

*Adventurous struggle to live, love  
and survive in the 1800's.*

## **LEGEND OF BEARDS HOLLOW**

by Kent D. Walsh

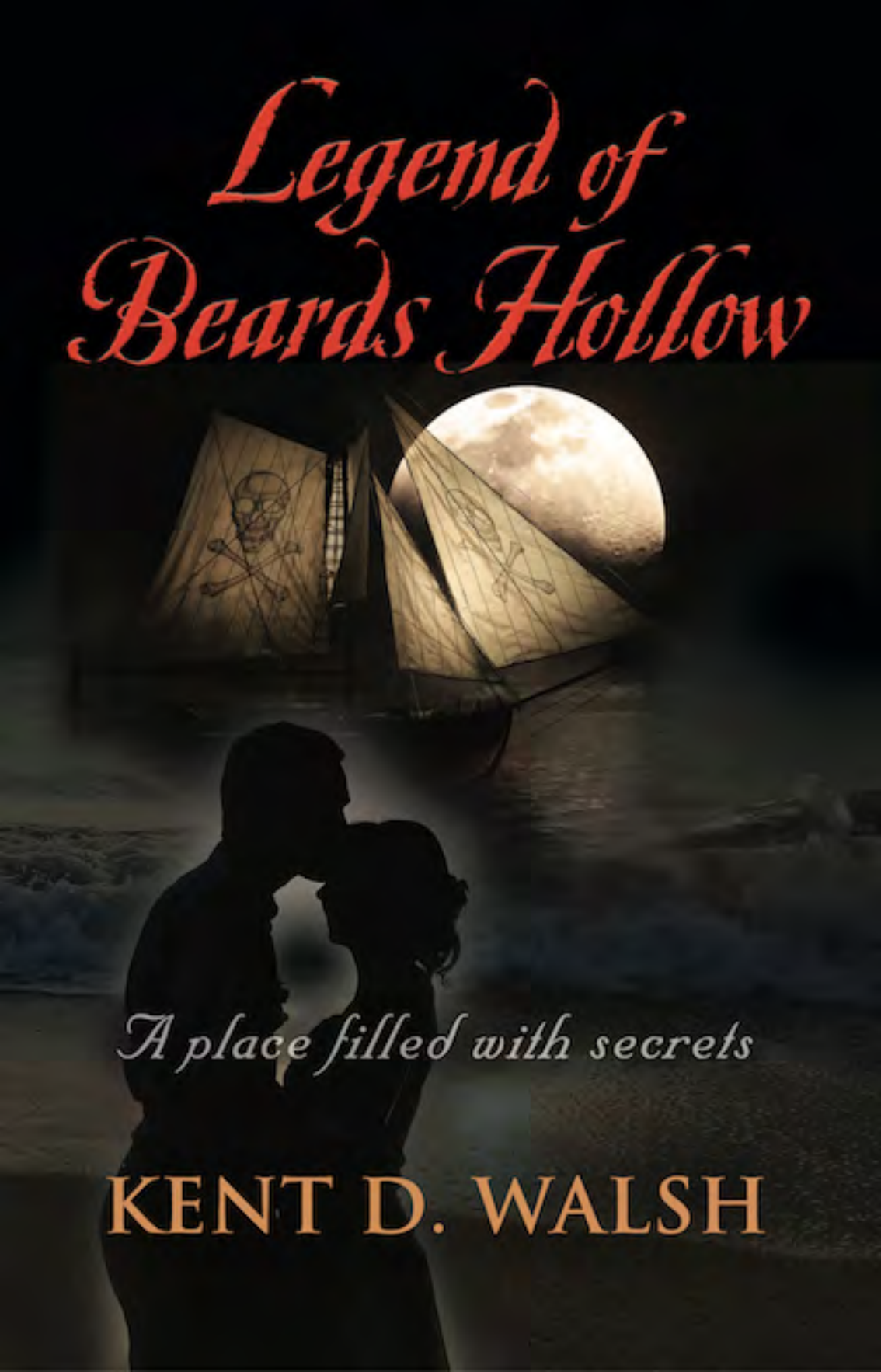
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# *Legend of Beards Hollow*



*A place filled with secrets*

**KENT D. WALSH**

# **LEGEND OF BEARDS HOLLOW**

Written by:

**KENT D. WALSH**

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## CHAPTER TWO

I, William Robinson, write this history by my own hand this 6<sup>th</sup> day of August in the year of our Lord 1854, to the best that I can remember. Some of the names I may have forgotten but the events that took place have been forever burned into my very soul.

