

DISTANCE AND DIFFERENCE: SEAMEN AND MARITIME COMMUNICATION IN
MASSACHUSETTS, RHODE ISLAND, AND THE ATLANTIC WORLD, 1730-1800

by
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Abstract

Historians say that common seamen communicated news during the eighteenth century. However, this commonsense belief remains mostly untested for regions other than the Caribbean and periods before the 1790s. This study tests whether such communications were new during the Age of Revolutions. It applies interpretive, qualitative, and digital history methods to the print, manuscript, oral, and musical communication of Massachusetts and Rhode Island mariners and demonstrates how all sorts of seamen communicated with each other and people on shore about politics, gender, and race.

This study argues that transformations in maritime communication during the 1760s made America seem different from and opposed to imperial Britain in various ways. Indeed, maritime communications connected everyone in port to the larger British Atlantic because all ranks of men worked at sea. Thanks to them, other early Americans did not have to rely on printers and postmasters for information. During the Imperial Crisis, early Americans made avoiding postage on ship letters a way to protest imperial taxation. Rumors and news overlapped for early American mariners when they used maritime communication to resist what they saw as the tyranny and despotism of navy impressment and French captivity. Massachusetts provincials adopted mariners' complaints about naval impressment, and seamen generalized their complaints about impressment to object to British rule. Moreover, expressions of mariners' attitudes about women, courtship, and marriage appeared in sea songs, where differences increased between American-composed verses that expressed new, sentimental opinions about women and marriage and British-composed verses that expressed Anglicized, patriarchal opinions. Furthermore, as Governors attempted to use maritime communications to regulate British subjects who voyaged to the fisheries and Inuit trade of Labrador in the north, Massachusetts provincials resented and resisted these regulations that they believed were an imperial encroachment. Finally, on slaving voyages to the Upper Guinea Coast and the West Indies in the south, news about slave ship uprisings indicated how these

American maritime communications had become redundant and robust, even over long distances. This suggests that even before early national newspapers and the federal post office, early Americans imagined how America differed from Britain when they chattered with seamen.

Lay Summary

Historians say that sailors' communication connected communities during the Haitian Revolution. This study finds and analyses the evidence for applying that belief to the American Revolution. The study's first claim is factual: Massachusetts and Rhode Island seamen from all socioeconomic levels connected British communities by carrying letters for other people, spreading rumors and news by word of mouth, and singing about political and social attitudes. The second claim is interpretive: the politics of maritime communication changed during the 1760s. Maritime communication made Americans different from Great Britain in what they said and did about impressment, enemy capture, and trade regulations, and social questions of courtship and marriage and the slave trade. Before newspapers and the post office helped widely-dispersed Americans imagine themselves as one, unified nation, communication at sea helped Americans imagine their differences from—and opposition—to Britain.

Preface

This dissertation is my original, unpublished, independent work. I identified and designed the research program under the supervision of Daniel Vickers and Coll Thrush. Daniel Vickers was the research supervisor until February 2017. Coll Thrush was the research supervisor after March 2017. I performed all the research and analyzed all the data.

Parts of this work are possible because of the historians, archivists, librarians, and bibliographers whose prior work is publicly available for secondary use. I conducted secondary analyses using the following datasets and databases: the Main and Main dataset of New England probates, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database 2.0, the English Broadside Ballads Archive database, the Broadside Ballads Online of the Bodleian Library database, the Roud Folksong Index, the Isaiah Thomas Broadside Ballads Project, and *The Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771*. I designed and conducted my analyses of the data in the Main and Main dataset with the written permission of Gloria L. Main. I scraped, cleaned, and queried Naval Office Shipping List data from Harriet Sylvester Tapley's *Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem* and the tables by Murray G. Lawson in "The Routes of Boston's Trade, 1752–1765." Tricia Perry, Joshua Horowitz, and others proofread parts of this work. Michael Hay formatted data presentations. No part of this work is published. There are no co-authors and no additional collaborators. The UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board did not require approval for this work. The NunatuKavut Community Council Inc. Research Review Advisory Committee approved the research related to NunatuKavummiut, Southern Inuit of Labrador. All remaining errors are mine alone.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Lay Summary.....	v
Preface	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
List of Abbreviations	xii
Note on Spelling and Grammar	xv
Acknowledgements.....	xvi
Dedication	xviii
Introduction	1
Historicizing Communication and Early America.....	4
Distance and Difference in Maritime Massachusetts and Rhode Island.....	17
“In a Public House One Evening”	25
Figures.....	29
1. American Mariners in a British Atlantic	30
I. “Mariner”	36
II. A British American Atlantic.....	53
III. Tables and Figures	65
2. “The Freshest Advices”: Seamen, Printers, and the Post Office.....	71
I. Printers and Postmasters.....	75
II. Before the Imperial Crisis	77
III. Mariners and the <i>Boston News-Letter</i>	91

IV. The Imperial Crisis	101
V. War	116
VI. Postwar	123
VII. Independence from Colonial Printers and Postmasters	125
VIII. Tables.....	127
3. “Rumors Every Day”: Seamen and News-Mongering about Nations and Empires.....	128
I. Rumor and News	132
II. Impressment and the British Nation	137
III. From the War of Jenkins’ Ear to the Seven Years War (1739-1754)	142
IV. The Seven Years War (1754-1763)	158
V. The Imperial Crisis (1763-1775).....	168
VI. The War of Independence to the War of 1812 (1775-1812)	176
VII. Community of Seamen and Land Dwellers	184
4. “Echoes Through the Town”: Seamen’s Songs, Americanization, and Women in Port	186
I. Ship and Shore	189
II. Songs and Verses from England and British America	195
III. Midcentury before the 1760s.....	200
IV. Crisis during the 1760s until 1775	203
V. Nation Formation after 1775.....	209
VI. Diverging American and British Songs.....	215
VII. Figures and Tables	217
5. Politics by Other Means: Maritime Communication in Massachusetts and Labrador during the Imperial Crisis.....	219
I. Informing Power	223
II. Changes in Numbers of Voyages	226

III. Knowledge Received from Seamen	233
IV. Imperial Regulations and Provincial Resistance	243
V. A Continuation of Politics by Other Means	255
VI. Figures and Tables	258
6. Common Winds and Uncommon Records: Maritime Communication and the Slave Trades to the Upper Guinea Coast and West Indies.....	265
I. Uprisings and Communications	269
II. Maritime Communication in the Slave Trades	276
III. Before the 1760s.....	283
IV. The 1760s.....	290
V. Epilogue	305
VI. Figures and Tables	309
Conclusion.....	312
Maritime Communication Transformed.....	319
Bibliography	322
Appendices.....	368
Appendix A. <i>Boston News-Letter</i> Study.....	369
Appendix B. Songs and Verses.....	377
Appendix C. Records of the Brigantine <i>Sally</i> and the Brigantine <i>Othello</i>	398
Appendix D. Naval Office Shipping Lists	401

List of Tables

Table 1. Wealth of New England Seamen at Probate, 1738-1774 (Secondary Use of Main and Main Data)	65
Table 2. Rigging by Registered Tonnage of Vessels (where stated), Salem Customs House Entrances and Clearances, 1751-1767 (Registered Tonnage)	66
Table 3. Rigging by Estimated Measured Tonnage of Vessels, Salem Customs House Entrances and Clearances, 1751-1767 (Estimated Measured Tonnage).....	67
Table 4. Rigging and Tonnage Advertised for Vessels in Sample of Boston News-Letter, 1740-1776 (Sales and Purchase Market and Newbuilding Market)	68
Table 5 Topics of Items <i>BNL</i> Printers Attributed to Mariners	127
Table 6 Sources of Items <i>BNL</i> Printers Attributed to Mariners	127
Table 7. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1740-1801	218
Table 8. List of General Schemes of the Fisheries, 1734-1795	260
Table 9. List of General Sketches of the Fishery on the Labrador Coast, 1764-1792.....	264
Table 10. Number of Transatlantic Slave Trade Voyages Departing from North America by Region (TSTD 2.0 data).....	310
Table 11 Items attributed to Mariners or Vessels in <i>BNL</i> Sample, 1740-1776.....	376
Table 12. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1740-1759	384
Table 13. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1760-1775	387
Table 14. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1776-1801	392
Table 15. Total Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767.....	401
Table 16. Total Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House: Extant Records and Estimated Missing Records, 1752-1765.....	403

List of Figures

Figure 1. New England Seamen and their Key Interlocutors	29
Figure 2. Total Number of Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767	69
Figure 3. Total Number of Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House, 1752-1765	70
Figure 4. Schematic Diagram of Communication to and from Eighteenth-Century British American Seamen Documented in Songs, Verses, and Letters	217
Figure 5. British Vessels from American Colonies in Newfoundland Governors' Annual Returns for the Fisheries, 1734-1795	258
Figure 6. Boston and Salem Total Entrances from and Clearances to Newfoundland, 1752-1765, Naval Office Shipping Lists	259
Figure 7. Schematic Diagram of Records of Maritime Communications in the Slave Trades	309
Figure 8. Number of Transatlantic Slave Trade Voyages Departed: Massachusetts and Rhode Island, 1645-1866 (TSTD 2.0 data)	311

List of Abbreviations

AAS	American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.
<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BFBR	Brown Family Business Records
bm	builders measurement
<i>BNL</i>	<i>Boston News-Letter</i> and variant titles, e.g. <i>Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter</i> , <i>Boston News-Letter and New England Courrant</i> , <i>Boston Weekly News-Letter</i> , <i>Massachusetts Gazette</i> (1765 only).
BPL	Boston Public Library, Boston, Mass.
Ches.	Chesapeake, Chesapeake Bay Area: Virginia and Maryland.
CO	Records of the Colonial Office, Commonwealth and Foreign and Commonwealth Offices
EBBA	English Broadside Ballads Archive
<i>EHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
EIC	East India Company
Fr.	France, French
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
HCA	High Court of Admiralty
HMS	His Majesty's Ship
Ib.	Iberia: Spain and Portugal, Iberia and Islands: Spain, Portugal, Balearic Islands, Western Islands.
illeg.	Illegible
IMA	International Marine Archive collection, New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, New Bedford, Mass.
JCB, JCBL	John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R.I.
<i>JER</i>	<i>Journal of the Early Republic</i>
KWM	Kendall Whaling Museum collection, New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, New Bedford, Mass.
LAC	Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, Ont.
LM, L.M.	Lawful Money
M'head	Marblehead
MC, M.C.	Middle Colonies

<i>MG&BNL</i>	<i>Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter</i>
<i>MG&BPBA</i>	<i>Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser.</i>
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.
MSA	Massachusetts State Archives, Boston, Mass.; Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, Md.
N. Am.	North America
NBWMRL	New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, New Bedford, Mass.
NF, N.F.	New France
NOS	Not otherwise specified
NOSL	Naval Office Shipping Lists
NS, N.S.	New Style, Nova Scotia
NSARM	Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management, Halifax, N.S.
NYHS, N-YHS	New York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.
NYPL	New York Public Library, New York, N.Y.
ODHS	Old Dartmouth Historical Society collection, New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, New Bedford, Mass.
OS, O.S.	Old Style
OT, O.T.	Old Tenor
PANL	Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's, N.L. (now, The Rooms Provincial Archives Division)
PEM-JDPL	Peabody Essex Museum John Duncan Phillips Library, Rowley, Mass. (now, Phillips Library).
PPL	Providence Public Library, Providence, R.I.
PRO	Public Records Office, Kew, U.K. (now, The National Archives)
RIHS	Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R.I.
RISA	Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, R.I.
RISCJRC	Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.
RPAD	The Rooms Provincial Archives Division, St. John's, N.L. (formerly, Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador).
TNA	The National Archives, Kew, U.K. (formerly, Public Records Office)
TSTD	Transatlantic Slave Trade Database
WI, W.I.	West Indies

WMQ

William and Mary Quarterly, third series.

Note on Spelling and Grammar

Quotations have silently corrected sources' the spelling, punctuation, and grammar according to the modernized method for editing historical manuscripts in *The Harvard Guide to American History*.¹

¹ Frank Freidel, Richard K. Showman, and Oscar Handlin, *Harvard Guide to American History*, Rev. ed (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), 30–31; See also, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, Seventeenth edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), chap. 13.7.

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Dedicated to my parents.

Introduction

In September 1719, word spread through the province of Massachusetts that local fishermen had chased a sea-monster out of Provincetown harbor. According to the *Boston News-Letter* newspaper, this monster had a “head like a lion’s, with very large teeth, ears hanging down, a large beard, a long beard, with curled hair on his head, his body about sixteen foot long, a round buttock, with a short tail of a yellowish color.”¹ The town’s fishermen rushed to harpoon the monster by piling into whaleboats and striking at the beast while it gnashed its teeth at them. Their chase lasted five hours before the monster got away. Someone brought this seamen’s story from Provincetown to Boston, the distance being about two days over uneven roads or less than a day by sail. About a week and a half after the events took place, the *Boston News-Letter* printed a narrative of these events, typesetting the item alongside foreign advices, shipping news, and advertisements for goods.² One reader who saw the story was Benjamin Franklin, Sr., a sixty-seven year-old silk-dyer who lived in Boston and was uncle to the future printer Benjamin Franklin, Jr. He found the story interesting and even important, for he labored to copy it out word-for-word into his commonplace book where he kept recipes for silk dyes, epigrams, and excerpts of poetry and news.³

¹ Benjamin Franklin (1650-1727), *Commonplace-book, 1718-1720*, 42, MHS; Benjamin Franklin, “The Commonplace-Book of Benjamin Franklin (1650-1727),” *The Colonial Society of Massachusetts Transactions 1904 – 1906*, vol. 10 (1904-1906), 192.

² “On the 17 Instant There Appear’d in Cape-Cod Harbor a Strange Creature...,” *Boston News-Letter*, no. 806 (September 28, 1719).

³ Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010); David Paul Nord, “Teleology and News: The Religious Roots of American Journalism, 1630-1730,” *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 1 (June 1990): 10, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2078637>.

This story of the Cape Cod sea monster of 1719 opens up an until-now poorly understood communication history of seamen in early New England. Historians have a commonsense belief that seamen were vectors of communication, but they have not documented this claim very well. This study scrutinizes that belief and shows that a portion of news originated with maritime workers who passed it on to people on shore, at first independent of print. The people who received that news included printers who subsequently propagated news across New England to a public of readers. Calls to study communication by seamen and other mobile workers predict that their very mobility makes them difficult to study. Nevertheless, the rewards are great, for cross-cultural encounters, cosmopolitanism, and counter-publics entangled in sailors' yarns.⁴ The errant, little narratives of these countless seamen are *petits récits* that wear down grand narratives about emancipation and progress.⁵

This study pioneers a communications history of American seamen in the British Atlantic by asking four interlocking questions: how did seamen communicate between themselves and with other people? What media did they use? What did they say about politics, gender, and race? And, how did this change over time? Asking how seamen communicated questions historians' commonsense belief that seamen did communicate between themselves and with

⁴ Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 110, 325-326n30, 327n31; Richard Boyer, *Lives of the Bigamists: Marriage, Family, and Community in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), 182-83; Stephen Greenblatt, "A Mobility Studies Manifesto," in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 250; Stephen Greenblatt, "Cultural Mobility: An Introduction," in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1, 19-20; Marcus Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates, and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail* (New York: Verso, 2014), 10, 28.

⁵ See, Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Theory and History of Literature, v. 10 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 60.

others on land, which informs arguments about how distant colonies shared popular politics. Asking what media seamen used assesses whether these seamen were independent of other producers and purveyors of communication, especially printers and postmasters, which informs arguments about how an American public formed independently from prints and the post office. Asking what seamen said about politics, gender, and race assesses the origins of the American Revolution, transformations of patriarchal authority, and resistance by free and enslaved workers. Those questions inform what Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh call the Hydrarchy, meaning a many-faceted, intersectional resistance movement of seamen, slaves, Antinomians, Anabaptists, striking workers, pirates, criminalized people, and others.⁶ Assessing change over time tests the limits of whether seamen's communications during the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) can be read backward in time to the 1760s or earlier and informs arguments about when the communication revolution happened.

This study argues that maritime communication changed during the 1760s, making America seem different from and even opposed to imperial Britain.⁷ Changes to seaborne communications contributed to transforming a British-American public into an American public that informed print but did not depend on it. Mariners connected New England to a British Atlantic of Britain, Southern Europe, the Upper Coastal Guinea, the West Indies, the continental

⁶ Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 3–4, 328–29, 332–34; See also, Marcus Buford Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007), 156, 350–52; David Brion Davis, "Slavery—White, Black, Muslim, Christian," *New York Review of Books* 48, no. 11 (July 5, 2001); Marcus Rediker, Peter Linebaugh, and David Brion Davis, "'The Many-Headed Hydra': An Exchange," *The New York Review of Books* 48, no. 14 (September 20, 2001).

