless , he considered retiring from the sea to go into business with his seafaring brother Oliver , who had also grown tired of the wandering life . They did not proceed with this project , but instead each invested his savings in a share of a ship : Oliver in Julia A. Hallock , and Benjamin in Mary Celeste . In October 1872 , Benjamin took command of Mary Celeste for her first voyage following her extensive New York refit , which took her to Genoa in Italy . He arranged for his wife and infant daughter to accompany him , while his school @-@ aged son was left at home with his grandmother .

Briggs chose the crew for this voyage with care . First mate Albert G. Richardson was married to a niece of Winchester and had sailed under Briggs before . Second mate Andrew Gilling , aged about 25 , was Danish in origin although born in New York . The steward , newly married Edward William Head , was signed on with a personal recommendation from Winchester . The four general seaman were all Germans from the Frisian Islands : the brothers Volkert and Boz Lorenzen , Arian Martens , and Gottlieb Goodschaad . A later testimonial described them as " peaceable and first @-@ class sailors " . In a letter to his mother shortly before the voyage , Briggs declared himself eminently

satisfied with ship and crew . Sarah Briggs informed her mother that the crew appeared to be quietly capable , " if they continue as they have begun " .

= = Abandonment = =

= = = New York = = =

On October 20 , 1872 , Briggs arrived at Pier 50 on the East River , New York City , to supervise the loading of the ship 's cargo for Genoa : 1 @, @ 701 barrels of poisonous denatured alcohol . A week later , Briggs was joined by his wife and baby daughter . On Sunday , November 3 , Briggs wrote to his mother , telling her that he intended to leave on Tuesday , adding that " Our vessel is in beautiful trim and I hope we shall have a fine passage " .

On Tuesday morning , November 5 , Mary Celeste left Pier 50 and moved into New York Harbor . The weather was uncertain , and Briggs decided to wait for better conditions . He anchored the ship just off Staten Island , where Sarah used the delay to send a final letter to her mother @-@ in @-@ law , in which she wrote : " Tell Arthur I make great dependence on the letters I shall get from him , and will try to remember anything that happens on the voyage which he would be pleased to hear " . On November 7 , when the weather eased , Mary Celeste left the harbor and went out into the Atlantic .

While Mary Celeste prepared to sail , another brigantine , the Canadian Dei Gratia , lay in nearby Hoboken , New Jersey , awaiting a cargo of petroleum destined for Genoa via Gibraltar . Her captain , David Morehouse , and his first mate Oliver Deveau , were Nova Scotians , both highly experienced and respected seamen . As captains with common interests , it is likely that Morehouse and Briggs knew each other , if only casually . Some accounts assert that they were close friends who , on the evening before Mary Celeste 's departure , dined together , but the evidence for this is limited to a recollection by Morehouse 's widow , 50 years after the event . Dei Gratia departed for Gibraltar on November 15 , eight days after Mary Celeste , following the same general route .

= = = Derelict = = =

Dei Gratia had reached a position of 38 ° 20'N , 17 ° 15'W , midway between the Azores and the coast of Portugal at about 1 pm on Wednesday , December 4 , 1872 , land time ( Thursday , December 5 , sea time ) , . As Captain Morehouse came on deck , the helmsman reported a vessel about 6 miles ( 9 @. @ 7 km ) distant , heading unsteadily towards Dei Gratia . The ship 's erratic movements and the odd set of her sails led Morehouse to suspect that something was wrong . As the vessels drew close , he could see nobody on deck , and he received no reply to his signals , so he sent Deveau and second mate John Wright to investigate . The pair established that she was the Mary Celeste from the name on her stern , then climbed aboard where they found the ship deserted . The sails , partly set , were in a poor condition , some missing altogether , and much of the rigging was damaged , with ropes hanging loosely over the sides . The main hatch cover was secure , but the fore and lazarette hatches were open , their covers beside them on the deck . The ship 's single lifeboat was missing , a small yawl that had apparently been stowed across the main hatch , while the binnacle housing the ship 's compass had shifted from its place , its glass cover broken . There was about 3 @. @ 5 feet ( 1 @. @ 1 m ) of water in the hold , a significant but not alarming amount for a ship this size . A makeshift sounding rod ( a device for measuring the amount of water in the hold ) was found abandoned on the deck .