The ship I sailed on was called *The Sea Galley*—she was a merchant sailing ship, guided by a warm-hearted master-mariner by the name of, Captain Richard Town. Not only was he the commander of the ship, he was a true friend—rescuing me from the streets of San Francisco when I was a lad of just fifteen years. Since at the time I didn't know my last name he started calling me Robinson, which was also his middle name. Our first mate was an intelligent and jovial fellow named Isaac Templeton—a man that took enough interest in me to teach me how to read and write, and how to be a mariner. Our crew was a dedicated bunch of seafaring men of all ages—the youngest aged about thirteen, the oldest about sixty. They were all highly trained and committed to their job of delivering goods from one port to another.

On this particular voyage, during the year of 1851, our cargo was gold coins, fine linens and wheat and barley among others. We shipped out of San Francisco bound for New York City. This was a time when vicious pirates in search of gold roamed the seas in abundance, robbing and stealing from the defenseless sailors that worked so very hard to make an honest living. The

pirates murdered many of those sailors outright, or, for greater enjoyment, forced them to walk the plank. Some they kept alive as slaves to do hard and dirty labor on their ships. Unfortunately the crew of *The Sea Galley* was destined to suffer that very same fate.

This story is one that will haunt me until my memories are no more. It happened on a night when the skies were very dark, as clouds covered the stars and the moon. The sea was quiet, and the wind was but a gentle breeze as *The Sea Galley* slowly moved through the calm waters of the Pacific Ocean.

Late that night, as our lookout accidentally drifted off to sleep, another ship silently crept close to *The Sea Galley*. It was a schooner called the *Devil's Shadow*—a pirate ship! The captain was an evil man by the name of Brutus Ruff, a fierce fighter known far and wide and feared by all who knew of him. He was very large and hairy and looked like a bear. His hair was long and black, his beard almost gray, and his eyebrows were bushy. On the left side of his cheek he had a long, jagged scar; it was said to be from a flailing sword of a past battle, from which he emerged the victor! His crew was a bunch of vicious outcasts who enjoyed robbing and stealing and administering as much pain and suffering to anyone else as they possibly could. Second in command was the first mate, a ruthless rogue by the name of Burton Klug. Like Captain Ruff he was a man of evil. He was short in stature with a big belly and had a shaggy black beard covered in dirty-looking splotches of gray.

Boldly, the *Devil's Shadow* pulled up abeam *The Sea Galley*; its crew, a murderous group of thugs, threw hooks attached to ropes onto our deck, pulling the two ships tightly together. Then the pirates, swinging across on ropes and flooding over the side rails, muskets blasting and swords flailing, boarded *The Sea Galley* before our crew even knew what was happening. Outnumbered and caught by total surprise, we were

overtaken in a matter of moments, and a helpless Captain Town and his men were captured.

The pirates raided the ship, stealing everything they could find. They ripped open the wooden crates containing food, garments, spices, and other goods, and stole every bit of it. Along with the cargo they took everything of value, including gold coins, jewelry, extra boots and clothing, ropes, tools, and such. They even stole the canvas from the sails and anything else that could have possibly helped propel their vessel.

After the pirates were done with their looting, Captain Ruff screamed, “Let’s put the captain, his first mate and the sick and wounded on the plank, and we’ll see if they can swim!”

The other pirates started grabbing the sick and wounded crew of *The Sea Galley* and dragging them to a large plank the pirates had extended out over the water. Pointing a sword at the belly of Captain Town, Burton Klug yelled, “You’ll be the first to walk the plank, Captain! Now start walking!”