⁷ This can be thought of as a "long 1760s," meaning a pre-Revolutionary War period of political and military changes in the British-American seascape that predate the Imperial Crisis by extending from the 1758 surrender of France's naval fortress at Louisbourg at least until the embargo initiated by the 1774 Boston Port Bill.

colonies, and the fishing and whaling grounds of the North and South Atlantic. They wrote, spoke, and sang about topics that included political and social differences of British subjecthood, nation formation, gender relations, Indigeneity, and enslavement. These mariners conveyed letters, prints, rumors and news, songs, and verses among themselves, merchants and traders, governors and navy officers, sweethearts and sex workers, families and friends, postmasters, printers and booksellers, seamen from England and elsewhere, and enslaved people. (see, Figure 1. New England Seamen and their Key Interlocutors, on page 29). Consequently, maritime communication connected ship life to shore society, with one foot in the ocean and the other foot on land.

Historicizing Communication and Early America

When seamen and other colonists engaged with maritime communications, they constituted a maritime public.⁸ Michael Warner argues that publics arose from the relation of letters, prints, and official declarations to their circulation. For instance, printing and circulating the constitution that said, “We the people” summoned into being that very “we” who was unseen and impersonal yet intelligible.⁹ The maritime public of letters, rumors, broadsides, and songs in ships, prisons, and taverns had its own “public reason” of shared values and rules that often differed from bourgeois deliberative reason. Habermas argued that a bourgeois public sphere emerged in the late eighteenth century when Western Europe’s commercial classes

⁸ See, Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy,” *Social Text* 25–26 (1990): 67.

⁹ Warner, Michael, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), xi, xii; Michael Warner, “Franklin and the Letters of the Republic,” *Representations*, no. 16 (October 1986): 126–27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928515>; Warner, Michael, “Publics and Counterpublics,” *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 48, 89, passim.

debated politics in newspapers, letters, coffeehouses, and markets.¹⁰ Nancy Fraser and others argue that other publics existed in parallel to the bourgeois public, including subaltern counter-publics of women; workers; Blacks, Indigenous people, and people of color; and sexual minorities. Their counter-discourses enabled oppositional politics.¹¹ Maritime communication expressed fears, hopes, interests, and desires in letters, word of mouth, and song that informed but did not depend on prints, legislatures, or a Merchant's Exchange. This relation of colonists and mariners to the circulation of maritime communication constituted a maritime public that differed from the better-known bourgeois public. Furthermore, maritime communication pushed Americans to think about how Britain did them wrong.

Maritime communication reorients the history of early American communication and nation formation away from printers and postmasters. Famously, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* argued that nation-states emerged after Latin America's printers married capitalist production to print technology to print provincial news about what later became national communities.¹² Anderson built this argument on the historiography about how British American printers fomented the American Revolution.¹³ However, some scholars now question the influence of those revolutionary-era printers, especially Trish Loughran, who

¹⁰ Jurgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Berger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989), 1–4, 19; See also, Hannah Arendt, Danielle S. Allen, and Margaret Canovan, *The Human Condition*, Second edition (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018).

¹¹ Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 67; Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic*, 10.

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 46, 65 NB Anderson also argues that the use of vernacular administrative languages was crucial.

¹³ See, Anderson, 63–64, and Chapter 2.

argues that early American printers did not have the technical capacity to print and distribute publications nationally.¹⁴ Maritime communication gives another push against this teetering pedestal of early printers.

More fundamentally, historians of non-alphabet literacies, including gesture, fashion, and consumption, decenter print itself from the history of communication in early America. These histories also reorient early American history away from the “Road-to-Revolution” story. Scholars of Indigenous literacies argue that prints and manuscripts circulated in Indian country along with tattoos, beadwork including wampum, knotwork such as quipu, sign languages, and other expressions of non-alphabet literacy. Settler communications were integrated into Indigenous communications when Indigenous couriers carried letters or when religious texts circulated in Indian Country, where communication networks empowered Indigenous peoples.¹⁵ For instance, Alejandra Dubcovsky and George Broadwell argue that in seventeenth-century Florida, Timucua people had high degrees of literacy that the Spanish relied on to administer the territory, even as the Timucua used this literacy to consolidate their alliances and organize opposition to Spanish colonization.¹⁶ Maritime communication opens a new

¹⁴ Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), xix–xx, 33–36.

¹⁵ Cohen, *Networked Wilderness*, 1996; Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover, eds., *Colonial Mediascapes: Sensory Worlds of the Early Americas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Céline Carayon, “‘The Gesture Speech of Mankind’: Old and New Entanglements in the Histories of American Indian and European Sign Languages,” *The American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (April 2016): 461–91, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/121.2.461>; Alejandra Dubcovsky, *Informed Power: Communication in the Early American South* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2016); Alejandra Dubcovsky and George Aaron Broadwell, “Writing Timucua: Recovering and Interrogating Indigenous Authorship,” *Early American Studies* 15, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 409–41; Katherine Grandjean, *American Passage: The Communications Frontiers in Early New England*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Dubcovsky and Broadwell, “Writing Timucua: Recovering and Interrogating Indigenous Authorship.”

geographic front for arguments that printers should lose their precedence at the front of the parade of early Americans who were on their way to the Revolution.

Progressive and Neo-Progressive historians of the American Revolution share this concern about the relative importance of seamen among trade workers in early America. This concern differs from Whig and Neo-Whig historians, who often emphasize printers' role, and Imperial and Neo-Imperial historians, who emphasize imperial officials and imperial politics.¹⁷ Bernard Bailyn, leading Neo-Whig historian, argues that the American Revolution arose primarily from new political and constitutional ideas about anti-authoritarianism, ideas that lengthy print pamphlets expressed most influentially.¹⁸ Compared to these pamphlets, the seamen who participated in anti-impressment riots before the revolutionary era were "ideologically inert" and expressed only a "diffuse and indeliberate antiauthoritarianism," unlike participants in later Stamp Act riots.¹⁹ Jesse Lemisch, a Neo-Progressive, disagreed with Bailyn and argued that the seamen's crowd actions were purposeful, radical, political

¹⁷ Consider, Michael A. McDonnell and David Waldstreicher, "Revolution in the Quarterly? A Historiographical Analysis," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2017): 635, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.74.4.0633>.

¹⁸ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), vi–vii, ix, 233; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), 506; Richard L. Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1985), ix, 253; Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998); Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, First Vintage Books (Vintage, 1993), 4–5.

¹⁹ Bernard Bailyn and Jane N. Garrett, eds., *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750–1776*, vol. I: 1750–1765 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), 581–83, 740 n. 10 cited in; Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (July 1968): 405, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1921773>.

expressions in defense of their liberties.²⁰ Other Neo-Progressives, often concerned with crowd actions, argue that economic conflicts motivated revolutionary mobilization and action. During the Revolution, marginalized peoples sought utopian reconfigurations of democracy and personal dependency; their plans differed from elites' plans.²¹ In contrast, Neo-Imperial histories emphasize the continuities and connections of the Revolution with politics in Great Britain and conflict within and between empires.²² American seamen encountered officers of

²⁰ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, v–vi; Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets,” 396, 406–7; Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, “A Motley Crew in the American Revolution,” in *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 211–47; Paul Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Society and Culture in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), xii; Paul A. Gilje, *To Swear like a Sailor: Maritime Culture in America, 1750–1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 3; Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783–1860* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 23, 28; Christopher Paul Magra, *The Fisherman’s Cause: Atlantic Commerce and Maritime Dimensions of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15.

²¹ Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution*, Abridged edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986); Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking, 2005), xiv, 1; Kathleen DuVal, *Independence Lost* (New York: Random House, 2015); Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763–1776*. (New York: Columbia University, 1918).

²² Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766*, 1st ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), xvii–xviii; Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts*, 253; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688–1783*, First American edition (New York: Knopf, 1989), 250; Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 346; Philip Richard D. Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford ; New York: Blackwell, 1985), 166; Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C. London: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000), vii; Eliga H. Gould, *Among the Powers of the Earth: The American Revolution and the Making of a New World Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607–1788* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986), xi; Jack P. Greene, “The American Revolution,” *The American Historical Review*, February 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/105.1.93>; Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty’s Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World*, 1st ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), 12–13; Richard R. Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire: The New England Colonies, 1675–1715* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1981), ix, 421; Elizabeth Mancke, *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, ca. 1760–1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 162; Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire*, Lewis Walpole Series in Eighteenth-Century Culture and History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 361; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837*, Rev. ed., with new introductory essay (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1, 7–8, 374–75.

the British and French states more often than any other Americans. Consequently, as Nathan Perl-Rosenthal argues, how seamen proved their nationality during these encounters advanced new ideas about recognizing the citizenship of a people who had no monarch as sovereign.²³ These three historiographies of Whig, Progressive, and Imperial historians differ in their values about what even deserves to be studied. This maritime study intervenes by arguing that most Neo-Whig and Neo-Imperial histories overlook how governors, printers, and colonists at large relied on maritime communications during the 1760s. In that aspect, this study is Neo-Progressive. It contributes to Neo-Progressive history by showing the attitudes seamen articulated in their words and songs. The parade of early Americans on their way to the Revolution was actually a crowd, but an articulate crowd.

Neo-Progressive histories of this early American crowd ask how “Red Atlantic” labor history intersected with “Black Atlantic” African-American history. The slave ship is one crux for this problem. Thinking about class formation, race formation, and enslavement as processes, not static structures, recognizes how these phenomena varied across place and time, their historicity.²⁴ Labor historians argue that seamen led class formation by working in international markets, bargaining for their wages, enduring violent work discipline, and acting collectively.²⁵

²³ Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors: Becoming American in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2015), 5, 10–11, 242–43.

²⁴ e.g. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), 5. Furthermore, writing the agency of individuals and collectives back into histories of transatlantic slavery denaturalizes how law, policy, custom, and habits created inequality.

²⁵ Jesse Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull: The Role of New York’s Seamen in Precipitating the Revolution*, Studies in African American History and Culture (New York: Garland, 1997); Marcus Buford Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 77, 114–15, 146–52, 206, 249–51, 297–98; Niklas Frykman, “Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships,” *International Review of Social History* 54, no.

However, seafarers' relationship as workers to the formation of a Black Atlantic was fraught, and nowhere more so than on slave ships. Many historians now argue that slave ships were forerunners of modern racial capitalism, not vestiges of European feudalism. Others advocate for African-centered explanations, where slave ships were just one part of Black Atlantic life. A different approach to the Black Africans looks at how seafaring gave many Black workers more autonomy than they had on land. Black laborers were everywhere in maritime trades, and maritime trades formed African-American and Black Atlantic identities, even as their property and liberty lacked many legal protections.²⁶ The Black Atlantic included Black maritime communication.

Historians are sure that eighteenth-century Blacks communicated via seamen, especially Black seamen in the Caribbean, but struggle to document what they know to be true. Julius Scott originated this research with his *Common Wind* argument that Black seamen conveyed communications within and beyond the Caribbean during the Haitian Revolution.²⁷ Scott's

1 (April 2009): 76, 85, 92; See also, E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966); Billy G. Smith, *The "Lower Sort": Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750-1800* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1990); Simon P. Newman, *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia*, *Early American Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

²⁶ W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 6, 229–30, 232; Michael J. Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (July 2002): 585–622, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3491466>; Charles R. Foy, "Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic World, 1713-1783," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 4, no. 1 (2006): 46–77, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2006.0002>; W. Jeffrey Bolster, "'To Feel Like a Man': Black Seamen in the Northern States, 1800-1860," *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (March 1990): 1199, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2936594>; Clarence Maxwell, "Enslaved Merchants, Enslaved Merchant-Mariners, and the Bermuda Conspiracy of 1761," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 1 (2008): 140–78, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.0.0015>; David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

²⁷ Julius S. Scott, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (PhD dissertation, Duke University, 1986); Julius Sherrard Scott, *The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution* (London ; New York: Verso, 2018); Bolster, *Black Jacks*; American Historical Review Forum, "Julius S. Scott's The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian

insight seems so evident now that historians forget just how original Scott's work was.²⁸

Historians have not marshaled and assessed evidence before the 1790s that substantiates this now-commonsense belief, but not for lack of trying. For instance, Ernesto Bassi's study of the voyages of shipmasters and sailors of the Vice-Royalty of New Grenada (Colombia) argues that their movements constructed Trans-Imperial Greater Caribbean, especially after the start of free trade in 1784. For Bassi, non-sailors imaged alternative futures for that constructed space of a Greater Caribbean. However, Bassi relies on evidence of how shipmasters informed other people, speculating that "Sailors surely shared stories" even though evidence for this is "beyond the historian's reach."²⁹ Documenting subaltern communications via seamen is like riding a penny-farthing: tough enough in the nineteenth century, and even trickier when moving backward.

There is slippage in the concepts that support the Hydrarchy and the Common Wind theses. First, historians skate over whether seamen and enslaved people understood themselves to be part of this inchoate movement of broad-based resistance the way governors feared and the way historians have argued based on governors' records. Second, the meaning of "communication" slides between connecting, informing, and activating. Communication can

Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 3 (June 1, 2020): 915–16, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhaa292>.

²⁸ Laurent Dubois, "Going to the Territory," *The American Historical Review* 125, no. 3 (June 1, 2020): 917–20, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhaa277>; For instance, Jeffery Bolster notes as an aside that seamen were "for black people in the Atlantic world what newspapers and the royal mail service were for white elites: a mode of communication integrating local communities into the larger community of color, even as they revealed regional and local differences." Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 39.

²⁹ Ernesto Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016), 4, 56, 72–73.

variously mean connecting people through association, informing people by passing on disarticulated public knowledge,³⁰ or mobilizing and activating people to change political behavior. Historians further confuse their definitions of communication because historical communication was an arena of politics. Historians describe how Americans both wielded, experienced, refined, and contested power through communication as well as how communication was a power source.³¹ The concept of historical “communication” requires refinement and operationalization.

Historians usually define two aspects to communications: one, the transmission of messages and, the other, communities’ shared meaning-making.³² Some of the best work on communication as transmission comes from John J. McCusker and his quantification of how the commodity price current and exchange rate current newspapers became “better, faster, cheaper” in that order.³³ The most notable work on communication as shared meaning making

³⁰ See, Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 2; Simon Schaffer, “Newton on the Beach: The Information Order of Principia Mathematica,” *History of Science* 47, no. 3 (September 2009): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1177/007327530904700301>.

³¹ Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*; David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, NC: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia by University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory & Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Konstatin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 8; Dubcovsky, *Informed Power*; Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*.

³² Robert Darnton, “An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (February 2000): 1–2; James W. Carey, “A Cultural Approach to Communication,” in *Communication as Culture*, Revised (New York: Routledge, 2009), 12–14, 15, 19.

³³ John J. McCusker, “The Demise of Distance: The Business Press and the Origins of the Information Revolution in the Early Modern Atlantic World,” *American Historical Review* 110, no. 2 (April 2005): 319; See also, Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Heidi J. S. Tworek and Simone M. Müller, “Editorial – Communicating Global Capitalism,” *Journal of Global History* 10, no. 2 (July 2015): 204.

is Robert Parkinson's qualitative analysis of how the revolutionary-era newspapers publicized a political ideology that an external British enemy was instigating internal Indigenous, African-American, and Hessian enemies to commit massacres, insurrections, and atrocities, respectively.³⁴

During the 1760s, the politics of maritime communication changed in both transmission and shared meaning making. In transmission, maritime communication improved. Governors, merchants, and seamen could do more things more reliably with maritime communication. Governors and provincials used maritime communication to regulate the northern fisheries and contest that regulation. News of slave trade uprisings indicated the redundancy of maritime communication in trade with Upper Guinea and the West Indies. In communication as shared meaning-making, mariners expressed changing attitudes towards political, gendered, and racialized differences about being English, British American, and American; women and marriage; and the slave trade. Maritime communication articulated letters, rumors, and songs with prints and the post office, bringing early Americans together into a public who resisted taxation, impressment, and regulation, and expressed attitudes about courtship, marriage and enslavement. Maritime communication was politics.

The slippage of concepts continues when histories of communication as transmission in early American networks glide, elide, and slide between defining communication as meaning connecting, informing, and activating. Much of this slippage happens in network analyses of

³⁴ Robert G. Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 6–7, 20–22; e.g., Dubcovsky and Broadwell, "Writing Timucua: Recovering and Interrogating Indigenous Authorship," 439–41.

family and merchant letters when the same records that show how parties were connected also show how they informed each other and how this information activated their behaviors. The most developed analyses of letter-writing networks are in studies about the principal-agent problem of how merchants trusted far-off delegates to represent their interests faithfully.³⁵ Realist-nominalist debates arise in network analyses, where critics allege that historians confuse abstractions for “actually existing” historical phenomena. For instance, *philosophes* wrote figuratively about a transnational “Republic of Letters,” but analysis of letter-exchanges shows that the Enlightenment existed in network of correspondence and Parisian salons were not at the center.³⁶ The slippage between communication as connecting, informing, and activating is entirely understandable because today’s usage of “communication” and “information” differs from the eighteenth-century usage.³⁷ When period users said

³⁵ e.g., Avner Greif, “Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghribi Traders,” *The Journal of Economic History* 49, no. 4 (December 1989): 857–82; Francesca Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers: The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009); John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull*, First edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

³⁶ Dubcovsky, *Informed Power*; Dan Edelstein et al., “Historical Research in a Digital Age: Reflections from the Mapping the Republic of Letters Project,” *The American Historical Review* 122, no. 2 (April 1, 2017): 400–424, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/122.2.400>; Caroline Winterer, “Where Is America in the Republic of Letters?,” *Modern Intellectual History* 9, no. 3 (November 2012): 597–623.