The last entry on the ship 's daily log , found in the mate 's cabin , was dated at 8 : 00 am on November 25 , nine days earlier . It recorded Mary Celeste 's position then as 37 ° 01'N , 25 ° 01'W , off Santa Maria Island in the Azores ? nearly 400 nautical miles ( 740 km ) from the point where Dei Gratia encountered her . Deveau saw that the cabin interiors were wet and untidy from water which had entered through doorways and skylights , but were otherwise in reasonable order . In Briggs 's cabin , Deveau found personal items scattered about , including a sheathed sword under the bed ,

but most of the ship 's papers were missing , together with the captain 's navigational instruments . Galley equipment was neatly stowed away ; there was no food prepared or under preparation , but there were ample provisions in the stores . There were no obvious signs of fire or violence ; the evidence indicated an orderly departure from the ship , by means of the missing lifeboat .

Deveau reported these findings to Morehouse , who agreed to bring the derelict into Gibraltar , 600 nautical miles ( 1 @, @ 100 km ) away . Under maritime law , a salvor could expect a substantial share of the combined value of rescued vessel and cargo , the exact award depending on the degree of danger inherent in the salvaging . Morehouse divided Dei Gratia 's crew of eight between the two vessels , sending Deveau and two experienced seamen to Mary Celeste , while he and four others remained on Dei Gratia . The weather was relatively calm for most of the way to Gibraltar , but with each ship seriously undermanned , progress was slow . Dei Gratia reached Gibraltar on December 12 , 1872 , and Mary Celeste , which had encountered fog , arrived on the following morning . She was immediately impounded by the vice admiralty court , preparatory to salvage hearings . Deveau wrote to his wife that the ordeal of bringing the ship in was such that " I can hardly tell what I am made of , but I do not care so long as I got in safe . I shall be well paid for the Mary Celeste " .

= = Gibraltar salvage hearings = =

The salvage court hearings began in Gibraltar on December 17 , 1872 , under Sir James Cochrane , the chief justice of Gibraltar . The hearing was conducted by Frederick Solly Flood , Attorney General of Gibraltar who was also Advocate @-@ General and Proctor for the Queen in Her Office of Admiralty . Flood was described by one historian of the Mary Celeste affair as a man " whose arrogance and pomposity were inversely proportional to his IQ " , and as " the sort of man who , once he had made up his mind about something , couldn 't be shifted " . The testimonies of Deveau and Wright convinced Flood unalterably that a crime had been committed , a belief picked up by the New York Shipping and Commercial List on December 21 : " The inference is that there has been foul play somewhere , and that alcohol is at the bottom of it " .

On December 23 , Flood ordered an examination of Mary Celeste , which was carried out by John Austin , Surveyor of Shipping , with the assistance of a diver , Ricardo Portunato . Austin noted cuts on each side of the bow , caused , he thought , by a sharp instrument , and found possible traces of blood on the captain 's sword . His report emphasized that the ship did not appear to have been struck by heavy weather , citing a phial of sewing machine oil found upright in its place ; Austin did not acknowledge that the phial might have been replaced since the abandonment , nor did the court raise this point . Portunato 's report on the hull concluded that the ship had not been involved in a collision or run aground . A further inspection by a group of Royal Naval captains endorsed Austin 's opinion that the cuts on the bow had been caused deliberately . They also discovered stains on one of the ship 's rails that might have been blood , together with a deep mark possibly caused by an axe . These findings strengthened Flood 's suspicions that human wrongdoing rather than natural disaster lay behind the mystery . On January 22 , 1873 , he sent the reports to the Board of Trade in London , adding his own conclusion that the crew had got at the alcohol ( he ignored its non @-@ potability ) and murdered the Briggs family and the ship 's officers in a drunken frenzy . They had cut the bows to simulate a collision , then fled in the yawl to suffer an unknown fate . Flood thought that Morehouse and his men were hiding something , specifically that Mary Celeste had been abandoned in a more easterly location , and that the log had been doctored . He could not accept that Mary Celeste could have traveled so far while unmanned .