Tears came to my eyes as this proud man walked out to the end of the plank, a sword poking him in his back and stepped off the end. He did not cry out or beg for mercy—he died with honor and dignity.

With hands tied behind his back, Isaac Templeton was next. As he reached the end of the plank he turned and blurted out, God Bless us all! At that same time Burton Klug jabbed him in the neck with his sword and Isaac fell to the sea. After that the sick and the wounded were ushered one by one into their cold, wet graves.

After being forced to watch this horrific act, the remaining six members of the crew of *The Sea Galley*—which luckily I was a part of (at least that’s what I thought at the time)—were bunched together while our wrists and ankles were attached to each other by locks and heavy chains.

Adding to their despicable evil deed, Captain Brutus Ruff and his blood-thirsty band of pirates sailed off, leaving *The Sea Galley* in an inferno of flames while I and my fellow mates looked on in horror. Off in the distance as *The Sea Galley* began to sink Captain Ruff and his disgusting group of followers gleefully laughed and shouted obscenities at us and our sinking ship. Unable and afraid to speak we all stood silently, bowing our heads as we each said our own silent prayer.

After *The Sea Galley* was no longer in sight we were led down into the hull of the *Devil's Shadow* and attached to four ragged and sickly looking prisoners that had been captured before us! After our captors had gone back up on deck I asked one of the men we were chained to how long they had been there. Unfortunately neither he nor his fellow mates seemed to know. They said there used to be a dozen of them, but each time one of them had fallen ill or failed to work as hard as expected the pirates tied his hands and feet together and threw him overboard. We were told the pirates never asked what names the prisoners were called by: they just treated them like animals on their way to the slaughter. Whenever the pirates felt they needed additional men they would raid another merchant ship and do the same evil deeds to them as they did to us, including taking some of them prisoner to use as slaves.

We were told that in addition to the slave labor the prisoners provided, the pirates had collected tons of useable goods and a fortune in gold, fine jewelry, and other goods from the many ships they had raided. One of these men, a fellow named Asa Thomas, said while the goods would provide the pirates with food, clothing and some luxury during their travels at sea, he heard one of them say the treasure was headed for a different type of destination—a secret hiding place near the mouth of a great river on the western side of North America. It would be a



place for Captain Ruff to stash his gold and jewelry until he decided to settle down and live his life in leisure.

As the days passed, the details of our fate would prove to be true. Almost on a daily basis we were beaten, spit upon, and in some cases men were tossed overboard to the sharks. Our captors seemed to take great pleasure in watching their victims struggle to stay afloat as the waves rolled over their heads. They laughed and shouted with joy as their hapless prisoners screamed in pain as they were ripped apart by schools of vicious sharks. In fact poor Asa Thomas was shot in the face and thrown overboard when he cried out during one of those beatings. I think it was meant as a message to the rest of us to do exactly as we're told and to never answer back.

Each night I would silently pray that this was all just one big horrible dream. Unfortunately each morning when the sun would rise, it would all start again. Not only did we suffer great abuse at the hands of these pathetic thugs; we were allowed to eat only the left-over scraps of food and rotted garbage the pirates tossed on the floor of the compartment in which we were locked. As far as they were concerned, we were no better than disloyal dogs and were to be treated the same.

Our duties on the *Devil's Shadow* were unlimited. Scrubbing the decks, mending sails, dumping buckets of human waste into the sea—these were but a few of those deeds. If any of us ever objected we were severely beaten—knowing if we ever cried out we would surely be delivered over the side of the ship into the jaws of awaiting sharks. Yes, the pirates had taught us well—we just did our jobs and kept our mouths shut.

After having traveled north for about four weeks, another merchant ship was spotted. Not wanting to attract attention to the *Devil's Shadow*, Captain Ruff instructed his men to direct the ship in the opposite direction until it was just out of sight of his next victim. As the skies darkened, the *Devil's Shadow* changed

direction again and headed straight toward the unsuspecting vessel and her crew. Slowly we moved in the shadows of the night until the *Devil's Shadow* was alongside the merchant ship. The pirates then threw hooks attached to ropes onto the other ship's deck and pulled the two ships tightly together. Suddenly pirates began swinging across on ropes and climbing over the rails onto the merchant ship. Down below where we were chained, we could hear only the muskets exploding, together with the screams of the men from the merchant ship being slaughtered. Totally caught off guard and unable to defend themselves, the ship's captain instructed his men to surrender.

