[**dasNdanger**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/805-dasndanger/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 320 posts
* Location:NJ
* Interests:Tall ships, Native American history and culture, rugby...and just about anything that predates 1900...

[Posted July 12, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=119953) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=119953)

Just a quick question because I am TOO lazy to figger it all out on my own...

When did hammocks come into popular use on ships? I think there was a thread here - or perhaps on another site - where it was once discussed, but I have no idea what was mentioned or where that thread is now.

Before Columbus 'discovered' the Americas - and the hammocks native peoples used - what sort of sleeping arrangement was there aboard ship? Hanging cots? Bunks? LL Bean sleeping bags?? Then, how soon after his voyage to the New World did hammocks come into popular use aboard ship, and what would have been the most likely sleeping arrangement on a pirate vessel during the Golden Age? Hammocks on larger ships, with built-in bunks on smaller vessels, like schooners? Or did the built-in bunks come much later, in the 19th century?

This might be the wrong place to ask this, perhaps I need a more ship-oriented forum, but I thought I'd start here...

das

[**blackjohn**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1144-blackjohn/)

* Iron Age Hero Lost at Sea
* 
* 
* Member
* 3,745 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Columbia, Md
* Interests:Stuff... and junk.

[Posted July 12, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=119957) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=119957)

Go to the Plunder forum, do a search on hammock, and you might find some answers there. Unless you are too lazy to do that. 

[**dasNdanger**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/805-dasndanger/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 320 posts
* Location:NJ
* Interests:Tall ships, Native American history and culture, rugby...and just about anything that predates 1900...

[Posted July 12, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=119963) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=119963)

No - not too lazy to do THAT...but I don't wanna buy one, I just want to know the evolution of sleeping arrangements aboard ship. Maybe I should have just said it that way, instead of getting all wordy and confusin'...

das

[**Fox**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1019-fox/)

* Old Twillian
* 
* 
* Moderator
* 2,564 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Beautiful lush Devon, England
* Interests:Nautical history of the 16-18th centuries and living history based thereon.

Shooting pirates.

[Posted July 12, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=119995) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=119995)

"Brazil Beds" certainly begin to appear on English documents in the late 16th century, but by the mid 17th century they seem to be fairly standard on English warships. I would presume from that that by the late 17th century most English and colonial sailors would have slept in hammocks - particularly in the Caribbean where they originated.

"Cots" also appear in documents relating to the possessions of seamen, but usually in the context of officers or senior seamen. These may have been proper beds or swinging cots, like a solid hammock, or both.

Similarly we quite often come across references to "beds" in sailors' wills and suchlike, which probably indicate stuffed mattresses, perhaps meaning that hammocks were less popular than we suppose. From the 17th century we begin to come across hammock in dockyard stores, suggesting that they were issued to the ships for the seamen to sleep in. Mattresses on the other hand appear to be more personal items, perhaps for those who didn't like hammocks, or perhaps to line their hammocks.

Prior to the widespread use of hammocks examination of surviving shipwrecks like the Mary Rose and the Wasa show little sign of cots or beds except in some of the officers' cabins leading one to suppose that men slept wherever they could find room on the decks, perhaps made more comfortable by mattresses, but probably often not.

[**dasNdanger**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/805-dasndanger/)

* Plunderer
* 
* 
* Member
* 320 posts
* Location:NJ
* Interests:Tall ships, Native American history and culture, rugby...and just about anything that predates 1900...

[Posted July 12, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=120015) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=120015)

Thanks, Foxe...

I have always read about the hanging or swinging cot in reference to officers in the navy, but wasn't sure if pirates would use them, since you have the whole 'equality' thing going on there (though we know there was still a pecking order).

Perhaps straw (or horsehair?) mattresses were used prior to the popularity of hammocks, but that seems like such a fire hazard, not to mention taking up a lot of space aboard the ship. I'm thinking a lot of men just slept flat on the deck, perhaps on a woolen blanket...or perhaps they curled up on sailcloth, or in the cable tier.

In visiting several ships in New England, I noticed that most of them had the built-in bunks...but I'm thinking that is a later addition, or done only on ships with smaller crews, such as merchants and whalers. I've never really bothered to research it too deeply, I just assumed that men used hammocks during that time frame, but I was thinking larger vessels. When someone asked me what type of sleeping arrangements there are on a smaller vessel, like a schooner, I drew a blank - thinking of the bunks on the *Meerwald*...and didn't know how to answer.

Thanks for the info - it gives me something to go on!

das

[**Captain Jacob Badger**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/2076-captain-jacob-badger/)

* Notorious Pyrate
* 
* 
* Member
* 937 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Wales. UK
* Interests:All things pyratical..
Bein' the Cap'n o' Jades Riscs...
vwcampers......
Swords....
art....
PS2...
guitar....
Rodents(Rats)....
errr....aye!
.