James Winchester arrived in Gibraltar on January 15 , to inquire when Mary Celeste might be released to deliver its cargo . Flood demanded a surety of \$ 15 @, @ 000 , money which Winchester did not have . He became aware that Flood thought he might have deliberately engaged a crew that would kill Briggs and his officers , as part of some conspiracy . On January 29 , during a series of sharp exchanges with Flood , Winchester testified to Briggs 's high character , and insisted that he would not have abandoned the ship except in extremity . Flood 's theories of mutiny and murder received significant setbacks when scientific analysis of the stains found on the sword and

elsewhere on the ship showed that they were not blood . A second blow to Flood followed in a report commissioned by Horatio Sprague , the American consul in Gibraltar , from Captain Shufeldt of the US Navy . In Shufeldt 's view the marks on the bow were not man @-@ made , but came from the natural actions of the sea on the ship 's timbers .

With nothing concrete to support his suspicions , Flood reluctantly released Mary Celeste from the court 's jurisdiction on February 25 . Two weeks later , with a locally raised crew headed by Captain George Blatchford from Massachusetts , she left Gibraltar for Genoa . The question of the salvage payment was decided on April 8 , when Cochrane announced the award : £ 1 @, @ 700 , or about one @-@ fifth of the total value of ship and cargo . This was far lower than the general expectation ? one authority thought that the award should have been twice or even three times that amount , given the level of hazard in bringing the derelict into port . Cochrane 's final words were harshly critical of Morehouse for his decision , earlier in the hearing , to send Dei Gratia under Deveau to deliver its cargo of petroleum ? although Morehouse had remained in Gibraltar at the disposal of the court . Cochrane 's tone carried an implication of wrongdoing which , says Hicks , ensured that Morehouse and his crew " would be under suspicion in the court of public opinion forever " .

= = Proposed solutions = =

= = = Foul play = = =

Although the evidence in Gibraltar failed to support Flood 's theories of murder and conspiracy , the suspicion of foul play lingered . Insurance fraud on the part of Winchester was briefly suspected , on the grounds of newspaper reports that Mary Celeste had been heavily over @-@ insured . Winchester was able to refute these allegations , and no inquiry was instituted by the insurance companies which had issued the policies . In 1931 an article in the Quarterly Review suggested that Morehouse could have lain in wait for Mary Celeste , then lured Briggs and his crew aboard Dei Gratia and killed them there . Paul Begg , in his account of the mystery , comments that this theory ignores undisputed facts : Dei Gratia left New York eight days after Mary Celeste , was a slower ship , and would not have caught Mary Celeste before the latter reached Gibraltar . Another theory posits that Briggs and Morehouse were partners in a conspiracy to share the salvage proceedings . The unsubstantiated friendship between the two captains has been cited by commentators as making such a plan a plausible explanation . Hicks comments that " if Morehouse and Briggs had been planning such a scam , they would not have devised such an attention @-@ drawing mystery " , and also asks why , if Briggs was intending to disappear permanently , he left his son Arthur behind .

Other theories of foul play have suggested an attack by Riffian pirates , who were active off the coast of Morocco in the 1870s . Charles Edey Fay , in his 1942 account , observes that pirates would have looted the ship , yet the personal possessions of captain and crew , some of significant value , were left undisturbed . In 1925 , the historian John Gilbert Lockhart surmised that Briggs , in a fit of a religious mania , had slaughtered all on board and then killed himself . In a later edition of his book Lockhart , who had by then spoken to Briggs 's descendants , apologized and withdrew this theory .

= = = Natural phenomena = = =

Commentators generally agree that , to precipitate such a course of action as abandonment of an apparently sound and seaworthy ship , with ample provisions , some extraordinary and alarming circumstance must have arisen . In his evidence to the enquiry , Deveau ventured an explanation based on the sounding rod found on the derelict 's deck . He suggested that Briggs abandoned ship after a sounding which , because of a malfunction of the pumps or other mishap , had given a false impression that the vessel was taking on water rapidly . A severe waterspout strike before the abandonment could explain the amount of water in the ship , and the ragged state of her rigging and sails . The low barometric pressure generated by the spout could have driven water from the bilges

up into the pumps , leading the crew to assume the ship had taken on more water than she had , and was in danger of sinking .

Other proffered explanations are the appearance of a displaced iceberg ; the fear of running aground while becalmed , and a sudden " seaquake " . Hydrographical evidence suggests the improbability of an iceberg drifting so far south , and had it done so it would have been spotted by other ships . Begg gives more consideration to the theory that Mary Celeste , while becalmed , began drifting towards the Dollabarot reef off Santa Maria Island . Fearing she would run aground , Briggs launched the yawl in the hope of reaching land . The wind then picked up and blew Mary Celeste away from the reef , but in the rising seas the yawl was swamped , and sank . The weakness of this theory is that if the ship had been becalmed , all sails would have been set to catch any available breeze , yet the ship was found with many of its sails furled .