Then as the pirates did to *The Sea Galley*, they raided the ship, stealing everything they could find that might have had any value. After the pirates had finished their looting and hauled the goods into the hold of the *Devil's Shadow*, Captain Ruff instructed his men to bring out the plank. At that point all we could hear was Captain Ruff screaming for the ship's captain to march out on the plank. After him followed the first mate and then two of the wounded crew members. The cries of those being forced into the sea were horrifying—we could do little but sit and wait to see if there were any survivors to join us in chains.

Before sailing away from the merchant ship, the *Devil's Shadow* first mate, Burton Klug, told his men to set the merchant ship on fire. We could hear them laughing as they lit the torches to toss on deck. After it was ablaze all we could hear was the roar of the flames as the *Devil's Shadow* slowly began to pull away—another vessel destined for the bottom of the ocean.

A few minutes later the seven surviving crew members of the merchant ship were dragged down into the hull and chained together with the four of us that remained from *The Sea Galley*. The four that were there when we were captured had already met their fate by either being shot, tossed into the ocean or both.

*Legend of Beards Hollow*

With the new arrivals I now knew it was just a matter of time before the rest of us were to meet the same demise.

The rest of that evening the pirates drank rum, laughed, and celebrated their great victory until late into the night.

## CHAPTER THREE

Over the next several weeks we were all surprised none of us had been beaten severely or tossed to the sea. Even though we were grateful to be spared, we just weren't sure why it was happening—at least until one afternoon when we heard someone up in the crows nest holler “land ahoy.” Soon after, two of the pirates came down into the hold and unchained us. We were then escorted into another section of the ship where I was absolutely amazed to see the amount of gold coins, silver and fine jewelry that was stored there. At that point one of the pirates told us to start hauling the massive treasure up onto the deck.

It took the eleven of us almost an hour to get it all moved to the place where we were instructed to. By the time we were finished, the pirates had tied four smaller boats to the side of the ship—waiting for us to load them with the treasure. When instructing us to begin loading, Burton Klug added that if we dropped anything, no matter how tiny, into the sea we would follow it right to the bottom. We loaded the boats with apprehension, and when that was accomplished, we were divided into slave groups of two and three per boat and told to get in. Then along with Captain Ruff and a few of his crew we began rowing toward a large hollow cove in the hillside near the mouth of a great river.

After reaching the sandy shore, we dragged the boats as high up on the shoreline as we possibly could. Then Captain Ruff and two of his men walked up away from the beach to the high tide line towards a large monument of rock. Yelling back to

us he told two of us to bring the shovels; the rest he instructed to start hauling treasure to where he was standing. Now all of a sudden I knew why over the past several weeks none of us had been whipped or murdered—the pirates needed us physically sound, the better to do their hard work for them!

As we reached to where Captain Ruff was standing he said, “OK. You two start digging and don’t stop until I tell you.”

While we were digging the hole, the rest of the prisoners were hauling gold and jewelry to a spot a few feet away. After we had been digging for almost two hours Captain Ruff barked, “That’s deep enough! Now go over and start throwing the treasure in the hole. So that’s exactly what we did—while all during that time Captain Ruff was busy stepping off distances and drawing a map as to where we had buried the treasure.

When we were finished covering it with sand, one of my fellow prisoners, Herman Bailey, totally exhausted, stumbled and fell to the ground. “Oh, you want to lay in the sand do you?” screamed Captain Ruff. He then pulled out his pistol and shot Herman through the right eye—killing him instantly. Two of us were then forced to drag Herman’s lifeless body about fifty yards from where the treasure was buried and told to dig a grave.