³⁷ The convergence of the history of communications with the history of information technology is so recent that it is irrelevant to the eighteenth century.

Further confounding histories of information technology with histories of communication, eighteenth-century actors used the word “information” differently from today. To them, Information was not a ubiquitous synonym for knowledge. Information meant material points, points of opinion, and hearsay that one wrote about, mentioned, heard, or told, that relieved uncertainty and ignorance. A demonstration of expectations for what “information” included were covered in a 1791 letter about “defects of information” that John Thornton, chairman of the Sierra Leone Company, wrote to John Clarkson, agent for the Company, severely chastising Clarkson for failing to inform the Company of mortality in the new colony. (Henry Thornton to John Clarkson, December 1791, 180–81, MG21-Add.MSS.-41262A 164-183, LAC, Ottawa. “Information” was also a legal term for an informer’s evidence. For historians, Ann Blair’s definition of information is useful:

I use the term “information in a nontechnical way, as distinct from data (which requires further processing before it can be meaningful) and from knowledge (which implies an individual

“communication,” they often meant association.³⁸ The problem of distinguishing communication as connecting, communication as informing, and communication as activating is acute for seamen. This study uses that three-part definition instead of historians’ usual definition of communication as transmission and communication as shared meaning making.

This study only touches on the substantial scholarship examining letters because letters had an elite bias. Historians argue that letter-writing developed individuals’ subjectivity during the eighteenth century, while family and gender historians argue that letters maintained family households’ primacy as political and economic units – not the individual. Sarah Pearsall, for instance, argues that even as letter writers valued expressions of individuals’ sensibility and credit-worthiness, more and more letters continued to value familiarity. Consequently, when the individual was the normative unit for politics and economics, these letters maintained households as effective political and economic units, even when households did not share one roof.³⁹ Konstantin Dierks argues that letters were rare before the mid-century consumer

knower). We speak of storing, retrieving, selecting, and organizing information, with the implication that it can be stored and shared for use and reuse in different ways by many people—a kind of public property distinct from personal knowledge. Furthermore, information typically takes the form of discrete and small-sized items that have been removed from their original contexts and made available as ‘morsels’ ready to be rearticulated.” Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 2.

See, James Gleick, *The Information: A History A Theory A Flood* (New York: Pantheon, 2011.).) T (C. E. Shannon, “A Mathematical Theory of Communication,” *Bell System Technical Journal* 27, no. 3 (July 1948): 381–82, 379, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1538-7305.1948.tb01338.x>; Luciano Floridi, *Information: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions 225 (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).).

³⁸ e.g., “Communication, n.,” in *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, July 2018), <http://www.oed.com>.

³⁹ Sarah M. S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20, 241; Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Upper Canada in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, McGill-Queen’s Studies in Ethnic History 24 (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007); Mary Kelley, “‘While Pen, Ink & Paper Can Be Had’ Reading and Writing in a Time of Revolution,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 439–66; Grandjean, *American Passage*; Sara T. Damiano, “Writing Women’s History Through the

revolution made paper and ink widely accessible.⁴⁰ For maritime communication, this means that histories of communication by letter are about elites whose letters record connecting, informing, and activating all in one place. Most counter discourses by non-elites whose letters did not survive are lost. Thus, this study of seamen builds on communication histories as associating and untangles the histories of communication as informing and histories of communication as activating.

On the transmission side, some communication historians argue a communication revolution happened between the sixteenth century and nineteenth century. They argue that the speed and expense of cargo, human travel, letter conveyance, and telegrams improved in Europe and North America, although they differ in their timelines. For instance, Robert Albion argues that a communication revolution of transmission happened in British America when Deputy Postmasters General Benjamin Franklin and William Hunter reformed the post office in 1754 and happened in England when the Bridgewater Canal opened in 1761.⁴¹ Richard John argues for a later chronology, writing that the 1792 Postal Act launched a communication

Revolution: Family Finances, Letter Writing, and Conceptions of Marriage,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2017): 697–728, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.74.4.0697>; cf. Ellen Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, “Atlantic Cultures and the Age of Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (2017): 667–96, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.74.4.0667>; Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*.

⁴⁰ Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*, 283–85.

⁴¹ Robert G. Albion, “The Communication Revolution, 1760-1933,” *Transactions of the Newcomen Society* 14, no. 1 (January 1933): 13–25, <https://doi.org/10.1179/tns.1933.002>; Richard R. John, “American Historians and the Concept of the Communications Revolution,” in *Information Acumen: The Understanding and Use of Knowledge in Modern Business*, ed. Lisa Bud-Frierman (London: Routledge, 1994); Wolfgang Behringer, “Communications Revolutions: A Historiographical Concept,” *German History* 24, no. 3 (July 1, 2006): 333–74, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0266355406gh378oa>; Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

revolution when the United States built thousands of new post offices, improved roads, and sent and received an order of magnitude more mail items.⁴² Other transmission-oriented work argues for gradual change. The most relevant of this work is Ian Steele's finding that seaborne English news sped up gradually from 1675 to 1740, forming a transatlantic English community.⁴³ Unlike Steele, most histories of early communication do not address transmission by seagoing vessels.⁴⁴ In most histories, the ships and seamen that bring the news are unremarked-upon. This study makes maritime communication visible.

Distance and Difference in Maritime Massachusetts and Rhode Island

This study's methodology uses complementarity to address how the record of seamen's communication is uneven and dispersed. Complementarity means that the biases of each type of source counteract the biases of other types of sources. Sailors' memoirs and travelogues narrate what sailors found meaningful and memorable but value a good story that seems authentic over strictly true details.⁴⁵ Conversely, even journals that aspire to be literature become lists about everyday work.⁴⁶ Logbooks are records of navigation, but some include

⁴² John, *Spreading the News*; Albion, "The Communication Revolution, 1760-1933"; John, "American Historians and the Concept of the Communications Revolution"; Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know about Itself* (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 2014).

⁴³ Steele, *The English Atlantic*.

⁴⁴ Contrast with Pettegree, where how foreign advices arrive from overseas is not addressed, Pettegree, *The Invention of News*; Compare with Stephen Russell Berry, *A Path in the Mighty Waters: Shipboard Life and Atlantic Crossings to the New World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

⁴⁵ Philip Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage: Sea Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, U.K.: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 188-89; John Samson, "Personal Narratives, Journals, and Diaries," ed. Haskell Springer (Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 83, 97.

⁴⁶ Peleg Folger, "Peleg Folger His Book: The Collected Writings of an Eighteenth-Century Nantucket Whaleman [1751-1776]," ed. Nathaniel Philbrick and Thomas Philbrick, n.d., Nantucket Athenaeum, Nantucket, Mass.

reflective songs, verses, and doodles, especially in the endpapers. Travelogues and diaries by non-mariners describe what seamen did not write down themselves. Because women wrote some of these travelogues and diaries, such documents begin to remediate how historians have excluded women from maritime history.⁴⁷ Minimally-literate seamen who signed with a mark when being deposed and interrogated by Courts of Vice-Admiralty and Courts of Common Pleas tell stories of interloping and smuggling. Naval Office Shipping Lists of the registered entrances and clearances of where shipmasters claimed vessels went. Quantitative analysis unlocks these data. Newspapers printed more complex stories that suit qualitative analysis. Collections of letters between merchants and their shipmasters and agents are suited to network analysis. Surviving letters between seamen and their families show non-commercial communication. Plentiful broadsides, pamphlets, and books counteract the scarcity of personal letters. Combining each source with another applies this methodology of complementarity.

Coastal Massachusetts and Rhode Island are exceptional sites for assessing maritime communication due to their maritime economies. New England's coastal economies specialized in fishing, whaling, privateering, shipping, and trade. In 1760, Boston was one of British America's five largest ports, with a population of more than 15,000. Commercial decision-making concentrated there, and the port had extensive trade to Europe and the West Indies.

⁴⁷ Sarah Kemble Knight, *Sarah Kemble Knight, Journal of Madam Knight*, ed. Malcolm Freiburg (New York: Wilder and Campbell, 1825) Knight predates the period of study, but is included to show how a woman's account of the roads and taverns of the northeast is a counterpart to men's accounts of those places, such as Alexander Hamilton's *Itinerarium*; Eunice Swain, "Journal and Poetry, 1776-1788" (n.d.), Nantucket Athenaeum, Nantucket, Mass.; See also, Suzanne J. Stark, *Female Tars: Women Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1996).

One-quarter of Boston residents had occupations in maritime commerce or the fisheries.⁴⁸

Newport in 1760 had a population of 7,500, a substantial merchant presence, and a substantial West Indies trade. In 1764, there were 2,200 Newport-based seamen.⁴⁹ Salem and Providence were secondary ports that still engaged in the West Indies and European trades. The many minor ports usually specialized in one industry, such as Bristol's specialization in slaving and Gloucester's fishing. These Rhode Island and Massachusetts ports are worth studying because they are exceptionally maritime.

Considering Massachusetts and Rhode Island together also applies the principle of complementarity. Studying both Massachusetts and Rhode Island is practical and fair because their records complemented each other and sometimes overlap. Rhode Island had a population of about one-fifth the size of Massachusetts. Rhode Island was especially maritime and urbanized, with 19% of its population living in Newport and Providence in 1790.⁵⁰

Massachusetts was less urbanized than Rhode Island but just as maritime: only 7% of its

⁴⁸ Jacob M. Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century," *Perspectives in American History* 8 (1974): 137 Price warns not to take his figures "too literally." He estimates there were unreported sailors. NB Price does not appear to include women's labor. Compare with Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, eds., *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850*, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), *passim*.

⁴⁹ Price, "American Port Towns," 173–74; John J. McCusker, "Population of Cities – Boston, Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston: 1630–1790," in *Historical Statistics of the United States Millennial Edition Online*, ed. Susan B. Carter et al., vol. 5, 5 vols. (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Table Eg60-64, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg1-193>; Elaine Forman Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 34.

⁵⁰ *Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States* (Philadelphia and London: J. Phillips, George-Yard, Lombard-Street, 1793), 34; John J. McCusker, "Population, by Race and by Colony or Locality: 1610–1780," in *Historical Statistics of the United States Millennial Edition Online*, ed. Susan B. Carter et al., vol. 5, 5 vols. (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Table Eg60-64, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Eg1-193> In 1760, the Massachusetts population was 202600 and the Rhode Island population was 45471.

population lived in the large ports of Boston and Salem in 1790, while 20% lived in ports of more than 3,000 people, on Cape Cod or the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.⁵¹ Many voyages touched in both colonies, such as whaling voyages from southern Massachusetts that sold oil to Rhode Island merchants. Considering the two colonies together shows a cross-section of maritime industries. Examining Massachusetts alone makes it more difficult to address questions touching on the slave trade while considering Rhode Island alone makes it harder to address questions touching on the cod fisheries. Rhode Island's Court of Vice-Admiralty file papers complement missing records from the Massachusetts Court of Vice-Admiralty, and document privateering. Conversely, in Rhode Island, ubiquitous smuggling, contraband, and informal trade obscured many voyages. Massachusetts complements Rhode Island, for there smuggling, contraband, and informal trade were "merely" rampant.⁵² One colony complements the other.

Early New England is an exceptional site for assessing communications because it led American printing. Supposing that newspapers indicate printing at large, Boston had the earliest, densest print culture. The *Boston News-Letter* was the first continuously printing newspaper in the Americas, having commenced operations in 1704. Of 37 colonial newspapers

⁵¹ *Return of the Whole Number of Persons Within the Several Districts of the United States*, 22–33, 34 Counting Boston, Salem, Marblehead, Gloucester, Newburyport, New Bedford, Beverly, Plymouth (2995), Barnstable County, Dukes County, and Nantucket.

⁵² *A Short View of the Smuggling Trade, Carried on by the British Northern Colonies, in Violation of the Act of Navigation, and Several Other Acts of Parliament* (London: 1751, n.d.), 2; For instance, see the impossibly low registered tonnage of vessels paying the Newport for tax, in "List of Vessels Paying Fort Tax at Newport in 1744 and 1745," *Rhode Island Historical Society Collections* 16 (1922): 84–89; Wim Klooster, "Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600-1800," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents, 1500-1830*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 167, 171, 174, 179; Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era*, 5–6.

in 1775, Boston alone had five, Salem had two, most other colonies had only a few, and some colonies had none at all.⁵³ Rhode Island complements Massachusetts' exceptionalism because Rhode Island's first newspapers began printing closer to most other colonies' newspapers: the *Newport Mercury* in 1758 and the *Providence Journal* in 1762.⁵⁴ Boston's fortunes fell during the mid-to-late century. By comparison, in 1775, New York was the packet service terminus, the Post Office headquarters, and printed three newspapers. In 1775, Philadelphia had the most shipping and printed six English newspapers and two German newspapers.⁵⁵ When Newport took a hammering during the War of Independence, New England's once-leading ports and once-leading print culture slipped even further behind.

The first chapter shows how maritime communication touched all ranks and races of early America and suggests that connections reached throughout the British Atlantic. It argues that maritime mariners were skilled trade workers of all ranks and races. Their declared routes were sensitive to changes in war, peace, and treaties of the British Atlantic. They had the vertical mobility of being promoted up through maritime trades and the horizontal mobility of moving from one maritime trade to another. In wealth, wages, and prestige, they ranged from the most marginalized indigents to the most successful traders. About one in five of these mariners were shipmasters and mates, about three in five were crewmembers, and by late-century, about one in ten worked never advanced up or out. A proportion of these crew were

⁵³ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, 675, 679–80.

⁵⁴ Parkinson, 680–81. Thanks to the Antinomians who splintered from Puritan-dominated Massachusetts and founded Rhode Island with religious toleration, Rhode Island had Baptist, Quaker, and Jewish settlers who interpreted texts within differing religious traditions of the relationship of an individual's conscience to authority and the text.

⁵⁵ Parkinson, 682, 688.

“seamen of color,” or Indigenous Americans, Blacks, and Portuguese Africans, especially on whaleships and among watermen in small craft on rivers and waterfronts. Merchant seamen moved primarily along two east-west axes of trade with Britain and Southern Europe and three north-south axes of trade to the West Indies, the future Canada, and the other British mainland colonies. Late century fishing, whaling, and trade reached further into the South Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. Smugglers, interlopers, privateers, ratings, prisoners, and flags of truce traversed to regions that British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and Danish imperial powers claimed. Some historians have argued that seamen were members of an early transnational working class. Though evocative, this is not strictly correct, for empire governed eighteenth-century movement and class was still inchoate.

Chapters two through four argue that during the 1760s, seamen expressed and acted on political, national, gendered, and racialized differences in letters, prints, word of mouth, and song. These chapters also document mariners' interlocutors, including families and friends; printers and booksellers; postmasters; enslaved people; wives, sweethearts, sex workers, and other port women tavern keepers; governors and naval officers; merchants and traders; and other seamen from England and elsewhere. Their many actions and attitudes expressed in maritime communication added up, nudging Americans away from Britain.

The second chapter, about alphabet communication in letters and prints, argues that Early Americans politicized ship letters as part of conflict over taxation during the 1760s. Moreover, maritime communication meant that provincials did not depend on the post office and printers to be informed. Mariners conveyed many letters for provincials, often illicitly, despite the 1710 *Postal Act*. Colonists began to speak about illicit letter conveyance as a way to

resist tyranny when the 1765 *Postage Act* changed the postage regulations on ship letters, and colonists debated whether the 1710 Act was a precedent for taxation in the colonies. In some ports, illicitly sent ship letters vastly outnumbered the number of letters that shipmasters and authorized post riders brought to the post office. Printers who created pamphlets, newspapers, and broadsides credited many items to mariners and vessels, suggesting that maritime communication preceded many publications. Yet, archetypical and longest-running colonial newspaper, the *Boston News-Letter*, credited most of its maritime news to shipmasters, not common seamen. This argument draws attention to the underappreciated importance of postage to the Imperial crisis and corrects the misperception that printers regularly credited news to common seamen.

The third chapter, about oral communication and the unstable categories of rumors and news, argues that Massachusetts provincials at large adopted how seamen spoke about their fears of captivity and authoritarianism, fears that stuck to Britain. Seamen used swift-moving rumors to resist impressment (conscription) by the navy and avoid capture by French and Spanish vessels. Seamen believed the Roman Catholic powers of France and Spain were despotic, and increasingly they said they feared English tyranny, too. By the 1769 *Pitt Packet* case of attempted impressment gone wrong, Massachusetts provincials at large adopted what had once been maritime complaints about impressment. Provincials' often-overlooked anger about impressment during the Imperial Crisis connects mariners' oral communication to politics on shore. Seamen's growing fear of English tyranny and the spread of anger about impressment to other provincials during the 1760s turned Massachusetts provincials against Britain.

The fourth chapter, about oral-musical communication in song and verse, argues that Americanization and Anglicization advanced together and in tension when the songs and verses that American seamen wrote themselves diverged from what they read in prints from England. Americans were becoming different from England. The song and verse from England's prints that seamen quoted expressed attitudes that were comparatively more patriarchal regarding women, courtship, and marriage. The verses American seamen authored themselves expressed attitudes that were comparatively more sentimental about women, courtship, and marriage. Lines from mariners' homespun songs and verses also described how seamen used letters and word-of-mouth to communicate with their families and sweethearts. American-authored attitudes towards women and courtship diverged from British-printed attitudes, constituting the idea that the songsters had a native land.

