



2017-01

## Ship Types in the Age of Sail—Single Mast

The number of ship types encountered during the age of sail is overwhelming. An easy way to categorize these ships involves using the number of masts and the sail configuration. The displacement between two ships in the same category can be large. For example, a vessel with a single mast carrying two sails configured like a sloop might be very small and designed only to hold one or two people, or it might be very large and constructed to carry several tons of cargo.

Single mast ships generally carried small loads along the coast or on rivers. They had limited crews of 2-6 men and were shallow draught. Typical types include:



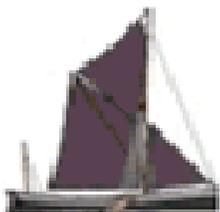
### Sloop

The sloop is a single mast vessel with a fore and aft rig. She carries only one head sail (sometimes called a jib or genoa depending upon the size).

The term sloop was also used for small square-rigged warships with two or three masts.

### Gaff Cutter

The gaff cutter is a single mast vessel similar to a sloop with a fore and aft rig. She carries two or more head sails and often has a bowsprit. Typically the mast is positioned further aft than on a sloop. Cutters are generally designed for speed and not cargo capacity.

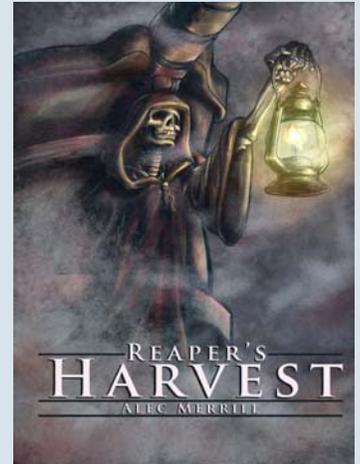


### Spritsail Barge

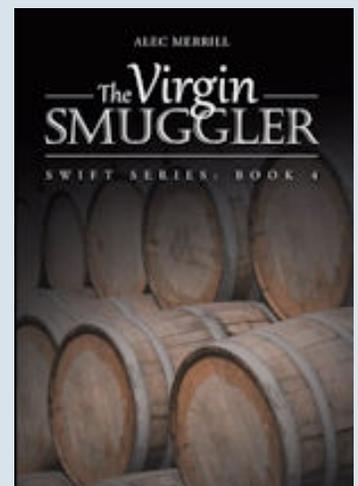
Most barges are flat bottomed and are more suited to the transport of cargo in sheltered waters. A spritsail is a form of a three or four sided fore-aft sail where the leech of the sail is supported by a diagonal spar named a sprit. The forward end of the sprit spar is attached to the mast, but bisects the face of the sail.

### Tartan

Also called Tartane, this small ship was used both as a fishing vessel or in the coastal trade primarily in the Mediterranean. The single mast supported a large lateen sail. A bowsprit supported a single foresail. When the wind was aft, a square sail was generally hoisted like a cross-jack.



Download your **FREE** copy of  
Reaper's Harvest at  
[www.alecmerrill.com](http://www.alecmerrill.com)



Alec's new book now available  
The Virgin Smuggler  
[www.alecmerrill.com](http://www.alecmerrill.com)