Once we finished digging this second hole, we dragged Herman to the edge and rolled him in. Unfortunately he landed face down. Not wanting his body to forever rest in shame, I asked Captain Ruff if I could roll him over so he was buried with his face toward heaven, and God. But he screamed at me, “If you go in that hole to roll him over you’ll be laying next to him until the sea is no more—now if that’s what you want then go ahead, it’s your choice.”

Not wishing to die at that particular time, I picked up the shovel and started throwing sand on the body. By then I knew enough about that evil animal Ruff to know never to challenge

what he said. Anyone who did would end up with a bullet in his head the same as Herman Bailey did.

After we were done burying Herman we were led back to the boats and rowed out to the main ship. While hauling the smaller boats on board, two of the prisoners were so exhausted they were having trouble pulling them up. First Mate Burton Klug wasn't very happy about that, so with a big grin on his face he growled, "Let's go fishing boys, we're gonna feed the sharks." At that point their hands and feet were bound together. Then the two men were tied to a long rope and thrown over the side while the pirates gleefully shouted profanities such as, "Swim you bastards! Swim!"

However, since there were no sharks in the area at that time the pirates decided it would be fun to just drag these poor souls under the boat until some did come along. As Burton Klug put it, "If we keep fishing long enough they're bound to find the bait sooner or later."

After a while they tired of waiting for the sharks, so they hauled the men back on board. Of course by then they were both dead, so Klug had them untied from the rope they were being dragged with and discarded back into their watery graves. All during the time this was going on the rest of us were forced to stand and watch these despicable deeds. And there was nothing we could do about it. One thing was for sure, it was just a matter of time before the rest of us were murdered too.

That next evening, just before dark, the youngest of the prisoners, a lad named Levi Stevens, mentioned that he was feeling ill. Without hesitation Burton Klug ordered two of his men to tie his hands behind his back, drag him up on deck and throw him overboard.

At that point I begged this sick piece of garbage, Klug, to spare him. I said, "He is only but sixteen years of age and barely a man. Please let me nurse him back to health—he'll be fine."

Levi had been one of my original mates on *The Sea Galley*. Since he and I were of similar age—I was but two years his senior—and had much in common, I had really taken a liking to him. Like me, he grew up on the streets of San Francisco, was orphaned, and didn't know who his parents were or exactly how old he was—we were almost like brothers. He and I had talked of many things and had agreed that if we ever made it out of this mess we would go back to San Francisco and start a business together—and I certainly didn't want to see him murdered by this piece of filth Klug.

I knew I was taking a risk by speaking up, but felt I had to try to save my friend. First Mate Klug was enraged by my plea. Without saying a word he raised his pistol and shot Levi straight through the heart—killing him instantly. He then ordered two of his men to drag the body up on deck and dump it overboard. Growling at me he said, “That's the only mercy you'll ever get from me—and if you speak again you'll be next.”

At that very moment, sobbing uncontrollably, I screamed, “You sick bastard!”

“Tell me what name you go by,” he bellowed.

“I am William Robinson,” I shot back.

Angrily, with his evil eyes glaring into mine and in a deep growling voice Klug said, “Tomorrow will be your turn to die, William Robinson!” He then struck me on the back several times with a heavy piece of rope while his men dragged Levi up the steps to the deck. After he tired of beating me he threw the rope to the floor and stomped off to watch the discarding of Levi's body.

After the pirates tossed my friend over the side into the ocean a scream came from the crows nest: “Ship ahoy, ship ahoy!”

Racing to the front of the ship Captain Ruff hollered, “What is she?”

“She looks like a merchant ship and she’s heading right for us,” the voice answered back.

Pointing in the direction of his next unsuspecting victims Captain Ruff screamed, “Get ready to attack.”

Slowly, the *Devil’s Shadow* approached the merchant ship in a manner of friendliness. Suddenly, only a few yards away, the merchant ship turned sideways, raising a skull and crossbones flag and opening fire, both cannon and musket. Captain Ruff had picked on the wrong ship this time—another band of pirates.

Totally caught off guard, Captain Ruff and his men barely had a chance to fire a shot before their mighty ship began to come to pieces. All during that time Captain Ruff screamed for his men to fire back, but very few did because these cowards were too busy scrambling around looking for a place to hide.