The fifth chapter delves into how communication was not just a source of power or a determinant of effective rule but constituted political activity itself. The increased number of voyages to Labrador in fishing and trade enabled governors in Newfoundland and Massachusetts to regulate commerce in Labrador and reduce violence against Inuit people. Provincials resented this regulation and governors' allegations that they were lawless bandits. These episodes are significant as lesser-known conflicts of provincials with imperial authorities on a north-facing frontier. This conflict that mattered to the fishers and traders of Massachusetts ports and even more to Labrador Inuit. Increased voyages increased conflict between imperial, provincial, and Inuit interests.

The sixth chapter uses news of slave trade uprisings as an indicator of changes to American maritime communication on voyages to the south as part of the slave trades of Upper

Guinea and the West Indies. It argues that by the mid-1760s, redundancy in these American-grown maritime communications of the slave trade became robust. These communications test the limits of the now-commonplace belief that seamen communicated rumors and news about slave uprisings. Eighteenth-century American records contain little about what enslaved people said about these voyages and even less about what they said about uprisings; this contributed to racialization. The history of slave ships at the intersections of labor, race, and slavery in the Black Atlantic and African America poses a conundrum for the Hydrarchy thesis. When slaves resisted state-supported racial capitalism, seamen fought back.

“In a Public House One Evening”

These themes of labor, race, language, and nation converged one night in 1760, when African-American sailor Briton Hammon washed up in a London alehouse, out of options.⁵⁶ Twelve years beforehand, he had been a servant in Massachusetts, likely enslaved. With the leave of his master, he worked on a voyage from Plymouth, Massachusetts, to Jamaica and back. The vessel ran aground in Florida, where Yamasee or Creek slavers killed the eleven other crew and ship officers, enslaved Hammon, and spoke to him in what he called “broken

⁵⁶ I will not engage in debates over Hammon’s veracity, his editor, or his co-author. I will not analyze the story as an example of captivity narratives or the fable of the faithful servant. And I will not analyze the many social deaths of enslaved people in the Atlantic. See, Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study: With a New Preface*, First Harvard University Press paperback edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018); James H. Sweet, “Mistaken Identities? Olaudah Equiano, Domingos Álvares, and the Methodological Challenges of Studying the African Diaspora,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 2 (2009): 279–306; Daniel Vollaro, “Sixty Indians and Twenty Canoes: Briton Hammon’s Unreliable Witness to History,” *Native South*, no. 2 (2009): 13–147; Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet, eds., *Biography and the Black Atlantic, Early Modern Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Rhys Isaac, *Landon Carter’s Uneasy Kingdom: Revolution and Rebellion on a Virginia Plantation* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

English.”⁵⁷ After some weeks, Hammon negotiated with his captors to board a Spanish schooner and made his escape with the shipmaster, whom Hammon happened to know from his recent time in Jamaica. The slavers caught up with Hammon in Cuba, where the governor ransomed him. Hammon spent a year working for the governor, apparently enslaved, then four and half years in a “close dungeon” in Havana after refusing to be conscripted into the Spanish Armada. Hammon then spent five more years working for the governor, sometimes carrying the bishop’s sedan chair. He attempted to escape and failed twice. His enslaved years brought him in and out of the maritime world.

Hammon made his third escape attempt in 1759 when the HMS *Beaver* was in Havana Harbor. “Some of the ship’s crew” informed Hammon that their vessel was sailing in a few days.⁵⁸ Hammon’s friend Mrs. Howard met with some crew and a lieutenant from the *Beaver* at a tavern where they arranged Hammon’s escape from Cuba into the navy. His escape succeeded. After a few months in the navy, Hammon suffered a head injury in battle, a disabled arm “rendered [him] incapable of service,” and the navy discharged him. He found some work as a ship’s cook, then caught a fever in London and spent the last of his money during six weeks of recovery. Far from Massachusetts, with a broken body and no money, Hammon signed onto a large slave-ship bound for Africa.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Briton Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man* (Boston: Green and Russell in Queen Street, 1760), 5–7; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 7–9; Daniel Volarro argues this was a slaving party from Georgia Volarro, “Sixty Indians and Twenty Canoes,” 142–43.

⁵⁸ Hammon, *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man*, 11.

⁵⁹ Hammon, 12.

In the days before the slaver sailed, Hammon was “in a public house one evening,” where he “overheard” riggers talking about a vessel going to New England.⁶⁰ Hammon’s ears perked up, and he began to question the trade workers about the intended voyage. Before long, the said vessel’s mate entered the alehouse, so Hammon turned to question that man, closing in on whether the vessel needed a cook. When the shipmaster entered the alehouse a half-hour later, Hammon signed up (shipped) right away. He got himself released from the slaver and started working on the New England-bound vessel during the three months it lay in port. One day, while Hammon was in the hold, he “overheard” people on board mentioning the name of his one-time master from Plymouth. Hearing the familiar name aroused his curiosity. Hammon began questioning these people and found out that his former master was to be a passenger on the vessel during its passage. Once reunited, the master said that seeing Hammon was like seeing someone risen from the dead. Later, the Boston printing office of Green and Russell printed Hammon’s narrative as a pamphlet.

Hammon the seaman listened, asked, and negotiated wherever he went, and then he told and retold his story. He conversed with Indigenous people, Spaniards, sailors, women in port, crimps, ship officers, and trade workers. He conversed in captivity, he conversed on vessels, and he conversed in taverns and alehouses. Thanks to these conversations, he used ships to escape dire conditions on at least three occasions. Eventually, printers sold his story to readers and audiences. Hammon exemplifies maritime communication by seamen from

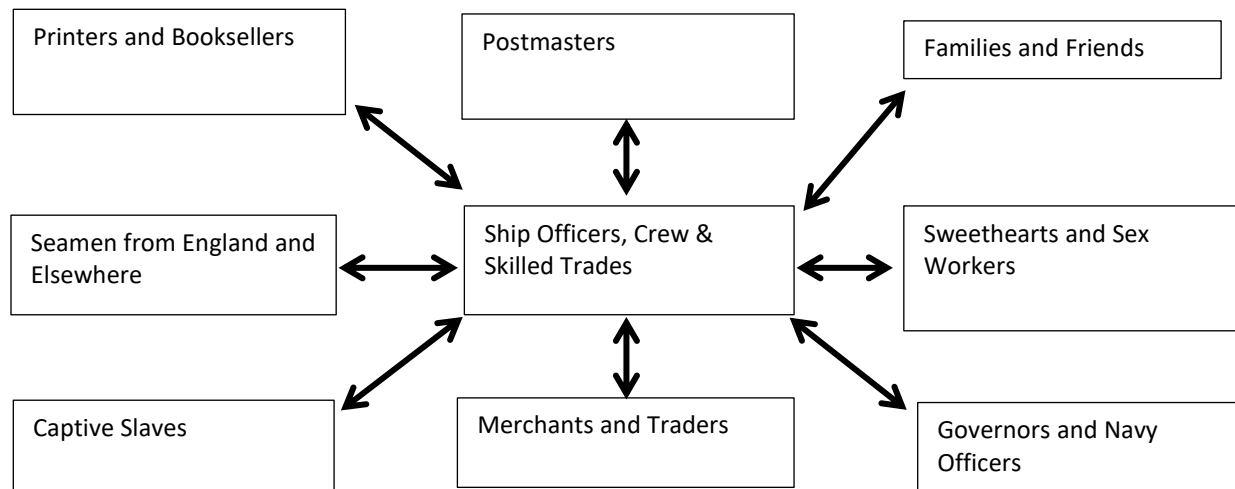
⁶⁰ On the differences between elite inns, middling taverns, ubiquitous alehouses, and the transition to Victorian pubs, see, Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: A Social History, 1200-1830* (London ; New York: Longman, 1983), 5, 11–13, 273; David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Massachusetts and Rhode Island of many ranks who included settlers, arrivants,⁶¹ and Indigenous people. This seaman informed print, used word-of-mouth to protect and recoup his autonomy, expressed fears of authoritarianism, spoke with port women and imperial officers, and narrowly avoided the graveyard of the slave trade. Hammon used his maritime communications to navigate his Atlantic World, as did so many others like him.

⁶¹ Meaning, forced migrants and their descendants. See, Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, First Peoples : New Directions Indigenous (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xix, xxx.

Figures

Figure 1. New England Seamen and their Key Interlocutors



1. American Mariners in a British Atlantic

The perfect international proletarian has always just disappeared around the corner. If you are looking for him among early American seamen, you just missed him. He reckoned his accounts and rowed ashore. He went down this crooked street, into that house where his wife keeps an inn. Historians who try to find footloose, transnational, waged, unpropertied seamen in eighteenth-century New England come back empty-handed, like press gangs who apprehended a sailor only for the detainee to plead his case and later be released. He is but a boy and still owes time on his apprenticeship. Or, he is too old now, and besides, he has children ashore, take someone else instead. Perhaps he is enslaved so you cannot take him because someone else lays claim to him already. Yes, he was once a seaman, but now he has a trade on land and is protected. He can pay someone else to take his place. The colonies and plantations are exempt from this British practice. He claims the rights of Englishmen and wants to appear before a jury. He is an American citizen on an American ship with an American cargo, and he can prove it: look at this tattoo here, look at that customs house certificate there. His creditors will appear before the magistrate and get a writ to set him free. The whole town knows his name, and if you do not let him go, they will come as a crowd to take him back and burn the records, too. Exceptional, exempted, disallowed. These are not the seamen you are looking for.

The very reasons that make the mariners of early New England imperfect examples of transnational workers are the same reasons that make seafaring an excellent occupation for understanding early America in the British Atlantic. These mariners connected early Americans

to the British Atlantic by touching all ranks of eighteenth-century Massachusetts and Rhode Island even as they were on the move within what shipmasters declared was a British Atlantic. This view differs from the views of radical historians who study seamen as indicators for impoverished, unskilled laborers.¹ Two arguments support this difference of views. The first is an argument that that trade, craft, or occupational identity in pre-industrial workplaces preceded class formation in industrial workplaces. The second is an argument that subjects lived and moved within a legal seascape of empires, not an international society of nation-states.

The first part of this argument challenges the view that the trade of mariner represents permanently impoverished workers. The mariners in this trade or craft of seafaring worked in fishing, trading, and war-making. Studying mariners as a trade includes studying many people who were not permanently dispossessed, while studying only permanently dispossessed people excludes many mariners. Mariners represented all strata of income and wealth in New England. They included white settlers and those who period sources called seamen of color, meaning Black arrivants,² Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous people, and Portuguese and Afro-Portuguese seamen. Advertisements for fugitive seamen reported that the seamen who were the most mobile were usually young and worked on larger vessels or navy vessels.

The second part of this argument challenges the view that mariners were international itinerants because shipmasters' declared shipping routes followed zones of British legality,

¹ Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, 1986; Smith, *The "Lower Sort"*; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*.

² i.e., those who capitalism and colonization forced to migrate and their descendants, see, Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xix, xxx.

moving within and along the edges of a British Atlantic world. The seamen themselves were English subjects. Most New England vessels were on the small side. These vessels were usually less than 100 tons, rigged as sloops and schooners, had small crews, and were best suited to short coasting routes and fishing voyages, but capable of sailing as far as needed. Before 1783, the routes that these New England merchant vessels declared at Customs Houses drew a *mare britannicum major*, a greater British seascape. This greater British seascape moved this way and that in synchrony with how laws, regulations, treaties, war, and peace changed the reach of British trading in the Americas, Southern Europe, and to some degree the Atlantic Islands and coastal West Africa. Massachusetts vessels in trade outside of New England declared routes to Customs Officers that ran along three north-south axes and two east-west axes. Traffic on these axes changed according to shifts in British territories and British treaties. The two east-west axes ran to and from Britain, and to and from Spain and Portugal. The three north-south axes ran to and from the northern part of the British empire in the fisheries and Quebec, to and from the middle part of the British empire in the middle colonies and southern colonies, and to and from the southern part of the British empire in the West Indies.

For these reasons, early American mariners were not who most historians believe they were. Radical interpretations argue that sailors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were members of an early transnational working class in the making. For instance, Marcus Rediker argues that these sailors belonged to a self-creative, pre-industrial proletariat that worked for wages, did not accumulate productive capital, and participated in collective actions that expressed collective consciousness. According to Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, these sailors overflowed analytic categories of race, gender, and class by participating in an

intersectional coalition of resistance from below, a many-faceted “Hydrarchy” of laborers, enslaved people, religious radicals, criminalized people, and social bandits.³ However, the most recent work on European maritime labor markets argues that during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, only the Dutch Republic’s maritime labor market could be called both free and international, where often half of crew members were foreigners. By comparison, England’s maritime labor market was free and domestic, and usually less than ten percent of the crew members were foreigners.⁴ Similarly, the evocative Hydrarchy argument that seamen led the formation of an intersectional, international movement of opposition from below has merit but is incomplete. It has merit because it retires dogmatic definitions of class that did not capture the full range of conflict in pre-industrial communities. It is incomplete because, even as it accounts for the complexity of maritime politics, it understates the importance of nation and empire to the lives of maritime people. It also obscures a less romantic reality that some mariners who accumulated capital belonged to middling sort and better sort of early America.⁵

³ Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, 1986, xi–xii; Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull*; Simon Middleton and Billy G. Smith, “Introduction,” in *Class Matters: Early North America and the Atlantic World*, ed. Simon Middleton and Billy G. Smith, Early American Studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 2–5, 9–10; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 291, 297; Rediker and Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, 3–4; Frykman, “Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships”; Nicolas Frykman et al., eds., *Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution: A Global Survey* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 9–10; E. P. Thompson, “The Patricians and the Plebs,” in *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: New Press: Distributed by W.W. Norton, 1993), 57, 87; cf. Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁴ Jelle Van Lottum, Jan Lucassen, and Lex Heerma Van Voss, “Sailors, National and International Labour Markets and National Identity, 1600–1850,” in *Shipping and Economic Growth 1350–1850*, ed. Richard W. Unger (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011), 312, 337–38, 350–51, <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004194397.i-464.27>.

⁵ Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*; Mark G. Hanna, *Pirate Nests and the Rise of the British Empire, 1570–1740* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

In contrast, this chapter accounts for this skilled trade as a whole, from the most marginalized fishermen to the most elite navigators.

In contrast to radical historians, historians in what could be called a national school argue that seamen pioneered republicanism and articulated a new American national identity. They argued that domestically, mariners from fishermen to merchants led Patriot political mobilization.⁶ Internationally, seamen represented the United States of America to other nations and demanded recognition of the new nation as a nation.⁷ Especially in the nineteenth-century Pacific, the early national Americans defined the United States as a nation when settler, African-American, and Indigenous seamen encountered Pacific Islanders who saw Native Americans and settlers alike as Americans.⁸ As Nancy Shoemaker argues, Native Americans who became ship officers, such as William Apess, show how “rank trumped race” on a whaleship and how race formation was contingent on place.⁹ These interpretations have merit but tend to be teleological. Their merits turn inside-out the grand narrative that America was a westward-creeping frontier destined to occupy Indigenous territories.¹⁰ The early United States looked

⁶ Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860*, 23, 28; Magra, *The Fisherman's Cause*, 15; Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront*.

⁷ Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors*; Gilje, *To Swear like a Sailor: Maritime Culture in America, 1750–1850*.

⁸ Dane Anthony Morrison, *True Yankees: The South Seas and the Discovery of American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014); Matthew Rafferty, *The Republic Afloat: Law, Honor, and Citizenship in Maritime America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Brian Rouleau, *With Sails Whitening Every Sea: Mariners and the Making of an American Maritime Empire*, United States in the World (Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2014).

⁹ Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalemen and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 6, 58, 197–98; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 6, 229–30, 232; Bolster, “To Feel Like a Man,” 1199.

¹⁰ Andrew Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier: Indians and the Contest for the American Coast* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2015).

outward, across the sea toward possibilities settlers did not envision for reservations, slave codes, and plantations. This body of interpretations that cluster in the early national period and advance narratives about the nation's instantiation tends to be teleological, even Hegelian. As Alan Taylor, Kathleen DuVal, and Gary Nash, and others argue, differing visions for America competed during the Revolution.¹¹ The United States could have turned out differently. For that reason, the years before 1775 need to be understood on their own terms and not necessarily as precursors to nationalist and republic movements.

Interpreting seamen as a trade of many ranks advances a third scholarship by maritime economic historians who argue seamen were not significantly different from others in seaside communities, that they “were simply working men who got wet.”¹² David Alexander wrote that memorable phrase on the night of his death, summarizing his findings that seamen in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia had the same educational background and literacy as other workers in that town. Since then, historians have replicated Alexander's findings for other ports during the age of sail and other indicators, including age, wealth, and wages.¹³ Even seemingly lawless pirates lived within institutions shaped by collective action problems of coordinating rational choices about utility among self-interested actors. As Mark Hanna argues, people on the British

¹¹ Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760 - 1820* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990); DuVal, *Independence Lost*; Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution*.