As to the seaquake theory , this disturbance ? an earthquake on the sea bed ? could , it is surmised , have caused sufficient turbulence on the surface to damage parts of the cargo , thus releasing noxious fumes . The displaced hatches might indicate that an inspection , or an attempted airing , took place . Rising fears of an imminent explosion could plausibly have led Briggs to order the abandonment . The New York World of January 24 , 1886 , drew attention to a case where a vessel carrying alcohol had exploded . The same journal 's issue of February 9 , 1913 , cited a seepage of alcohol through a few porous barrels as the source of gases that may have caused or threatened an explosion in the hold . Briggs 's cousin Oliver Cobb was a strong proponent of this theory as providing a sufficiently alarming scenario ? rumblings from the hold , the smell of escaping fumes and possibly an explosion ? for Briggs to have ordered the evacuation of the ship . The lack of damage from an explosion and the generally sound state of the cargo upon discovery tend to weaken this case . In 2006 an experiment was carried out for Channel Five television by Andrea Sella of University College , London , the results of which helped to revive the " explosion " theory . Sella built a model of the hold , with paper cartons representing the barrels . Using butane gas , he created an explosion , which caused a considerable blast and ball of flame , but contrary to expectation , no fire damage within the replica hold . " What we created was a pressure @-@ wave type of explosion . There was a spectacular wave of flame but , behind it , was relatively cool air . No soot was left behind and there was no burning or scorching " .

Cobb believed that the transfer of personnel to the yawl may have been intended as a temporary safety measure . He speculated from Deveau 's report on the state of the rigging and ropes that the ship 's main halliard may have been used to attach the yawl to the ship . Thus , when the danger had passed , the company could return on board . The line could subsequently have parted , whereupon Mary Celeste sailed away empty while the yawl foundered with its occupants . Begg notes the illogicality of attaching the yawl to a vessel that the crew thought was about to explode or sink , while the modern writer Macdonald Hastings asks whether Briggs , an experienced captain , would have effected a panicky abandonment of the ship when , " if the Mary Celeste had blown her timbers , she would still have been a better bet for survival than the ship 's boat " . If this is what happened , Briggs " behaved like a fool ; worse , a frightened one " .

= = Myths and false histories = =

In the decades that followed , fact and fiction became intertwined . As early as June 1883 , the Los Angeles Times retold the Mary Celeste story with invented detail : " Every sail was set , the tiller was lashed fast , not a rope was out of place ... The fire was burning in the galley . The dinner was standing untasted and scarcely cold ... the log [ was ] written up to the hour of her discovery " . Twenty years later , in the November 1906 Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine , Mary Celeste was recorded as drifting off the Cape Verde Islands , some 1 @,@ 400 nautical miles ( 2 @,@ 600 km ) south of the actual location . Among many inaccuracies , the first mate was " a man named Briggs " , and there were live chickens on board .

The most influential retelling , which according to many commentators ensured that the Mary Celeste affair would never be forgotten , was a story in the January 1884 issue of the Cornhill Magazine . This was an early work of Arthur Conan Doyle , then a 25 @-@ year @-@ old ship 's

surgeon . Doyle 's story , entitled " J. Habakuk Jephson 's Statement " , did not adhere to the facts ; he renamed the ship " Marie Celeste " , the captain 's name was " J. W. Tibbs " , the fatal voyage took place in 1873 and was from Boston to Lisbon . The vessel carried passengers , among them the eponymous Jephson . In the story , another passenger , a fanatic named Septimus Goring with a hatred of the white race , has suborned members of the crew to murder Tibbs and take the vessel to the shores of Western Africa . Here , the rest of the ship 's company is killed , save for Jephson who is spared because he possesses a magical charm that is venerated by Goring and his accomplices . Doyle had not expected his story to be taken seriously , but Sprague , still serving as the US consul in Gibraltar , was sufficiently intrigued to inquire if any part of the story might be true .