Blood-curdling cries rang out as a large cannonball ripped through the ship’s hull, impaling several men at a time with giant splinters from the shattered wood. Then another blast! And then another! Towering sails came crashing down as shredded canvas covered the deck. Many of the *Devil’s Shadow* crew began crying for mercy as they began jumping into the sea rather than trying to defend their bloodthirsty vessel of horror. Their adversaries, however, had no intention of sparing any lives as they continued to shoot anyone they could see, on deck or in the water—and so, the fate of Brutus Ruff and his band of heathens had apparently been sealed from the sound of the first cannon blast.

As its hold began to fill with water, the *Devil’s Shadow* rolled slightly to starboard. The body of a crew member washed towards me; the dead sailor was carrying several keys on a ring. Reaching out as far as I could I was able to grab them. After unlocking the chains that bound my hands and feet I released my fellow prisoners. We all raced to the deck as the sounds of



cannon and muskets continued to fill the air. As those around me perished, I was able to make my way to the side of the ship and slide down the rope of a shattered sail into the water.

I swam as much as I could under water so our attackers would not see me. When I felt my lungs getting ready to burst I would raise my head just enough to catch a breath of air and then duck back down under again. This went on for almost a half mile, before I was able to feel safe enough to swim and float on the surface. Looking back, I thought to myself, “Wow, I never dreamed that pirates might hate pirates!” Laughing hysterically, I then watched as the evil *Devil's Shadow*, engulfed in flames, sank into the great Pacific Ocean, as well it should.

## CHAPTER FOUR

After treading water throughout the night, I was so tired I struggled to stay afloat. My thoughts wandered aimlessly: “I don’t think I can last much longer. I wonder if the pirates are looking for me. Did anyone else survive? I am so exhausted maybe I should just let go of life and sink to the bottom of the ocean.” By then, almost mad with fatigue, I could see, in the dim light of the breaking dawn, something drifting towards me. As the sky lightened even more, I could finally tell what it was: “a boat,” I said to myself. As I looked closer I could see it was one of the small boats from the *Devil’s Shadow*.

Swimming over to the small skiff, I noticed how badly it was busted up—but still floating nonetheless. And at that point that’s all that mattered. Crawling aboard, I collapsed! After sleeping all day and all that next night I woke up thirsty and hungry. Knowing I could last only a short time without food and water and that the chances of being rescued were very small, I began making my plan of survival.

First, whenever it rained I would need to soak my shirt with as much rain water as I possibly could. And then holding the shirt up over my mouth I would quench my thirst by squeezing the water out into my mouth. When it wasn’t raining the soaked shirt would be stored out of the sun under one of the boat’s benches to prevent it from drying out too soon.

Next, needing food, I pulled a long sharp piece of splintered wood from along the top of the boat’s side. Each time I would see a fish swimming near the boat I would dive in the water with

my makeshift spear in hand trying to impale the fish with it. Unfortunately the fish were few and far between, and the ones I did see were deep down and extremely difficult to spear. In fact it took me almost two days to finally catch one. At that point I was so hungry I just started ripping it apart with my teeth—eating it as if I were some wild animal devouring my prey.

Day in and day out I would stare into the water searching for the elusive fish. Luckily, even though I was very weak I was still able to catch enough to keep myself from actually starving to death. However, finding drinking water wasn't near as much of a problem as finding food—it rained almost every day, allowing me about as much water as I needed to survive.

Each passing day seemed to go by slower than the one before, and now with the increased scarcity of fish I was becoming weaker and more sickly than ever before. Any hope I had of being rescued was quickly disappearing. Still, the will to survive was too strong. I knew that without the will to keep going I would surely die. I told myself not to give up—to keep fighting until the very end. No matter how hard it had become to hold my head up to look into the water searching for fish, I must continue do so.

It was on the twenty-third day adrift and no longer able to find food that I had become so weak I could not dive into the water even if I wanted to. Feeling too ill to stand and nearly unconscious, I lay on the bottom of the boat with my eyes closed, praying, and waiting for my life to end. Drifting in and out of this horrible state, I heard a faint noise off in the distance. Not knowing or really caring what it might be, I continued helplessly lying there with my eyes closed. And then I heard it again.