¹² David Alexander, “Literacy among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899,” in *Working Men Who Got Wet: Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project, July 24-July 26, 1980*, ed. Atlantic Canada Shipping Project et al. (St. John's, Nfld.: Maritime History Group, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), 32, See also, 21, 28.

¹³ Eric W. Sager, *Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914* (Montreal, Que. and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989); Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

empire's margins viewed piracy as transient acts, not as a stigmatized identity. So, when mariners accumulated capital by exploiting the market failures, their home ports rewarded them with status and recognition, even public office.¹⁴ The seafaring was a microcosm of early America that included people from the lower sort, the middling sort, and the better sort – and people who walk the line of legality in the seascape of empires.

I. “Mariner”

After a storm on October 30, 1770, the body of a deceased Massachusetts seaman washed up on a Nantasket beach. His remains and possessions displayed his circumstances at the time of his death and signs of his rank, meaning his social and economic status. This man was a healthy six feet four inches tall, about forty years old, and he had the dark skin and dark hair of what contemporaries called a “seaman of color” who was Indigenous, Black, or Portuguese. He carried a hasp knife that had the initials “W.F.” carved into the horn handle, signifying his alphabet literacy. W.F. closed his “pretty good” boots with cod line, suggesting his proximity to the fisheries, and that he had the wherewithal to own pretty good boots. He wore white stockings and a check shirt. He had on two pairs of old trousers plus a pair of patched woolen breeches: he had the means to layer three pairs of pants against the cold, but all three were old, for many seamen wore second-hand and third-hand “slops.” W.F. completed his attire with a woolen under-jacket closed by leather buttons, not the more fashionable and expensive mother of pearl or brass.¹⁵ Perhaps W.F. saved his money instead of spending it on

¹⁴ Peter T. Leeson, *The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2009); Hanna, *Pirate Nests*.

¹⁵ “We Have a More Particular Description of the Body...,” *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter*, no. 3500 (November 1, 1770).

fine clothes. That is what once-enslaved Rhode Island seaman Venture Smith did when Smith fished and wore homespun to accumulate earnings to buy his freedom, the freedom of his family and other men, and real estate.¹⁶ This literate seaman of color represents one member of the occupation of mariner in eighteenth-century New England, an occupation that encompassed the several trades of fisherman, whaler, privateer, and merchant seamen, where men learned how to hand, reef, and steer: the skills of able seamen. Although his exact employment was unclear, W.F. was a mariner.

“Mariner” means crew and ship officers who were fishermen, including whalers and sealers, merchant seamen, privateers, and navy sailors or ratings. When period actors said “mariner,” they variously meant skilled navigators, able seamen, ordinary seamen, and laborers who had not yet learned a sailor’s specialized skills, and they often lumped together mariner, seaman, and sailor. Narrowly, mariner meant someone who had mastered navigation, which distinguished navigators from laborers who called themselves sailors or seamen.¹⁷ For Connecticut, Jackson Turner Main argues that the key demographic and economic differences between those who called themselves mariners and those who called themselves seamen was that mariners were an average of ten years older than sailors, more likely to be married (two-

¹⁶ Venture Smith, *A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Venture, A Native of Africa but a Resident above Sixty Years in the United States of America. Related by Himself* (New-London, Conn.: Printed by C. Holt, at the Bee-Office, 1798), 26.

¹⁷ Allan Kulikoff, “The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (July 1971): 411–12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1918824>; Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 414; Jackson Turner Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 286–87; Daniel Vickers, “Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (January 1990): 3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2938039>; Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*; Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull*, preface.

thirds of all “mariners”), and usually owned real estate.¹⁸ As an occupational group, mariners represented all levels of income and wealth in early New England. Outside of the largest cities, New England was not highly unequal in wealth or income. In records from the Gloria L. Main and Jackson Turner Main New England probates dataset, people who professed the occupation of mariner died at all levels of wealth. At issue is whether the occupation of mariner was one trade that crossed many ranks from laborer to sea captain or whether seamen belonged to a laboring class that excluded sea captains who were members of a professional or merchant class.¹⁹

These New England seamen came from a society that was still egalitarian in wealth and income distribution compared to Western Europe but was becoming more unequal over time. Economic historians of New England debate whether top households and middle households by wealth were gaining as other provincials fell behind. In early quantifications, Allison Hanson Jones estimated that the top ten percent of New England households in 1774 held about 47 percent of the wealth. Jones calculated a Gini coefficient²⁰ for wealth in New England of .64, but this did not even include the wealth of indentured servants and enslaved people, who

¹⁸ Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 286–87; cf. Jackson Turner Main, *Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 73–74.

¹⁹ On occupational identity as a category of analysis, see, Mark Hailwood, “Broadside Ballads and Occupational Identity in Early Modern England,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (2016): 187, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hlq.2016.0016>.

²⁰ One of the the usual measures of inequality are estimates of the Gini coefficient for wealth or for income. A Gini coefficient approaching a value of 1 represents perfect inequality, meaning total concentration of all wealth or income of a population. A Gini coefficient approaching a value of 0 represents perfect equality, meaning a perfectly equal distribution of wealth or income in a population. Quantile measurements describe how much of the wealth or income is held by the top fraction of the population.

owned little of value.²¹ Compared to Jones, Gloria L. Main found a more equal distribution of wealth in Massachusetts during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the top ten percent of households held about 45 percent of the wealth and the Gini coefficient for wealth was between .55 and .60.²² Main, Jackson Turner Main, and others find that inequality increased over time, especially before the War of Independence.²³ The most recent and comprehensive analysis of early American incomes, by Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, argues that New England was very equal, even when the incomes of indentured servants and enslaved people are taken into account. They argue that the top ten percent of New England households earned about 20 percent of the total income in 1774, when the Gini coefficient for income was about .35. Lindert and Williamson contrast this egalitarian distribution of income with four roughly contemporary northwest European nations where the average Gini coefficient for income was .57.²⁴ Urban Boston, however, was highly unequal, argues Allan Kulikoff, and became more so during the Revolutionary years: the top ten percent of Boston households held about 63 percent of the wealth in 1771 and 65 percent of the wealth in 1790.²⁵ Lynne Withey finds that Providence and Newport were also unequal in wealth

²¹ Alice Hanson Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies about 1770," *The Journal of Economic History* 32, no. 1 (March 1972): 121, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050700075410>.

²² Gloria L. Main, "Inequality in Early America: The Evidence from Probate Records of Massachusetts and Maryland," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7, no. 4 (1977): 581, <https://doi.org/10.2307/202882>.

²³ Gloria L. Main and Jackson T. Main, "The Red Queen in New England?," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (January 1999): 121, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2674597>; Main, "Inequality in Early America," 581.

²⁴ Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "American Incomes Before and After the Revolution," *The Journal of Economic History* 73, no. 3 (September 2013): 755–57; Peter H. Lindert and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "American Colonial Incomes, 1650–1774," *The Economic History Review* 69, no. 1 (February 2016): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ehr.12106>.

²⁵ Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," 376, 381.

distribution and became even more unequal between 1760 and 1775.²⁶ New England was becoming less equal on the eve of the war, it became even less equal still after the war, and historians debate the speed of this change and its relationship to migration to the West where settlers took Indigenous land, found easy credit, and enjoyed social mobility.²⁷

Mariners died at all levels of wealth, from the lowest to the middle to the upper ranks of early New England. Many seamen and mariners owned enough property, including real estate, to belong to the middling sort, and some were among their community's elites. In this respect, seamen resembled other occupational groups in the relatively open society of New England where, on the whole, vertical socio-economic mobility was possible for whites.²⁸ The source for these claims is probate inventories, which often are a counter-intuitive and inconsistent body of records that are sometimes outright misleading. The analysis of probate inventories requires comparing jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction customs, converting and deflating currencies, applying price indexes, reckoning debts, and using judgment about questions such as what things of value probate inventories never recorded or recorded inconsistently.²⁹ Furthermore, using probate inventories to calculate wealth distribution among living people instead of the deceased requires assigning weights to the records according to the age of death and correcting

²⁶ Lynne Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 127–28.

²⁷ Main and Main, "The Red Queen in New England?," 134.

²⁸ Main, *Social Structure of Revolutionary America*, 68, 83; Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies about 1770," 124, 126; Kulikoff does not find mobility in Boston, Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston."

²⁹ Gloria L. Main, "Many Things Forgotten: The Use of Probate Records in 'Arming America,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 211–12.

for the estates of people who were not probated, which often includes people with high net worth or low net worth.³⁰ Jackson Turner Main and Gloria L. Main remediate some of these problems in their public dataset of 18,509 New England probate inventories from 1631 to 1774. These data include 839 estates for decedents who professed the occupation of seamen. (See, Table 1. Wealth of New England Seamen at Probate, 1738-1774 (Secondary Use of Main and Main Data), on page 65). These 839 estates do not include those seamen who had been in the service of the sea while young then retired to profess other occupations on land. Of the 839 seaman's estates, 335 are from the years 1738 to 1774. Among these 335 seamen, the median age of death was 36, and the mean age was 36.3.³¹ At that age, many New Englanders had not lived long enough to accumulate the wealth of someone who died in their fifties or later. Despite that, many of these 335 deceased seamen had accumulated enough wealth to be noteworthy: 61 percent of these inventories included real property. The number of deceased seamen with real property may have been even higher still because not all eighteenth-century New England probates inventoried decedents' real estate.³² Cases in Courts of Common Pleas confirms that many seamen held real estate in ports such as Newport. These seamen who own real estate are an inconvenient fact for the proletarian view of seafaring labor.

There were some seamen at all levels of wealth. Many seamen had few assets, but that is already widely accepted. Less widely known is how often seamen accumulated assets that

³⁰ Gloria L. Main, "The Correction of Biases in Colonial American Probate Records," *Historical Methods Newsletter* 8, no. 1 (December 1, 1974): 10–28; Carole Shammas, "Constructing a Wealth Distribution from Probate Records," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9, no. 2 (1978): 297, <https://doi.org/10.2307/203229>.

³¹ Main and Main, "The Red Queen in New England?," 138.

³² Main, "Inequality in Early America."

included real estate. In Main and Main's data, 15.2% (51) of the estates of deceased seamen in New England had a net wealth of more than £50 sterling, and 42.4% (142) had a gross wealth of more than £50 sterling. This was more wealth than most of the lowest ranks of Boston workers: In Gary Nash's calculations, the bottom 30% of adult male inhabitants of Boston held wealth of £50 or less at the times of their deaths.³³ Allison Hanson Jones' study of New England in 1774 found men in seafaring trades at all wealth levels: the eleven least valuable estates in that study included two mariners and one fisherman, 79% of fishermen and 35% of mariners were in the bottom third of estates by value, 65% of mariners and 21% of fishermen were in the middle third of estates by value, some sea captains were in the top third of estates by value, and three of the eleven most valuable estates belonged to sea captains.³⁴ These findings are consistent with Vickers and Walsh's argument for using age as a category of analysis in seaside towns where going to sea was just one phase in life for many young men who continued their later lives on land in other occupations.³⁵ Seamen were not stuck being landless laborers who never got ahead.³⁶

Turning from wealth to income, waged seamen earned rates typical of urban free workers and sometimes more than other urban free workers. Lindert and Williamson estimate the real income per capita in current pounds sterling for Boston in 1774 at £9 16s. 0d. and for all New England at £11 6d. 0d., including enslaved people. Jackson Turner Main estimated that

³³ See, Main, *Social Structure of Revolutionary America*, 272; Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, 1979, 396–401.

³⁴ Jones, "Wealth Estimates for the New England Colonies about 1770," 122, 126.

³⁵ Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*; See also Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*.

³⁶ I thank Prof. Gloria Lund Main and Dr. Andrew A. MacDonald for commenting on my secondary use of the Main and Main data. Errors remain mine alone.

a New England laborer before the Revolutionary War might have had a monthly rate around £1 5s. 0d. for an annual income of £15 “not found” (i.e. without room and board).³⁷ Seamen seem to have earned more than urban laborers when they worked.³⁸ In Gary Nash’s series of mean wages for Boston seamen the average monthly wage between 1730 and 1775, converted to pounds sterling, was £1 12s. 0d.³⁹ Main finds that on a voyage, the wages of a seamen might be about £2 5s. 0d. per month found or the equivalent of about £12 to £14 per annum found. Seamen were not always on voyages, so the irregularity of their work complicates estimating a typical wage for seamen. Bringing their annual rates down, seamen did not work as seamen all the time, and for those who the navy impressed, rates were fixed and payments were unreliable. Bringing their annual rates up, those seamen who shipped as privateers or whalers earned shares of a voyage or prize, sometimes very considerable amounts, and during war seamen’s wages could double or more. Wages rose with rank, and shipmaster’s rates were commonly between one and a third to two times the rates of seamen, from £5 to £8.⁴⁰

Seaman had horizontal mobility within this trade by moving between voyages of the fisheries, trading, and war-making.⁴¹ These seamen usually started by shipping on voyages in the main export trades of their home ports. In northern Massachusetts, this meant fishing for

³⁷ Main, *Social Structure of Revolutionary America*, 70–71; On income and status, see Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 28–30; Kulikoff, “The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston,” 385–87.

³⁸ Estimates of the wages of urban free laborers use seamen’s wages and the wages of free craftsmen in trades such as tailors, so it is hard to compare seamen wages to these indexes which are themselves composed of seamen’s wages

³⁹ Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, 1979, 392–94.

⁴⁰ Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, 1986, 38, 72, 110, 113, 150–51, 208–9.

⁴¹ See, Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London, New York: Macmillan; St. Martin’s Press, 1962), 105–26; Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*.

cod and getting paid in wages, a lump sum, or shares of the catch or “voyage.”⁴² In southern Massachusetts, this meant whaling, where they called the shares of voyages “lays.” Both Massachusetts and Rhode Island had West Indian trades in provisions, wood, livestock, and sugar products. Massachusetts and Rhode Island also had African trades in rum, manufactures, and enslaved workers. Seamen supplemented their wages by trading on the side, on their private accounts. During wartime, wages rose, and seamen who shipped as privateers earned shares of a captured prize. The navy conscripted people with maritime skills, especially able seamen or topmen who worked on the upper masts, although most sailors in the navy came from the vessels of England.⁴³ Horizontal mobility within maritime trades had limits. Merchant vessel shipmasters employed whalers reluctantly because they thought whalers were sloppy and lackadaisical, and shipmasters preferred crew from their own home ports. So, seamen brought their skilled trade to merchant shipping, whaling and fishing, privateering, and the navy.

Many seamen experienced vertical mobility when they did not work as laborers their entire lives. After passing two years at sea and mastering how to hand, reef, and steer, ordinary seamen became able seamen.⁴⁴ Not being in the navy helped with further advancement. A first-rate ship of the line in the British navy had complements of crew, officers, and “idlers”

⁴² Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 127.

⁴³ Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 51–90. N.B., most Navy impressment was in England’s home counties of the Thames tideway, not the mainland American colonies where colonists believed they were legally exempt from impressment.

⁴⁴ “The Merchant Seamen,” in Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 105–26; Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*.

such as marines totaling 850 people.⁴⁵ To advance on vessels that size, many other people had to die first, and so the customary Thursday toast was “to a bloody war or a sickly season.” Many seamen found there was more room for advancement when working on small, local vessels. Unlike the navy, merchant vessels in the coasting trade had as few as five crew. Crew who were Euro-American settlers, who grew up locally, and who had the right personal references had a good chance at becoming a ship officer on these local vessels. Vickers and Walsh find that among eighteenth-century seamen from Salem, the second largest port in Massachusetts, one fifth rose to become mate and one quarter rose even further to shipmasters. Thirty percent of Salem seamen died before making those milestones or retiring to land. Ninety percent of seamen in Salem and Philadelphia were under 35, and they were male in almost all cases.⁴⁶ The picture was similar for Philadelphia mariners, where about one-fifth were mates and shipmasters, and about one-tenth were lifelong crewmembers.⁴⁷ A substantial fraction of seamen advanced to become ship officers.

The crew inhabited the forecastle (fo’c’sle) of the bow, before the mast, while the officers of the master and mates and the tradesmen such as the ship carpenter inhabited cabins in the stern (aft). Some ship officers rose from the forecastle, coming “up through the hawse-hole,” while others “entered from the quarter deck” by shipping as an officer from their first voyage. Scholarly opinions differ about which route was more prevalent, but Vince Walsh finds

⁴⁵ Nicholas A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Collins, 1986), 348.

⁴⁶ Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*, 129–30, 162, 266; cf. Stark, *Female Tars*.

that coming up through the hawse-hole was the usual route in Massachusetts' secondary ports.⁴⁸ Those who became shipmasters enjoyed respect in the colonial artisan class as having a similar status to master printers and lesser merchants.⁴⁹ Others "swallowed the anchor" and retired to land, often to work in maritime trades such as sailmaking or ropemaking. These mariners advanced "up or out" of their trade.

