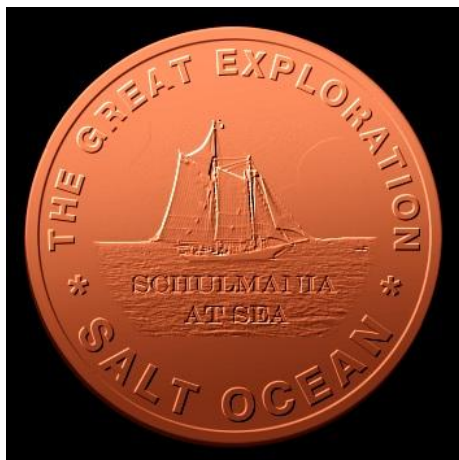




East Devonshire: It Begins

Cape Eastway, capital of East Devonshire, where Governor Eula Bird nests. Here, a fleet of massive proportions has been built to explore the great eastern salt ocean. No one has dared venture farther than a few miles off of the coast. Most ships stay within sight of the shore as they ply the waters between Cape Eastway and Woods of Wayne. Not these ships. Not the ships assembled under the leadership of Archduke Bower of Schulmanicus. This is the largest and strongest fleet ever assembled in Schulmania. These vessels are commissioned to explore the ocean to the east – as far as possible – even to the other side, if there is one. Over 700 sailors have signed on to undertake this adventure.

What does one gain from such a daring adventure? The pay for the journey is 810 schulmonetas, which is a goodly sum. Of course, there is the glory of being a part of such a history-making expedition. And, there is the copper medal given to all participants by Princess Shelby. It would fetch a goodly sum on eBay, methinks.



Preparations are full ahead in Cape Eastway, where hundreds of sailors have gathered to make the historic sail. The influx of cash and goods has been particularly welcome in East Devonshire, which still relies on imported coins and promissory notes for local commerce. Should this expedition go well, Governor Eula Bird can expect to finally be given the authority to have coins minted in the district.



At the district capitol, administrators are delighted to see the exploration fleet grow. It has fulfilled all of their expectations for spurring the economy and has provided the impetus to spruce up the coastal town.



Next door, at Gov. Eula Bird's massive estate, she had mixed feelings: the fleet was certainly good for the economy but local taxes supporting the fleet have stifled her ability to skim off funds for personal use.

In this context, East Devonshire is prospering more than any time in its past. New shops have opened and a festive atmosphere seems to have permeated the coastal area.



Markets are doing quite well thanks to the infusion of capital into the local economy.



Excitement is mounting as the day of departure draws near. Nearly everyone is in the spirit – with banners, flags and balloons preparing the town for the biggest bon voyage party ever!



Supplies continue to pour in at a fast rate – and ships are nearly fully loaded already.



Which sound do you think Governor Eula Bird hears? The “huzzah” of the crowd as the fleet readies to depart or the “ka-ching” of all of the money being spent to prepare the fleet? I’ll bet it’s the latter.



The boats have been readied and Archduke Bower of Schulmanicus is preparing for departure. This is truly an exciting and historic moment for Schulmania.

Brave crew members got ready for the big day in different ways. Some spent their last night on dry land having one last good meal.



Helmsman Oreo McFrisky looks out over the vast expanse he plans to traverse.

Some just sat in their rooms and daydreamed about the unlimited fish supply that awaits them at sea. Salmon? Got it. Tuna? Check. Sardines? Done and done.



It's gonna be great!

But, Archduke Bower could not rest. He had the responsibility of the entire fleet on his paws – he could not rest until the expedition was safely back in port. He went to bed early, tossing and turning and pacing the floor. He had never commanded an expedition before. But, there was something else. What was it? The materials have all been loaded on the ships. He has an experienced and dedicated crew. His vessels have all been checked and are the sturdiest Schulmania has to offer. There are no navigational charts to review; no one has been out that far and no one knows the wind patterns. So, what was it? Something kept bugging him as he laid in bed. Sailing east into the unknown is certainly a big undertaking, especially when the number of potentially perilous variables is so high.

All night, Archduke Bower passed in and out of sleep, haunted by visions of a thousand different things that could go wrong with his mission. And, with so many lives in his paws, the stakes were enormous. Amid this uncertainty, he knew the mission was important and that it was attainable. He knew he had the right crew and the right equipment. And, he knew that he needed to be the leader his crew needed to make it a success. So, he cast his doubts aside and strode confidently out of his room, ready to face the crowds along the harbor and the ships which beckoned. As he descended down the stairs to the walkway below, he paused to gaze at the horizon, endless ocean in every direction. “Today,” he silently told the vast ocean, “you shall be tamed. I, Archduke Bower, will tame you.” With that, he walked the short distance to the ships and prepared them for departure.



Today, the greatest adventure ever undertaken in Schulmania's history has begun. No doubt, an event of this magnitude will be a turning point in history. All that remains is to see what is discovered.



Now, it begins.