[Posted July 12, 2005](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=120070) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=120070)

bunks!!......ye have bunks now?..........damn........as a Cap'n....I have the finest horse hair matt' money can buy.....(tho it is topped wi' a duvette). and whoa.......yes comfey.....I should coco.......the old ways are naught gorn......just misslayed!....aye :)

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,081 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted November 28, 2012](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=412272) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=412272)

Some notes on sleeping arrangement from *The four years voyages of capt. George Roberts* when he shipwrecked on St. Johns in 1721 or 22:

"They [the natives helping him on St. John's] then made me and the Boy drink some of the [goat's] Milk they had brought in the Calabash [a hollowed out, dried gourd used as a cup]; and seeing my Feather-bed [from his ship] swimming about on the Sea [because the ship had wrecked], Two of them swam off, and saved it, and laid it upon the Rock to dry." (Roberts, p. 179)

Curiously, they later removed all the feathers from the feather bed because they had gotten wet!

This is from when Roberts came down with a fever while stuck on the island several days later. (This was also about the time the natives decided to pluck the feather bed.)

"... Mr.

*Franklin*

[a Welshman staying on St. John's] told them, That I should be much better, if I lay better; and

*Domingo*

[one of the natives] having a Cotton Hammock, which his Father had of the Pirates when they were at this Island, he ask'd Mr.

*Franklin*

whether that would be of any Service to me, who told him it would, and bid him carry it down [from the town of Fuurno, which Roberts had been unable to reach from the place where he shipwrecked], and shew'd him how to hang it." (Roberts, p. 244)

Later, when Roberts reached Fuurno, he found they had made a rather interesting bed for him, which he describes in some detail.

"...so I was lay'd on the Bed, which indeed was extraordinary, considering the People and Country; for there were four Posts drove into the Floor, in the Form of a long Square, and four Pieces of Wood tied to them with Banana Cords, which form'd the Head, Feet, and Sides of the Bed, and three or four Sticks laid across, and tied at each End to the two Pieces that made the Sides of the Bed, over that was lay'd a Hurdle made of large Cane Reed, being the same Sort which is brought out of

*Portugal*

, &c. over the Cane Hurdle was good Store of dry'd Banana Leaves, laid after the same Manner as the poorer Sort of the Native

*Irish*

do their Beds of Straw, over the Banana Leaves was laid a Banana Mat, and on that two white Cotten Cloths as Sheets, with a thick blue-and- white Cotten Cloth over all, as a Rug or Quilt.

I have been the more particular in describing this Bed, because Beds are not usual there, they all lying on the Ground, and, as he told me, it was of his Brother's Contrivance, who had liv'd some Time at St.

*Philip*

's, and had been once at St.

*Jago*

[santiago, Cape Verde], where he saw those Sort of Beds there, used by the

*Branca*

's (i.e.

*Portuguese*

) inhabiting there..." (Roberts, p. 256)

I call that a banana bed - and I think the much beloved ship's surgeon should have one while he is staying on shore, tending the sick.

[**corsair2k3**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/82-corsair2k3/)

* Ship's Master
* 
* 
* Member
* 167 posts

[Posted November 28, 2012](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=412273) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=412273)

Snelgrave says that, on Cocklyns ship, that if there were hammocks for everyone aboard then everyone slept on the deck..

The Corsair

[**Matty Bottles**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/949-matty-bottles/)

* Notorious Pyrate
* 
* 
* Member
* 891 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Milwaukee, WI
* Interests:Writing, Art, Spending exorbinant amounts of money on action figures, rum, murder.

[Posted November 28, 2012](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=412274) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=412274)

 On 11/28/2012 at 11:23 AM, Mission said:

*Domingo* [one of the natives] having a Cotton Hammock,

Now that's interesting. I would have expected linen or hemp hammocks, but not cotton wool. I have a few old blankets that would probably make great hammocks.

[**Mitchell O'Sionnach**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/20752-mitchell-osionnach/)

* Deck Swabber
* 
* 
* Member
* 26 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Port Swansboro
* Interests:Knots, Large items of a valuable nature.

[Posted July 20, 2013](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=414489) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=414489)

I often actually camp out with mine, and during the winter with out an isomat ye will freeze to death even in a subzero sleeping bag... I found a wool blanket is the perfect isolation material.. ye will be snug as a bug in a wool hammock..

[**Mission**](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/profile/1929-mission/)

* Goat Specialist
* 
* 
* Admin
* 5,081 posts
* Gender:Male
* Location:Monroe, MI
* Interests:Scholarly piracy, designing and creating haunted house rooms and props, movies, abstract thinking, abstruse thinking, obstructive thinking, ideating, random thinking, movies, cartoons, movies, movies scores, cycling, world peace and small furry dogs, movies, writing, drawing, personal skills training, gremlins and, of course, lest I forget, movies.

[Posted July 21, 2013](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=findComment&comment=414490) · [Report post](http://pyracy.com/index.php?/topic/5273-swing-low-sweethammock/&do=reportComment&comment=414490)

Not to go to far off topic, but the thing I remember about staying warm while sleeping in the cold was that you should change the layer of clothing closest to your skin. We were ground camping in 2 feet of snow and I didn't know any better the first night and froze to death. When I was talking with someone the next day, they advised me of the above, explaining that the clothes next to your skin get sweaty during the day which makes them poor insulators when you're stationary. So I tried it the second night and found I was as warm as toast.