These mariners were white, Black, and Indigenous. Whaler, merchant seaman, and later small merchant Benjamin Bangs of Cape Cod called the people who shipped on his vessels "the usual porridge." The whalers who worked alongside Bangs and later worked for Bangs were Nauset, Wampanoag, and Afro-Wampanoag men, African-American men, and white settlers. They crammed together into the forecastle of his sloop and schooner where they slept, made tea and chocolate on the caboose stove, hung wet clothing to dry, stored sea chests, and smoked and gambled in close quarters. Bangs tended to ship settlers from one of a few Cape families: the Hatches, the Sturgeses, the Clarks, the Freemans, the Lincolns, the Sears, and the Bangs – some of them were his cousins.⁵⁰ Bangs shipped African Americans who included people named Jolly, Old Fryday, Silas, and a man who Bangs called both one of "my Indians," and "my negro" and named Oliver Jesse, Oliver Caesar, or Jesse Caesar. The Wampanoag

⁴⁸ Vince Walsh, "'Up through the Hawse Hole:' The Social Origins and Lives of Salem Shipmasters, 1640 to 1720" (M.A. Thesis, St. John's, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1995), 35; Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*; Sager, *Seafaring Labour*; Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*; Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull*; Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*.. There are demographic studies of seamen in the town of Salem and some statistics for Connecticut as a whole, but none exist for Boston, due to missing records, and comparable studies do not exist for other British American ports.

⁴⁹ Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 286–281.

⁵⁰ Transcript of Benjamin Bangs Diary, 4 volumes, 1742-1762, Ms. N-1797, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; Massachusetts Historical Society Pre-Revolutionary Diaries Microfilm P-363, reel 1.19-22; Genealogy of Benjamin Bangs, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

seamen who shipped with the English Americans before the mast on the same voyages included at least eleven different named men, mainly from Nauset of Cape Cod.⁵¹ These Indigenous men who worked on vessels such as the sloop and schooner that Bangs owned, like many others, survived the century-long reorganization of Indigenous life in New England that followed King Phillip's War and worked in maritime trades, often for settlers.⁵²

The most mobile and hard to document mariners in New England come alive in newspaper advertisements for stragglers, runaways, deserters, and fugitives from vessels. Advertisements for stragglers warned dawdling sailors or seamen to return to the vessels they signed onto or be deemed deserters. Advertisements for runaways printed fugitives' names, often their ages, distinguishing characteristics, allegations of taking items from the vessel, and descriptions of their personalities, at least as seen by ship officers.⁵³ In June 1750, HMS *Success* advertised for three men at once. James Rich, 22, had a "dark brown complexion,"

⁵¹ Ezra Stiles, "An Account of the Potnummecut Indians. Taken by Dr. Stiles on the Spot, June 4, 1762" *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. 9, 112-113, Carroll, "Savages in the Service of Empire," note 15 and note 59.

⁵² Morison, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860*; Daniel Vickers, "Nantucket Whalemen in the Deep-Sea Fishery: The Changing Anatomy of an Early American Labor Force," *The Journal of American History* 72, no. 2 (September 1985): 277-96; Bolster, *Black Jacks*; Foy, "Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic World, 1713-1783"; Jason Mancini, "Beyond Reservations: Indians, Maritime Labor, and Communities of Color from Eastern Long Island Sound, 1713-1861," in *Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Power in Maritime America: Papers from the Conference Held at Mystic Seaport September 2006* (Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Seaport Museum, 2006), 22-44; Brian D. Carroll, "Savages in the Service of Empire: Native American Soldiers in Gorham's Rangers, 1744-1762," *New England Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (September 2012): 383-429; Shoemaker, *Native American Whalemen and the World*; Lisa Tanya Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War*, Henry Roe Cloud Series on American Indians and Modernity (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Christine M Delucia, *Memory Lands: King Philip's War and the Place of Violence in the Northeast*, 2020.

⁵³ For this literature, see Antonio T. Bly, "'Pretends He Can Read': Runaways and Literacy in Colonial America, 1730-1776," *Early American Studies* 6, no. 2 (2008): 264-265n3; Antonio T. Bly, "A Prince among Pretending Free Men: Runaway Slaves in Colonial New England Revisited," *Massachusetts Historical Review* 14 (2012): 88n5, <https://doi.org/10.5224/masshistrevi.14.1.0087>; Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, eds., *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

was “talkative, and swears much in conversation, round faced with a youthful aspect, and a large quid of tobacco in his mouth; had a blue jacket on when he went away.” William Duncomb, about 34, was “round shouldered, with an idiot maudlin down look, red haired and a red beard, commonly slovenly and nasty.” Anthony George, about 20 years old, spoke with a French accent and had “a light brown complexion, smooth face, and strong cheerful features.”⁵⁴ The advertisements warned shipmasters not to ship fugitive sailors, merchant seamen, servants, and slaves who worked on vessels, were “inclined” to the sea, or wore seamen’s clothing. As inducements, they publicized rewards to turn in these fugitives, such as when the navy promised ten pounds old tenor for delivering John Holborn, 26, a “lusty well-set Indian Man,” who wore a striped jacket and wide trousers.⁵⁵ Scholars of enslaved people find an archive of Black life in similar records of fugitives from slavery. In the course of attempting to re-enslave these fugitives, these sources recorded details of African-American families, political engagement, enduring African ethnic identities, consumption and engagement with market economies, multilingualism, music, disability, literacy, and resistance.⁵⁶ This reading adopts the methodologies of fugitive slave advertisements to advertisements for seamen and sailors.

Many of these fugitive seamen came from outside of New England and spoke with accents from England, Wales, North England, Scotland, France, and elsewhere. In 1748, the ship

⁵⁴ “Whereas the Three Men, Whose Names and Descriptions Are under-Written...,” *BNL*, no. 2508 (June 7, 1750).

⁵⁵ “Deserted from His Majesty’s Service, a Lusty Well-Set Indian Man,” *BNL*, no. 2320 (October 2, 1746).

⁵⁶ e.g., Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 4; David Waldstreicher, “Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (April 1999): 244, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2674119>; Bly, “Pretends He Can Read,” 264-265 n3; Bly, “A Prince among Pretending Free Men,” 88 n5, 108.

Industry, captain Graham, and the *Princessa*, captain Bewes advertised for four French runaways named Alexander Monnait, Jean Quandett, André Dubert, and Peter.⁵⁷ In 1746 HMS *Diamond* transport, master William Sherwill, advertised for Thomas Jenney, a Livorno-born seaman who spoke broken English, Robert Geluspy, a Scotland-born seaman from Perthside, and three servants wearing sailors' apparel named Michael Whitehead, Robert Stimpson, and Robert Nickson, variously born in Newcastle and Yorkshire. These strangers in a strange land were closer to Rediker's international workers than the Cape whalers who voyaged with people they grew up with, on round trip voyages from the ports near their homes. Shipping brought seamen from elsewhere to Boston, mostly from Great Britain.

These most mobile of seamen were young. For instance, in 1748, John Woodhouse, master of the snow *Isaac*, advertised for Edward Glancey, a servant boy of fifteen born in Liverpool who wore a blue or snuff-colored jacket, the way sailors did.⁵⁸ In a sample of the *Boston News-Letter* advertisements, the average age, when stated, was 24, and about two-thirds were between eighteen and 28 years old. Eighty-seven percent of the seamen in this sample were under the age of thirty.⁵⁹ These advertisements are especially useful because demographic data about Boston seamen is otherwise missing. The Boston advertisements are consistent with findings for Salem and Philadelphia. In those ports, about ten percent of

⁵⁷ "Deserted from the Ship Industry...", *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2420 (September 1, 1748).

⁵⁸ "Ran-Away on Tuesday Night from the Snow Isaac, John Woodhouse, Master...", *BNL*, no. 2401 (April 21, 1748).

⁵⁹ The mean age was 24, the median age was 23, the range was from ten years old to 40 years old, and the standard deviation was 5.06, meaning that 68% of seamen in that population were between the ages of about eighteen and 28.

seamen who worked before the mast were in their thirties.⁶⁰ By their thirties, most onetime seamen were seamen no more.

Finally, the majority of seamen in the British Atlantic declared themselves to be English. That so many seamen self-identified as English is an obstacle to the thesis that British maritime labor was international. The nation was attached to the subject in the early modern world. The crew of British shipping was mostly English subjects, unlike the free, international maritime workers who were half the Dutch Republic's seamen.⁶¹ The reason was simple enough: the British Navigation Acts required most seamen to have English nationality. The Navigation Acts applied the ideas and practices now called mercantilism.⁶² This suite of legislation included the Navigation Act of 1651, the Acts of Trade of 1660 and 1663, and later, supplementary acts in 1662, 1670, 1671, 1673, and 1696. The Act of 1660 required, among other measures, that English shipping carry trade to and from English colonies. English shipping meant English-built, English-owned, English-captained, and English-crewed, meaning that three-quarters of the crew were English. Importantly, as far as the Act and colonists were concerned, "English" nationals included colonists in the Americas.⁶³ These seamen moved within a seascape of English laws.

⁶⁰ Simon Newman, "Reading the Bodies of Early American Seafarers," *William and Mary Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1998): 59–82; Vickers and Walsh, *Young Men and the Sea*.

⁶¹ Van Lottum, Lucassen, and Van Voss, "Sailors, National and International Labour Markets and National Identity, 1600–1850," 312.

⁶² R. W. K. Hinton, "The Mercantile System in the Time of Thomas Mun," *The Economic History Review* 7, no. 3 (1955): 290, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2591154>; Lynn Muchmore, "A Note on Thomas Mun's 'England's Treasure by Forraign Trade,'" *The Economic History Review* 23, no. 3 (1970): 502–3, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2594618>.

⁶³ John McCusker, "British Mercantilist Policies and the Colonies," in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States, Volume I: The Colonial Era*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Armstrong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 345, 349.

Even whalers who were not in the carrying trade embraced their English nationality, suggesting that being English was more than a nationality of convenience. Before the American Revolution, usually what determined a subject's nationality was which monarch ruled the subject's country of birth. What sounds simple enough became complicated when Admiralty courts needed to judge a seaman's nation. The courts made these judgments by looking for signs in a seaman's language, customs, and dress. Courts also examined the ship's papers where seamen left written evidence attesting to how they saw their nationality in their contracts (portledge bills or shipping papers) and sometimes in other documents, including marginalia. A mate on trading voyages from Massachusetts between 1769 and 1774 inscribed the following ownership mark into the front endpapers of his logbook, "George Stevens is my name and England / Is my nation. Beverly is my dwelling place / And Christ is my salvation."⁶⁴ In 1770, Christopher Pease wrote the same rhyme in the logbook of several Massachusetts whaling voyages.⁶⁵ Nathan Perl-Rosenthal argues that this concept of subjecthood changed during the Revolutionary era when a sailor's subjecthood and citizenship became voluntary, something he declared for himself.⁶⁶ In the meantime, the law required that most of the seamen on any given merchant vessel were English.

International maritime workers briefly passed through New England's written records as captives and prisoners of war. These captives came from the Dutch, French, Spanish, Black, and

⁶⁴ George Stevens log book kept on ships from Beverly, 1769-1774, Pre-Revolutionary diaries microfilm, Massachusetts Historical Society, reel 12.15, front endpapers.

⁶⁵ Journal kept on board the Brig *Marmaid*, by Peter Pease, Peter Pease master 1770. New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, 142.

⁶⁶ Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors*, 10–11; Van Lottum, Lucassen, and Van Voss, "Sailors, National and International Labour Markets and National Identity, 1600–1850," 334.

Indigenous seamen on captured Dutch, French, and Spanish shipping. When privateers captured their vessels, the privateers sent some of the officers and crew to Vice-Admiralty Courts to testify to the nation of the vessel's owners, master, cargo, and crew. For instance, in 1745, the brigantine *Dolphin*, captain Richard Langdon, chased the sloop *Amity*, master Philip de Jong, during the *Amity*'s voyage from Dutch Curaçao to French Martinique. During the chase, the *Amity*'s boatswain tied the ship papers to a stone and threw the parcel overboard. The *Dolphin* captured the *Amity*, but with the ship papers gone, it was hard to tell what nation the vessel belonged to and whether it was lawful prize. Langdon sent the captives to Newport, where the Vice-Admiralty Court used interpreters to question the French- and Dutch-speaking officers and crew.⁶⁷ The court decided the vessel was Dutch, but a later witness remembered something he had previously forgotten: the *Amity*'s boatswain had sewn the sloop's Dutch and French papers into the captain's bed. After this revelation, the court ruled that the sloop was French and condemned it as lawful prize.⁶⁸

This story about international workers illustrates the high stakes of seamen's nationality. Categorizing the *Amity*'s crew according to their nationality was crucial to deciding whether the vessel was lawful prize. Each witness gave a different version of who was on the vessel. "About thirty of all nations" testified the French common seaman Jean Sollet, who claimed he had previously been master of a snow before he was castaway on the Spanish Main

⁶⁷ Preparatory Examination of Thomas Randal, 14 Oct. 1745, in Dorothy S. Towle, ed., "Dolphin vs. Sloop Amity, 1745," in *Records of the Vice Admiralty Court of Rhode Island 1716-1752* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1936), 323; Interrogatory of Philip de Jonge [Philip Young], Oct. 14, 1745, in Towle, 325.

⁶⁸ Interrogatory of Frederick Peters [Frederich Peters], 21 Oct. 1745 in Towle, "Dolphin vs. Sloop Amity," 1936, 326.

and shipped on the *Amity* for St. Eustatia.⁶⁹ The Dutch boatswain, Friederick Peithers, was more specific and said the vessel had “About fourteen or sixteen men Spaniards, French, Italians, Negroes, Indians, and one Dutchman besides myself.”⁷⁰ The Dutch captain, Philip de Jonge, seemingly contradicted Sollet and the boatswain, testifying that there were twenty-three on board, “All French and Spaniards, except three. Myself, mate, and clerk.”⁷¹ The court made people, vessels, and cargos such as this fit into categories of nationality when it judged whether the “mustee” or “octoroon” crew born in Curaçao were Dutch, whether enslaved Blacks from St.-Domingue were French, and how to count “Spanish Indians.”⁷² Historians also tumble with how people made and were remade by ideas about nation and nationality. Notwithstanding these foreign prisoners of war, most New England seamen were English enough.

II. A British American Atlantic

New England seamen moved within a British Atlantic of treaties, war, and peace where even the familiar routes of smuggling and interloping were an open secret. The trade routes shipmasters registered at the Boston and Salem Customs Houses sketch the regions where mariners declared they were coming from or going to.⁷³ According to the total number of

⁶⁹ Interrogatory of Jean Sollet, Oct. 14, 1745, in Towle, 323–24.

⁷⁰ Interrogatory of Friederick Piethers [Frederick Peters], Oct. 14, 1745, in Towle, 324–25.

⁷¹ Interrogatory [Second] of Philip de Jonge [Philip Young] Oct. 14, 1745 in Towle, 325.

⁷² Interrogatory of Jean [Jan] Venderbist, Oct. 22 1745, in Dorothy S. Towle, ed., “Reprisal vs. Hope, 1745,” in *Records of the Vice Admiralty Court of Rhode Island 1716-1752* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1936), 330–31; Interrogatory of Joseph Arnold, Oct. 22 1745, in Towle, 329.

⁷³ Naval Office Shipping Lists (NOSL) are the best available evidence of midcentury shipping. The lists record 17,263 records of voyages to and from locations outside of New England registered at the Salem Custom House from 1750 to 1768 and the Boston Customs House from 1752 to 1765.

Harriet Sylvester Tapley edited the Salem data into a 1934 reference book organized by 2464 vessel names, titled *Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem*. Murray G. Lawson organized and published

entrances and clearances, Massachusetts shipping had three north-south axes that dominated shipping and two east-west axes that accounted for far fewer voyages.⁷⁴ Changes in the registered shipping on these axes synchronized with changes in officially-sanctioned British access to trade – changes that varied with the territories Britain and other empires occupied. Among the many cross-cutting biases and shortcomings of these lists are that they come from just two decades and do not record the smuggling and interloping within those regions that new Englanders widely acknowledged.⁷⁵ Consequently, this is only a sketch of the regions for voyages, showing where seamen went at a minimum but not the full story.

aggregates of the Boston data in a 1948 research note that the *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* published.

I scraped the Tapley and Lawson data and used digital history tools and quantitative methodologies to clean these data then build, populate, link, and query a relational database of the origins and destinations of voyages. Coding the origins and destinations by sub-empire, meaning which empire claimed authority in a subregion in each year, accounted for territorial changes and territorial occupation during the war.

For the Lawson numbers I calculated an estimate of the numbers in the missing records based on the number of quarters of records present for each year for years where the records are missing for one or more quarters.

⁷⁴ These axes ran between sub-empires of which empires occupied which territories at which points in time. The coded sub-empires are Newfoundland, New France/Quebec and Île Royale/Cape Breton, the British American northeast (Nova Scotia, the eastern parts of Massachusetts (Maine), New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Long Island), the Middle Colonies (New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware), the Chesapeake, the British American southeast (North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida after 1763), the British West Indies (Barbados, St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, Jamaica, Bahamas, the Virgin Islands (except St. Thomas and St. Croix), Guadeloupe from 1759 to early 1763, Dominica from 1761, St. Vincent and Tobago from 1762, Martinique and Havana in 1762, and Grenada from 1763 plus the Mosquito Coast on the mainland) the Danish West Indies (St. Croix and St. Thomas), the Netherlands, the Dutch West Indies (St. Eustatius, Bonaire, Curacao, and St. Martin, plus Surinam on the mainland), the French West Indies (St.-Domingue, Dominica until 1761, Guadeloupe except for 1759 to 1763, Martinique except 1762, Grenada until 1763, and St.-Vincent and Tobago until 1762), the Spanish West Indies (Hispaniola (not including St.-Domingue) and Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Sal Tortugas, Cuba except for Havana in 1762, plus Honduras Bay on the mainland, and other references to the Spanish Main except Florida after 1763), Spain (with subregions for Basque country, Galicia, Andalusia, Mediterranean, Balearic Islands, and Canaries), Portugal, Portuguese Atlantic Islands (the Azores, Madeira, and Cape Verde), “Italy” and the Holy Roman Empire (Tuscany (Livorno) and Sardinia (Cagliari) plus Hamburg), and the British Isles (Scotland, Orkneys, Ireland, England, Isle of Man, Jersey, and Guernsey).