*“What a strange sound,”* I thought. Could it be waves slapping against each other? Perhaps the wind was trying to sing. Maybe it is the calming sounds of death, or just my imagination

now taking over my thoughts. I blinked my eyes and then rolled over and raised my head. Rubbing the blur away, I saw something moving towards me. Looking closer I saw a sight I thought I would never see again. It was a large sailing vessel and it was heading right at me.

Crawling to my knees, I began to wave my shirt in the air and call out for help. When one of the men on board waved back I was so excited I began to sob. Then as the ship coasted up next to me one of the crew yelled, “Ahoy! Are you all right?”

He then threw a rope down to me. I called back, “I am now—I think.” I tied the rope to the front of my skiff and they pulled it up close enough to the ship that I could reach a rope ladder they had dropped over the side. Slowly I made my way up the ladder, stopping about halfway up to rest. Continuing to climb I was so weak I wondered if I was going to be able to make it to the top, but I kept going. Finally, as I reached the rail of the ship, there were two men that grabbed onto my arms and dragged me up on deck. As they helped me to my feet I don’t think I have ever felt more thankful than I did at that moment—for I had just been pulled from the stranglehold of certain death.

Seeing how weak and undernourished I was, the ship’s captain, Captain Edward Beard, instructed two of his men to help me down to the lower deck to get some food and water in me. As they put my arms over their shoulders they carried me towards the lower deck. As I looked back at Captain Beard, he smiled and said, “Once you’re strong enough to talk I’ll be down to hear how you got yourself into this mess—but for now, first things first.”

I nodded yes, even though I wasn’t sure at the time how much of my story I should actually tell him.

After being carried into the galley, and while waiting for my food to be brought to me, I made my decision—I would tell Captain Beard everything except the part about the buried

treasure. I'm not sure why, but I just had this strange feeling some things should be left untold. Perhaps it was because I was worried I would be pressured about its location—though I had no idea where it was. But regardless, I was determined to keep it to myself.

A few minutes later, a fine complement of bread, cheese, salted pork, dried fruit and a bottle of rum were placed on the table in front of me—I was so hungry I dug in immediately. After chewing on crusty bread and salted pork, my body quickly began feeling a renewed energy. And then, after a couple hearty gulps of rum I was ready to tell my story.

The first thing I did was introduce myself to Captain Beard. “I am William Robinson,” I began. “I was a crew member on a merchant ship called *The Sea Galley*.” I went on to tell him about how we had been robbed and taken prisoner by the pirate, Captain Brutus Ruff, and his despicable crew. I explained how our captain, Richard Town, our first mate, Isaac Templeton and the sick and wounded had been forced to walk the plank. “When the pirates were done stealing our goods from the ship they burned it—and it sank. Those of the crew who survived were turned into slaves, brutally beaten, and then murdered one by one—until, that is, another pirate ship came along and attacked us. As far as I know everyone on board was killed except me—and if it hadn't been for my great ability to swim underwater, I'd be dead too.”

Captain Beard sat shaking his head in almost disbelief. He then explained his ship was called the *Vandalia*, carrying goods from San Francisco, California, to Astoria, Oregon. He said they had traveled to San Francisco to drop off a load of lumber for the rebuilding of the city after it had suffered a great fire a couple of years earlier.

“Why, I grew up in San Francisco—are you going back there?” I asked.

“Once we drop these goods off and pick up another load of lumber we are. Why do you ask—do you want to go back there?”

“Sure, if you’d be willing to let me work my way back I’d be much obliged.”

“Well, since you are a seafaring man I guess I’d be willing to take a chance on you...and who knows, it might be that if things work out you may want to stay on as one of my crew—I could use another man, if you’re a good one, that is.”

Now that sounded pretty fair to me. Here I was, pulled back from the brink of death, given food to eat, water and rum to drink and now, I might even have a job lined up. “Wow,” I thought, “it’s strange how things work out sometimes.”