In 1913 , The Strand Magazine provided another alleged survivor 's account , from one " Abel Fosdyk " , supposedly Mary Celeste 's steward . In this version all on board ( except Fosdyk ) were drowned or eaten by sharks , when a temporary platform , on which they had crowded to watch a swimming contest , collapsed into the sea . Unlike Doyle 's story , this was proposed by the magazine as a serious solution to the enigma , but it contained many simple errors : " Griggs " for Briggs , " Boyce " for Morehouse , Briggs 's daughter as a seven @-@ year @-@ old child rather than a two @-@ year @-@ old , a crew of 13 and an ignorance of nautical language . Many more people were convinced by a plausible literary hoax of the 1920s , perpetrated by an Irish writer , Laurence J. Keating . Again presented as a survivor 's story ? one " John Pemberton " ? this told a complex tale of murder , madness and collusion with the Dei Gratia . It included basic errors such as using Doyle 's name " Marie Celeste " , and misnaming key personnel . Nevertheless , the story was so convincingly told that the New York Herald Tribune of July 26 , 1926 , thought its truth beyond dispute . Hastings describes Keating 's hoax as " an impudent trick , by a man not without imaginative ability " .

In 1924 , the Daily Express published a story from a retired naval war hero , Captain R. Lucy , whose informant , allegedly , was Mary Celeste 's former bosun ? no such person is recorded in the registered crew list . In this tale , Briggs and his crew are cast in the role of predators ; they sight a derelict steamer , which they board and find deserted , with £ 3 @, @ 500 @-@ worth of gold and silver in its safe . They decide to split the money , abandon Mary Celeste , and seek new lives in Spain , which they reach by using the steamer 's lifeboats . Hastings finds it astonishing that such an unlikely story was , for a time , widely believed ; readers , he says " were fooled by the magic of print " .

Chambers 's Journal of September 17 , 1904 , suggests that the entire complement of Mary Celeste was plucked off one by one by a giant octopus or squid . According to the Natural History Museum , giant squid , or *Architeuthis dux* , can reach 49 feet ( 15 m ) in length ; they have been known to attack ships . Begg remarks that while such a creature could conceivably have picked off a crew member , it could hardly have taken the yawl and the captain 's navigation instruments . Other explanations have suggested paranormal intervention ; an undated edition of the British Journal of Astrology describes the Mary Celeste story as " a mystical experience , connecting it by processes of reasoning beyond the power of ordinary human understanding , with the Great Pyramid of Gizeh , the lost continent of Atlantis , and the British Israel Movement " . The Bermuda Triangle has been invoked , even though Mary Celeste was abandoned in a completely different part of the Atlantic . Similar fantasies have considered theories of abduction by aliens in flying saucers .

= = Later career and final voyage = =

Mary Celeste left Genoa on June 26 , 1873 , and arrived in New York on September 19 . The Gibraltar hearings , with newspaper stories of bloodshed and murder , had made her an unpopular ship ; Hastings records that she " rotted on wharves where nobody wanted her " . In February 1874 , the consortium sold the ship , at a considerable loss , to a partnership of New York businessmen .

Under this new ownership , Mary Celeste sailed mainly in the West Indian and Indian Ocean routes , regularly losing money . Details of her movements occasionally appeared in the shipping news ; in February 1879 , she was reported at the island of St. Helena , where she had called to seek medical assistance for her captain , Edgar Tuthill , who had fallen ill . Tuthill died on the island , encouraging

the idea that the ship was cursed ? he was her third captain to die prematurely . In February 1880 , the owners sold the Mary Celeste to a partnership of Bostonians headed by Wesley Gove . A new captain , Thomas L. Fleming , remained in the post until August 1884 , when he was replaced by Gilman C. Parker . During these years , the ship 's port of registration changed several times , before reverting to Boston . There are no records of her voyages during this time , although Brian Hicks , in his study of the affair , asserts that Gove tried hard to make a success of her .

In November 1884 , Parker conspired with a group of Boston shippers , who filled Mary Celeste with a largely worthless cargo , misrepresented on the ship 's manifest as valuable goods and insured for US \$ 30 000 ( \$ 790 000 today ) . On December 16 , Parker set out for Port au Prince , the capital and chief port of Haiti . On January 3 , 1885 , Mary Celeste approached the port via the channel between Gonâve Island and the mainland , in which lay a large and well charted coral reef , the Rochelois Bank . Parker deliberately ran the ship on to this reef , ripping out her bottom and wrecking her beyond repair . He and the crew then rowed themselves ashore , where Parker sold the salvageable cargo for \$ 500 to the American consul , and instituted insurance claims for the alleged value .