⁷⁵ The extant midcentury Salem Custom House entrances and clearances run from November 1750 to February 1768 and the extant midcentury Boston Custom House entrances and clearances run from October 1752 to September 1765, with many quarters missing from the records. A more complete mid-century run of pre-Independence Custom House records is not known to exist for Massachusetts or Rhode Island. The Salem lists

The first north-south axis ran from Massachusetts to the mainland colonies south of New England.⁷⁶ Shipping within the northeast and to the Chesapeake increased in the early Seven Years War while shipping to other regions decreased. When the Seven Years War started, the navy embargoed many British American ports to end trade with the French West Indies. This embargo was short-lived in the south, and in Pennsylvania, it ended in August 1756. Soon after this, Commander in Chief John Campbell, the fourth Earl of Loudoun, placed new embargoes on mainland ports that he did not lift until 1757. Shipping within the Northeast reached a global maximum during 1757 and 1758, which were the nadir for voyages to and from most other destinations. Middle Colonies' shipping increased after a global minimum near the start of the war in 1754 and 1755. Chesapeake shipping grew after a global minimum in 1756. Southeast colonies' shipping increased after a global minimum in 1756 and 1757. These changes in registered shipping reflected changes to the embargos on continental ports.

include entrances and clearances at Salem and other northern Massachusetts ports including Marblehead, Newburyport, Gloucester, and others. The full lists recorded the date, the most recent origin of the voyage or intended first destination of the voyage, the vessel name, master, registered tonnage, number of crew, number of guns, owners, port of registration, year built, and lading. Naval officers sent copies of these lists to the London Customs House each quarter. Tapley and Lawson's publications do not include all of this information from the manuscript sources.

A series of unfortunate events are believed to have destroyed many Customs House records, events that included the Boston Stamp Act riots, the British evacuation of Boston, and a fire on February 12, 1814 at the London Customs House that completely destroyed the building where many of the remaining American records are believed to have been deposited. Due to this, data on shipping to and from early American ports is very incomplete. Of the records of the Massachusetts Customs Houses at Salem and Boston, Sandra L. Webber writes, "What little has been published on the topic [of where the Custom House records are] is clouded in myth and conjecture, some of which sounds logical, yet searches have repeatedly ended in frustration." Sandra L. Webber, "The Lost Customs Records of Colonial Massachusetts," *Coriolis* 8, no. 2 (2018): 1.

⁷⁶ See, Table 15. Total Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767, on page 417 and Table 16. Total Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House: Extant Records and Estimated Missing Records, 1752-1765, on page 419

Decreased numbers of Massachusetts voyages registered to and from other British American regions on the continent coincided with increased voyages registered within the Northeast.

A second north-south axis ran from Massachusetts north to the Bay of St. Lawrence and Newfoundland.⁷⁷ Shipping to the future Canada decreased in the early war then increased after a global minimum in 1758. In 1758, France surrendered the naval fortress of Louisburg to Britain, weakening French naval power in the Americas and opening access to the former Île Royale colony and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The surrender of Louisbourg was the first in a series of events that included the fall of Quebec in 1759, the fall of Montreal in 1760, and the permanent removal of French metropolitan authority from most of North America in 1763. The French navy suddenly posed much less danger to Massachusetts shipping. With the French threat diminished, the number of Massachusetts voyages beyond the British mainland colonies increased, responding to the change in military circumstances.⁷⁸

A third north-south axis ran from Massachusetts to the West Indies, where declared voyages varied with empires' changing seascapes.⁷⁹ Smuggling and interloping were widespread, especially in the West Indies. The tension between official trade regulations and how traders avoided these regulations began to be resolved in the 1760s and 1770s when the British and Spanish empires began to normalize free trade, with Dutch-style freeports such as

⁷⁷ See, Table 15. Total Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767, on page 417 and Table 16. Total Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House: Extant Records and Estimated Missing Records, 1752-1765, on page 419

⁷⁸ Alan Rogers, "Wartime Restrictions on Colonial Trade," in *Empire and Liberty: American Resistance to British Authority, 1755-1763* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 90-104; Anderson, *Crucible of War*.

⁷⁹ See, Table 15. Total Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767, on page 417 and Table 16. Total Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House: Extant Records and Estimated Missing Records, 1752-1765, on page 419

British Dominica, and the liberalization of the Bourbon reforms.⁸⁰ As one anonymous critic wrote in 1750, “this trade is not only connived at, but cherished and encouraged by the foreigners with whom it has been carried on, who well know how much it tends to enrich their own colonies, and impoverish ours.”⁸¹ During this whole time, shipmasters registered most of these voyages as going to or coming from the British West Indies. Voyages to the British West Indies, Spanish West Indies, Dutch West Indies, and Danish West Indies decreased to a global minimum in 1758, then increased. After the peace of 1763, the Customs Houses began to record voyages to French territories. The origins and destinations for trade in the West Indies that shipmasters declared changed with the legality of British trade.

Traders understood that these voyages often had undeclared routes.⁸² British traders to the West Indies generally touched first at British Barbados, which is windward to the Lesser Antilles. Then, they traded “down” the British Leeward Islands to British Jamaica, the Dutch

⁸⁰ Frese, Joseph R., “*Smuggling, the Navy, and the Customs Service, 1763-1772*,” in *Seafaring In Colonial Massachusetts, 199-214*; n.d.; Jacob Price, “Summation: The American Panorama of Atlantic Port Cities,” in *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850*, ed. Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss, 1st ed (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 276; Knight and Liss, *Atlantic Port Cities*, 10; Shannon Lee Dawdy, *Building the Devil’s Empire: French Colonial New Orleans* (Chicago, Ill.; Bristol: University of Chicago Press ; University Presses Marketing [distributor, 2009), 101–3, <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/317922818.html>; Klooster, “Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600-1800,” 171–75; Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada’s Transimperial Greater Caribbean World*, 16; John J. McCusker, “Introduction,” *Business History Review* 79, no. 4 (2005): 701, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25097111>; McCusker, “British Mercantilist Policies and the Colonies”; cf. John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 286.

⁸¹ *A Short View of the Smuggling Trade, Carried on by the British Northern Colonies, in Violation of the Act of Navigation, and Several Other Acts of Parliament*, 2; See also, Klooster, “Inter-Imperial Smuggling in the Americas, 1600-1800,” 171.

⁸² According to the number of voyages and what merchants said at the time, many voyages that were not registered to specific West Indian ports were still voyages to the West Indies. Vessels usually registered only to the first or last port of their voyage, even when vessels touched in multiple ports. In addition, many vessels registered as simply going to the “West Indies,” without stating which West Indian ports they were intended for.

freeport at St. Eustatius, and other foreign ports. After that, they proceeded to the mainland colonies. In a 1763 memorial to the Massachusetts General Court that Boston merchants wrote opposing the renewal of the Molasses Act and its prohibitions on trade to foreign islands, Boston's Society for Encouraging Trade and Commerce wrote of these routes that the vessel generally:

. . . call at Barbados to try their markets, from thence they proceed to Antigua, Nevis and St. Kitts, and in case they meet with a tolerable market at either of those islands, they always embrace it, if not they then proceed, some to Jamaica, others to St. Eustatius, and the other foreign Islands, where they dispose of the Cargoes which our own [British] Islands do not want. . . .⁸³

A hypothetical voyage might depart Boston for Barbados with a registered cargo of fish, grain, and shingles. It might trade for molasses and enslaved people at Barbados and French Guadeloupe, bringing enslaved people to Jamaica to trade for even more molasses. Finally, it might touch at South Carolina to trade the remaining enslaved people for bills of exchange, then take molasses and bills of exchange to Boston. There, it would register as an entrance

⁸³ Even when going from British Island to British Island the vessels could not find enough demand to sell all their goods to British buyers alone. The merchants continued, reporting that the colonial trade with the West Indies was almost entirely on British American vessels, not West Indian vessels, and identifying the problem this posed for trade: “. . . being already overstocked with those commodities. But a further proof that the trade is in their favor is this; formerly when our goods fetched a price with them, and their produce did not vend quick; they owned and sent vessels with their produce to sell among us, and took our produce in pay; but this is not the case now; for where one vessel owned in the West-Indies comes to us, we send an hundred sail to them which plainly shows, that they do not want our Goods, so much as we do to sell them, nor to vend their own so much as we do to buy; their Navigation is otherwise employed; they take our Fish and other Commodities; dispose of them among the French, and pay us in the Return of those Goods only, shifted into English Cask at 100 per Cent Advance. Upon the whole, It is plain that our Islands are able neither to supply us with what we want from them, nor to take from us what Lumber and Fish we are obliged to export: and they will be still less able to do either; for our Demands will be growing faster than their Produce, and our Fishery which has been increasing, will continue still to increase, if not obstructed, while their Demands have not increased in any Proportion, and never can.” Joseph Green et al., “‘State of the Trade,’ 1763,” ed. Charles M. Andrews, *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 19 (1917): 389–90.

from South Carolina. The Customs House would record that hypothetical voyage had gone to Barbados and come from South Carolina.

East-west shipping was subordinate to north-south shipping according to the number of voyages to Britain and the Netherlands or Southern Europe and the Atlantic Islands.⁸⁴ The first east-west axis ran only from Boston to the British Isles and, to a lesser extent, the Netherlands. Boston's British Isles shipping decreased until a global minimum in 1760 and increased after that. The trade registered between Salem and Great Britain was not substantial compared to Boston, just 87 voyages over seventeen years, a total that was less than the annual number of Boston voyages for every individual year except for one. The second east-west axis ran from both Salem and Boston to southern Europe. When shipping registered to territories in the Mediterranean decreased, shipping registered to territories on the Iberian Atlantic coast increased, and vice versa. The year 1756 marked the decrease of voyages to the Mediterranean with the fall of the British naval fortress at Mahon. Throughout all this time, Britain had free trade with Portugal that dated back to the thirteenth century. British American shipping did not take place in an idealized, Dutch *mare librum* of early free trade. British American vessels still voyaged in a greater British seascape of naval force and protected trade, a *mare britannicum major*. Seamen on these voyages lived and worked within a world defined by empires, often acknowledged in the breach, not a society of nation-states.

The sizes of New England vessels suggest that maritime laborers in New England worked on a mixture of short-, medium-, and long-distance voyages—but mainly on short- and

⁸⁴ See, Table 15. Total Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767, on page 417 and Table 16. Total Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House: Extant Records and Estimated Missing Records, 1752-1765, on page 419

medium-distance voyages. According to vessel size, midcentury provincials named vessels sloop, schooner, brigantine, snow, and ship, in roughly increasing order. The crew sizes on merchant vessels varied greatly. A colonial vessel typically had a crew of at least five plus a master, with the exact number varying according to the vessel's size and the route.⁸⁵ While most coasting routes were just a few weeks, West Indies voyages were longer: the average voyage times from New England to Barbados in 1764-5 were 38.6 days out, 51.2 days back, not including port time.⁸⁶ The Customs House records at Salem document the declared size of vessels entering from or clearing for routes outside New England (See, Table 2. Rigging by Registered Tonnage of Vessels (where stated), Salem Customs House Entrances and Clearances, 1751-1767 (Registered Tonnage), on page 66, and Table 3. Rigging by Estimated Measured Tonnage of Vessels, Salem Customs House Entrances and Clearances, 1751-1767 (Estimated Measured Tonnage), on page 67). *Boston News-Letter* advertisements and public notices for the sale, auction, and lease of vessels and hulls describe New England vessel sizes that do not depend on unreliable reports made to the Custom House.⁸⁷ (See, Table 4. Rigging and Tonnage

⁸⁵ James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 196; Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 55–56, 68; cf. Van Lottum, Lucassen, and Van Voss, "Sailors, National and International Labour Markets and National Identity, 1600–1850," 343.

⁸⁶ Shepherd and Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America*, 197.

⁸⁷ For the early eighteenth century, the Massachusetts Registry of Shipping recorded all vessels from 1697 to 1714 (Bernard Bailyn and Lotte Bailyn, *Massachusetts Shipping, 1697-1714: A Statistical Study*, 1959, 100–101, <https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674734999>).

These advertisements for ships and hulls are drawn from a representative sample of issues of the *Boston News-Letter* newspaper. Insofar as this is a representative, systematic sample of that newspaper, these advertisements are representative of all the vessels advertised in the *Boston News-Letter* during those years. The data presented here record all advertisements and public notices of vessels for sale or auction or lease in that sample, including rigging and tonnage when available. The biases of newspaper advertisements differ from the biases of custom house records, giving these sources some advantages as for describing the characteristics of the

Advertised for Vessels in Sample of Boston News-Letter, 1740-1776 (Sales and Purchase Market and Newbuilding Market), on page 68). These records show how small vessels dominated Massachusetts shipping.

Small vessels dominated Massachusetts shipping in both the number of voyages and the total tonnage of shipping. Most Massachusetts vessels were small, maneuverable fore-and-aft rigged schooners and sloops, usually of less than 100 measured tons. These vessels were ideal for coasting and fishing trades, often unregistered with the Customs House, and usually had a small crew who often worked on engagements of a few weeks or less. A minority of vessels – about a third in Boston and a fifth in Salem – were square-rigged ships, snows, brigantines, and brigs, usually of 100 measured tons or more. These vessels were built to be efficient on long-distance, cross-oceanic trading voyages to the West Indies or Europe, voyages that engaged crew for many weeks or months at a time. Even smaller navy ships were larger than vessels in

New England fleet. First is the accessibility of advertisements compared to Custom House records: Boston was the second largest ports in mainland America during the middle eighteenth century and the largest port in New England, yet the Boston Customs House destroyed customs house records there. (N.B. Records remain for all colonial ports of entry at the National Archives (The Public Records Office) and the years 1768 to 1771 are especially well used because of the compilation of the Customs Ledger of Import and Exports, British North America, 1768-1772 (CUST 16/1, PRO/TNA))

Besides, the many vessels that travelled within New England did not need to register at the Custom House. Those vessels that were supposed to register often underreported their tonnage in order to pay lower wharfage fees or evaded registering altogether and smuggled instead. The limitations of newspaper advertisements include that these recorded only publicly advertised local sales and auctions of vessels and hulls, and not vessels built on commission by shipyards, vessels purchased elsewhere especially in the Thames where tonnage was cheaper, or vessels bought and sold privately. (John J. McCusker, "Colonial Statistics," in *Historical Statistics of the United States Millennial Edition Online*, ed. Susan B. Carter et al., vol. 5, 5 vols. (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 627-, <https://hsus.cambridge.org>.)

Newspaper advertisements have different biases to the biases of Custom House records and supplement what those records reveal. Because of uncertainties in the wording of some advertisements, this sample has combined the sales and purchase market of second-hand vessels with the newbuilding market of new vessels .

See, McCusker, 643.

the colonial fleet in terms of tonnage, armaments, and the hundreds of ratings (navy sailors) whose engagements lasted years. During the mid-to-late century, a sixth-rate vessel mounted 20 to 28 guns, had a complement of 160 to 200 officers, crew, and idlers, and builder's measurement⁸⁸ tonnage of 400 to 610 tons.⁸⁹ The history of maritime communications by mariners in New England reflects all three scales of shipping, but especially the many voyages of smaller vessels on shorter routes.

Attempting a more detailed account than that of vessel size leads to a mire because colonists changed how they described their assets depending on their audience.⁹⁰ The naming conventions for vessels were not yet standardized. Unlike today, colonists variously named vessels according to hull types, rigging, and intended usage, or combinations of all three.⁹¹ They did not use today's units of measurement for a vessel's tonnage, and they did not define, measure, or report tonnage with precision.⁹² John J. McCusker summarizes the relationship

⁸⁸ The navy used builder's measurement (BM) to calculate the carrying capacity of hulls. See, Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates* (St. Paul, Minn: Seaforth Publishing / MBI Publishing Co, 2007), xv.

⁸⁹ Rodger, *Wooden World*, 348; Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792*, 132.

⁹⁰ e.g., see the lowballed vessel sizes registered at Newport for taxation purposes in "List of Vessels Paying Fort Tax at Newport in 1744 and 1745."

⁹¹ Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792*, xiv–xv; William Avery Baker, "Vessel Types of Colonial Massachusetts," in *Seafaring in Colonial Massachusetts*, vol. 52, Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts; Distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 1980), 5; Karl Heinz Marquardt, "Rigs and Rigging," in *The Line of Battle: The Sailing Warship, 1650-1840*, ed. Robert Gardiner and Brian Lavery, Conway's History of the Ship (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1992), 125; Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1714-1792*, xiv–xv.