That night, for the first time in almost two years, I slept without fear: a sleep untroubled by thoughts of dying at the hands of pirates, nor by how many lashes with a braided rope I might receive that day; undisturbed by sobbing or groans of pain from my mates—merely the sound of waves slapping the sides of the ship as we sailed north—how peaceful!

The next morning Captain Beard gave me a sharp knife to shave my almost two years of beard growth. He told me I’d also need to use it for cutting rope and for opening some of the crates supplies were kept in. After shaving, I made a sheath out of a piece of canvas and tied it to my right calf, where I would carry it from then on.

Over the next several weeks I did every job Captain Beard would allow me to do. I felt it was a way of earning my keep for a ride that could eventually take me back to San Francisco, and maybe even earn me a permanent job on the *Vandalia*. Either way I felt great accomplishment for being able to help. Besides, it was also exciting to be part of a ship’s crew again, even if it should turn out to be just for the one voyage.

Soon after—I well recall that it was the ninth day of January, the year of our Lord 1853 and the seas were especially rough—we began to approach a great flow of churning water. It was a great river called the Columbia, also known as “Graveyard of the Pacific.” In this large vortex the flow of the mighty river slams into the currents of the Pacific Ocean, creating seas of unforgiving turbulence such as I had never seen before.

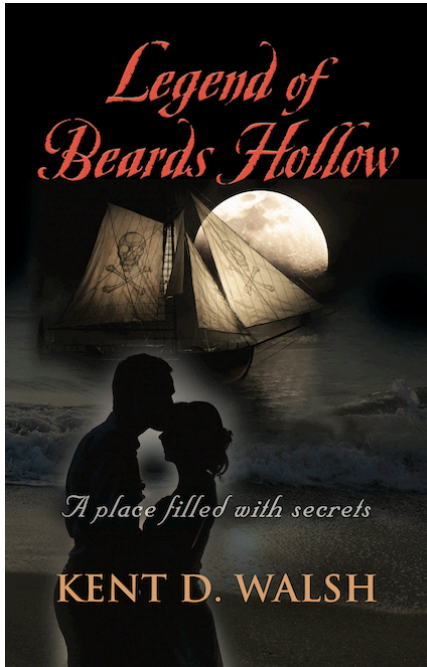
As we began to enter the giant flow of water, high winds and strong currents pushed the *Vandalia* much farther north than what Captain Beard had anticipated. As he screamed for his men to correct the direction the ship was going, the *Vandalia* began bouncing up and down almost uncontrollably.

Looking off in the distance while trying to stay on my feet, I was surprised to see several familiar sights: the large hollow in the rocky bluff along the shoreline, the mountains in the distance, the river itself. I thought to myself, “Have I been here before?” For some reason it brought to mind the horrible happenings of only a few short weeks ago. Studying the north shoreline it suddenly hit me: “That’s where we buried Captain Ruff’s treasure.” Then, before I could give it another thought, a huge wave slammed the side of the ship knocking me to the deck. As I crawled back to my feet I could see with a continuous flow of massive waves that the ship was laboring terribly. As the *Vandalia* tried to move through the turbulent waters it was knocked sideways. At that point the *Vandalia* began coming apart—it was being beaten to pieces by the breaking surf.

As the ship tipped to its side I could hear Captain Beard scream, “Abandon ship!” I jumped into the sea. As I tried to swim towards shore, the powerful undertow kept sucking me downward into the icy water. Each time I went down I had to hold my breath so long I feared I would drown before again reaching the surface—and air. When my lungs felt they were about to explode I would fight my way back to the surface, only

to be pulled down again. Each time I came up I looked for my fellow mates but I couldn't see or hear any of them. And then I was pulled underwater again—only this time my body was slammed into what felt like a hard surface. When I bobbed back up I could now see a sandy beach only a few yards in front of me. Struggling to reach the shore I used every ounce of energy I had left in my body. When I was finally able to reach the shoreline I crawled a short distance and then collapsed into unconsciousness.





*Adventurous struggle to live, love  
and survive in the 1800's.*

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