When the consul discovered what he had bought was almost worthless , the insurance company began a thorough investigation , which soon revealed the truth of the over insured cargo . In July 1885 , Parker and the shippers were tried in Boston for conspiracy to commit insurance fraud . Parker was additionally charged with " wilfully cast [ ing ] away the ship " , a crime known as barratry and at the time carrying the death penalty . The conspiracy case was heard first , but on August 15 , the jury announced that they could not agree on a verdict . Some jurors were unwilling to risk prejudicing Parker 's forthcoming capital trial by finding him guilty on the conspiracy charge . Rather than ordering an expensive retrial , the judge negotiated an arrangement whereby the defendants withdrew their insurance claims and repaid all they had received . The barratry charge against Parker was deferred , and he was allowed to go free . Nevertheless , his professional reputation was ruined , and he died in poverty three months later . One of his co defendants went mad , and another committed suicide . Begg observes that " if the court of man could not punish these men ... the curse that had devilled the ship since her first skipper Robert McLellan had died on her maiden voyage could reach beyond the vessel 's watery grave and exact its own terrible retribution . "

In August 2001 , an expedition headed by the marine archaeologist and author Clive Cussler announced that they had found the remains of a ship embedded in the Rochelois reef . Only a few pieces of timber and some metal artifacts could be salvaged , the remainder of the wreckage being lost within the coral . Initial tests on the wood indicated that it was the type extensively used in New York shipyards at the time of Mary Celeste 's 1872 refit , and it seemed the remains of the Mary Celeste had been found . However , dendrochronological tests carried out by Scott St George of the Geological Survey of Canada showed that the wood came from trees , most probably from the US state of Georgia , that would still have been growing in 1894 , about ten years after the ship 's demise .

= = Legacy and commemorations = =

Mary Celeste was not the first reported case of a ship being found strangely deserted on the high seas . Rupert Gould , a naval officer and investigator of maritime mysteries , lists several such occurrences between 1840 and 1855 . Whatever the truth of these stories , it is the Mary Celeste that is remembered ; the ship 's name , or Doyle 's version of it , has become fixed in people 's minds as synonymous with inexplicable desertion . The Oxford English Dictionary includes an entry for the term Marie Celeste , defining it as " Allusively : a place suddenly and inexplicably deserted " , with citations from 1966 onwards using this spelling ; Mary Celeste is shown as an alternative spelling .

In October 1955 , the MV Joyita , a 70 ton motor vessel , disappeared in the South Pacific while traveling between Samoa and Tokelau , with 25 people on board . The vessel was found a month later , deserted and drifting north of Vanua Levu , 600 miles ( 970 km ) from its route . None of those aboard was seen again , and a commission of inquiry failed to establish an explanation .



David Wright , the affair 's principal historian , has described the case as " a classic marine mystery of Mary Celeste proportions " .

The Mary Celeste story inspired two well @-@ received radio plays in the 1930s , by L. Du Garde Peach and Tim Healey respectively , and a stage version of Peach 's play in 1949 . Several novels have been published , generally offering natural rather than fantastic explanations . In 1935 , the British film company Hammer Film Productions issued The Mystery of the Mary Celeste ( retitled Phantom Ship for American audiences ) , starring Bela Lugosi as a deranged sailor . It was not a commercial success , although Begg considers it " a period piece well worth watching " . A 1938 short film titled The Ship That Died presents dramatizations of a range of theories to explain the abandonment : mutiny , fear of explosion due to alcohol fumes , and the supernatural . A 1965 episode of Doctor Who , entitled ? Flight Through Eternity ? , takes place on the Mary Celeste ? in the episode the crew are scared into abandoning ship by the arrival of the daleks , who were chasing the Doctor and his companions . The January 24 , 1980 episode of the paranormal investigation television series In Search of ... focused on the mystery . In November 2007 , the Smithsonian Channel screened a documentary , The True Story of the Mary Celeste , which investigated many aspects of the case without offering any definite solution .

At Spencer 's Island , Mary Celeste and her lost crew are commemorated by a monument at the site of the brigantine 's construction and by a memorial outdoor cinema built in the shape of the vessel 's hull . The ship has featured on postage stamps issued by the Maldives Islands , and by Gibraltar .