⁹² Martin Stopford, *Maritime Economics*, 2nd ed (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 523–26; Bailyn and Bailyn, *Massachusetts Shipping, 1697-1714*, 9–10, especially n12; John McCusker, "The Tonnage of Ships Engaged in British Colonial Trade During the Eighteenth Century," in *Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic World* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 43–44; McCusker, "Colonial Statistics," 644; Van Lottum, Lucassen, and Van Voss, "Sailors, National and International Labour Markets and National Identity, 1600–1850," 343.

between the three measures of colonial vessels' tonnage as a ratio of approximately 2:3:4 registered tonnage to measured tonnage to cargo tonnage. "In other words," writes McCusker, "a ship that was registered at 100 tons measured 150 tons and could carry 200 tons of cargo." McCusker advises that the most suitable measure when discussing pre-Revolutionary War shipping depends on the context: use registered tonnage for dues, use measured tonnage for sales of vessels, and use cargo tonnage for cargo capacity.⁹³ Fortunately, this mire of units of measurement does not change that most New England vessels were small and on short routes.

In conclusion, mariners are exemplary subjects for studying New England's communications because they were a skilled trade of many ranks that claimed to voyage within a British Atlantic. Their trade and nation exclude many of these early American mariners from radical histories of transnational and marginalized people. At the same time, their trade and nation make mariners a way to access communications by early Americans of many ranks. Historians searching for international crews of free waged laborers can find them on Dutch vessels, including captured Dutch vessels. New England mariners included Euro-American settlers, African American arrivants, Indigenous seamen, and mariners of all ranks from indigent and youngster to sea captain and town leader. They worked in the fisheries, in merchant shipping, and in waging war. Some mariners accumulated enough property to be considered members of the artisan class and the middling sort. Most were young, and a portion came from Great Britain. Custom house records of registered voyages sketch three north-south axes of routes within the Americas that accounted for most registered voyages and two axes of routes

⁹³ McCusker, "The Tonnage of Ships Engaged in British Colonial Trade During the Eighteenth Century," 69; Stopford, *Maritime Economics*, 523–26.

to Britain and Southern Europe that accounted for a smaller number of registered voyages.

Most of the vessels were smaller sloops and schooners suited to coasting and fishing, and one-fifth to one-third of the vessels at the largest ports were larger brigantines, snows, and ships.

The world of their work was a British Atlantic, sensitive in its geography to changes in law, politics, war, and peace, but familiar in its outlines, even in how colonists winked at interloping and smuggling.

III. Tables and Figures

Table 1. Wealth of New England Seamen at Probate, 1738-1774 (Secondary Use of Main and Main Data)

Range	Gross Wealth		Net Wealth	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
< £0	3	0.9%	18	5.4%
£0 - £50	165	49.3%	49	14.6%
£51 - £200	98	29.3%	29	8.7%
£201 - £400	23	6.9%	9	2.7%
> £400	21	6.3%	13	3.9%
Blank	25	7.5%	217	64.8%
Total	335	100.0%	335	100.0%

Notes: n = 335. Data source: Main and Main, "Mains' 18,509 Probates for Colonial New England, 1631-1776." ¹

All amounts in pounds sterling. £1 = 111.4 grams of silver.

¹ Jackson T. Main and Gloria L. Main, "Mains' 18,509 Probates for Colonial New England, 1631-1776," ed. Gloria L. Main and Peter H Lindert (Global Price and Income History Group, July 2013), Gloria L. Main, "Wealth per Estate Data; Medium: Table, Graph", Maryland State Archives, MSA SC 5906-10-435., Maryland State Archives, <http://gpih.ucdavis.edu/tables.htm>.

**Table 2. Rigging by Registered Tonnage of Vessels (where stated), Salem Customs House Entrances and Clearances, 1751-1767
(Registered Tonnage)**

Rigging	Number of Vessels	Percent of Total Vessels	Total Registered Tonnage (tons)	Percent of Total Registered Tonnage	Minimum Registered Tonnage (tons)	Maximum Registered Tonnage (tons)	Mean Registered Tonnage (tons)
Square Rig	424	17%	39,122	28%	30	280	92
<i>Ship</i>	63	2%	7,722	6%	50	280 ^a	127
<i>Snow</i>	131	5%	12,561	9%	50	180	97
<i>Brig</i>	7	<1%	649	<1%	76	115	93
<i>Brigantine</i>	222	9%	18,060	13%	30 ^b	125	83
<i>Galley</i>	1	<1%	130	<1%	130	130	130
Fore-and-Aft Rig	2,140	83%	100,444	72%	11	120	50
<i>Schooner</i>	1,628	63%	75,934	54%	11	120	50
<i>Sloop</i>	512	20%	24,510	18%	14	94	51
Total	2,564	100%	139,566	100%	11	280	58

^a Ship *Amherst Frigate*, master William Watt, registered tonnage 280 tons, cleared for the West Indies Nov. 1, 1758.

^b Three of the 222 brigs had registered tonnage less than 50 tons.

**Table 3. Rigging by Estimated Measured Tonnage of Vessels, Salem Customs House Entrances and Clearances, 1751-1767
(Estimated Measured Tonnage)**

Rigging	Number of Vessels	Percent of Total Vessels	Estimated Total Measured Tonnage (tons)	Estimated Percent of Total Measured Tonnage	Estimated Minimum Measured Tonnage (tons)	Estimated Maximum Measured Tonnage (tons)	Estimated Mean Measured Tonnage (tons)
Square Rig	424	17%	58,683	28%	45	420	138
Ship	63	2%	11,583	6%	75	420 ^a	191
Snow	131	5%	18,842	9%	75	270	146
Brig	7	<1%	974	<1%	114	173	140
Brigantine	222	9%	27,090	13%	45 ^b	188	125
Galley	1	<1%	195	<1%	195	195	195
Fore-and-Aft Rig	2,140	83%	150,666	72%	17	180	75
Schooner	1,628	63%	113,901	54%	17	180	75
Sloop	512	20%	36,765	18%	21	141	77
Total	2,564	100%	209,349	100%	17	420	87

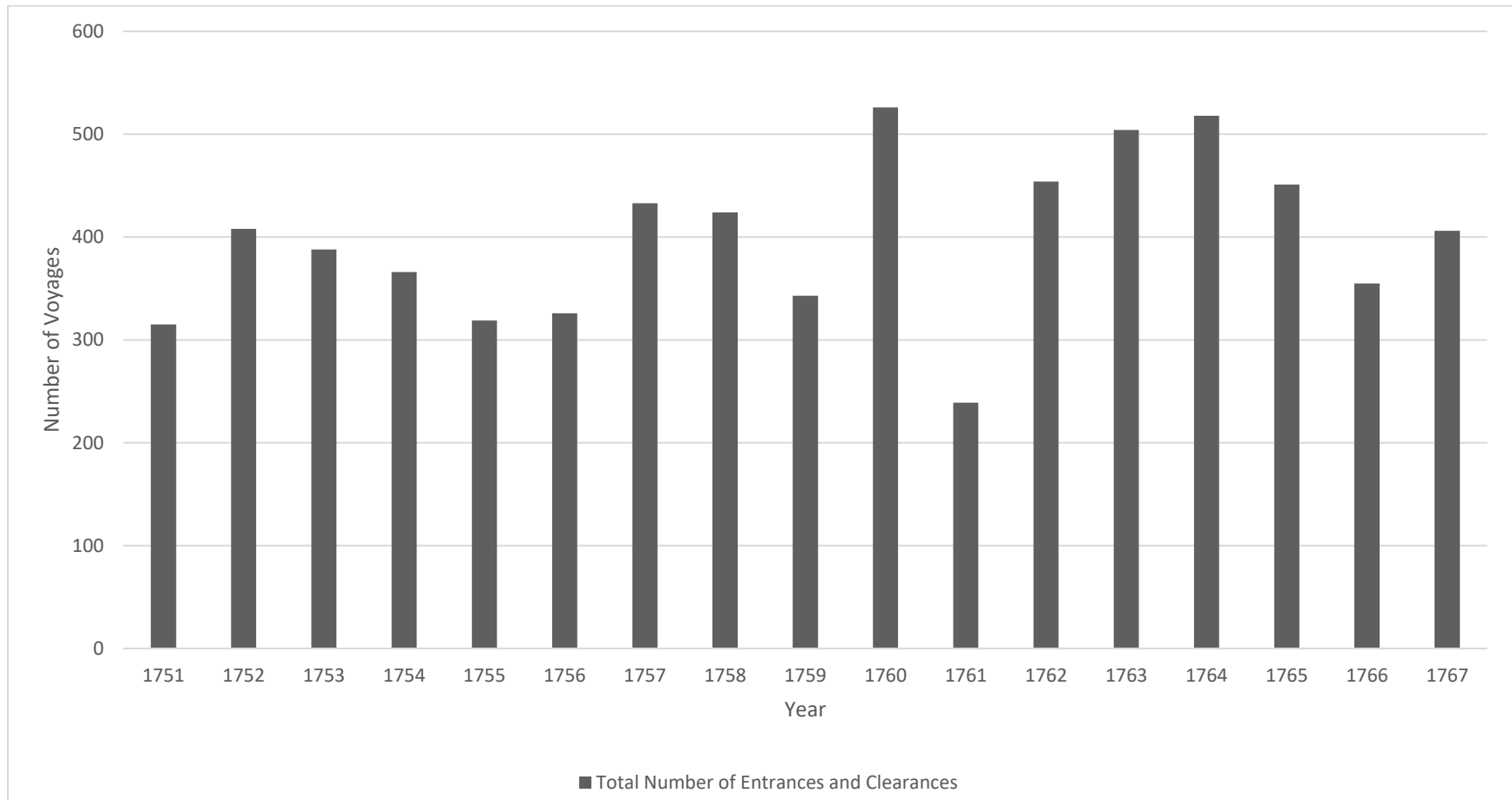
^a Ship *Amherst Frigate*, master William Watt, registered tonnage 280 tons, cleared for the West Indies Nov. 1, 1758.

^b Three of the 222 brigs had estimated measured tonnage less than 75 tons.

Table 4. Rigging and Tonnage Advertised for Vessels in Sample of Boston News-Letter, 1740-1776 (Sales and Purchase Market and Newbuilding Market)

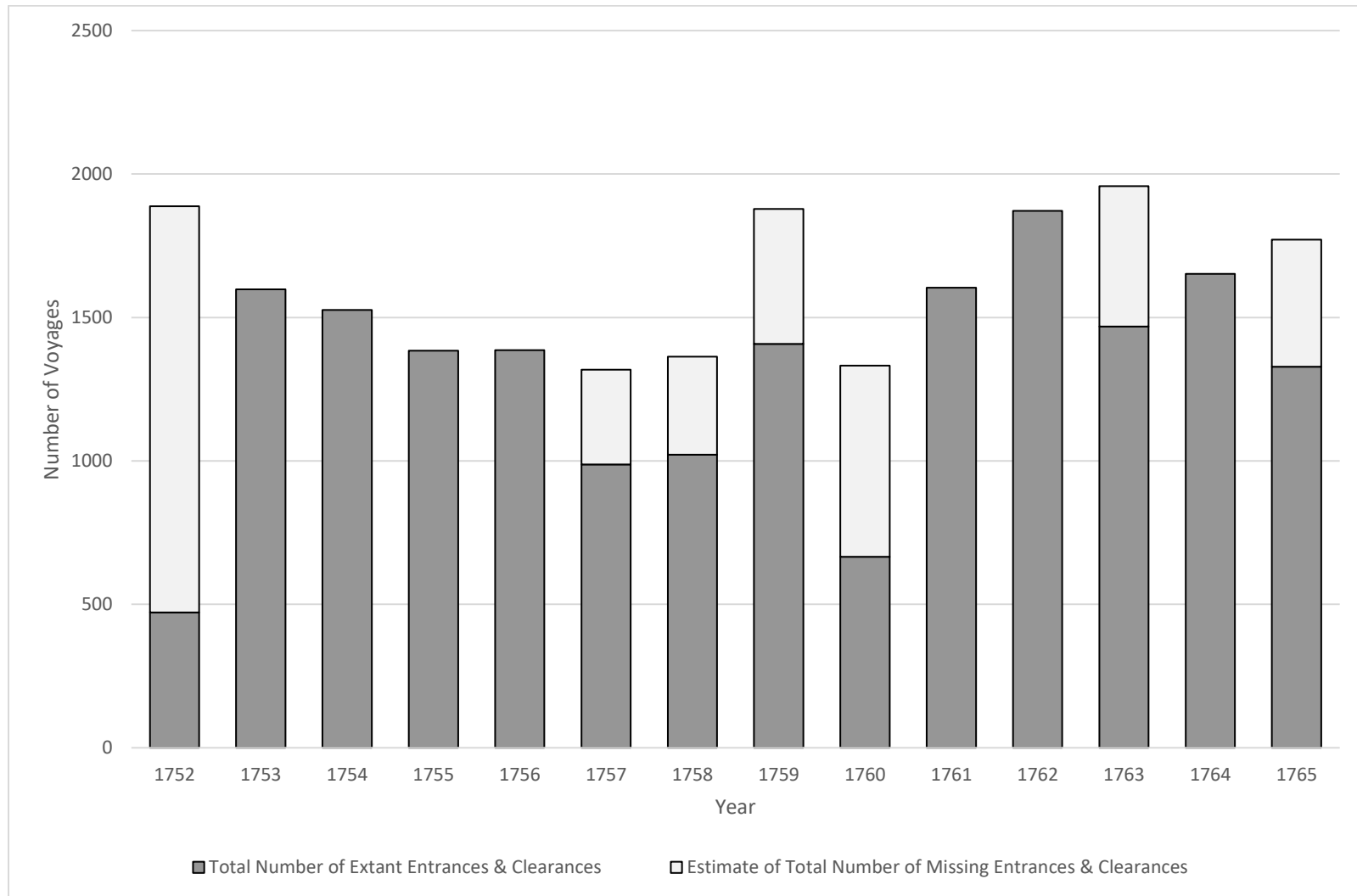
Rigging	Number of Vessels	Percent of Total Vessels	Total Measured Tonnage (tons)	Percent Total Measured Tonnage (tons)	Minimum Measured Tonnage (tons)	Maximum Measured Tonnage (tons)	Mean Measured Tonnage (tons)
Square Rig	28	33%	4,059	53%	65	290	145
<i>Ship</i>	11	13%	2,045	27%	100	290	186
<i>Snow</i>	6	7%	874	11%	100	234	146
<i>Brigantine</i>	10	12%	1,060	14%	65	150	106
<i>Brig</i>	1	1%	80	1%	80	80	80
Fore-and-Aft Rig	51	60%	3,385	44%	30	106	67
<i>Schooner</i>	27	32%	1,823	24%	27	106	68
<i>Sloop</i>	24	28%	1,562	20%	30	95	65
Others	6	7%	62	1%	11	150	46
Total	85	100%	7,716	100%	11	290	91

Figure 2. Total Number of Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767



Data source: Tapley, Harriet Sylvester, ed. *Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750-1769*. Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1934.

Figure 3. Total Number of Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House, 1752-1765



Data Source: Lawson, Murray, G. "The Routes of Boston's Trade, 1752-1765." *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 38 (February 1948): 80-120.

2. “The Freshest Advices”: Seamen, Printers, and the Post Office

After a storm wrecked a small schooner of 20 to 30 tons off the Massachusetts coast on October 20, 1770, all hands lost, the people of Plymouth found two bodies still with the vessel. One of the deceased carried a pocketbook containing “sundry” papers including a letter from Lemuel Lattimore and Lucretin Lattimore in Mount Desert, in the Eastern Part of Massachusetts (now Maine), addressed to their mother, Ruth Lattimore, in New London, Connecticut, as well as a bill of sale for the schooner *Defiance*, sold by Lemuel Lattimore to Danton Lattimore, also of Mount Desert.¹ This deceased mariner participated in New England’s maritime communications by seamen who conveyed letters and other documents on behalf of themselves and people on land, often illicitly. The political significance of these communications changed during the 1760s.

New England mariners’ communications existed independently of local printers and postmasters, arriving in ports first and later informing the post office or printing office. This independence meant that seamen and other provincials did not have to rely on printers and postmasters to be informed. These communications outside of the post office became politicized during the 1760s when provincials began to relate their longstanding practices of evading postage on ship letters to then-current debates about whether postage was a precedent for Parliament taxing the colonies. Politicizing ship letters was one of the most important of the cumulative changes to the significance of maritime communication during the

¹ “In the Late Storm on the 20th Instant,” *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter*, no. 3500 (November 1, 1770).

1760s. Due to these debates, postal history was an arena where provincials wrestled over Britain's claims to legitimate political authority in the Americas.

This chapter argues that maritime communications via mariners are significant because these decenter printers and postmasters from the history of communication in early America before, during, and after the War of Independence. Many Postmasters were printers by trade because becoming postal officials gave printers some advantages in their business. When composing their newspapers, printers drew from an assortment of material they gathered from local informants and correspondents from other cities, including, as historians sometimes note, seamen.

This chapter also argues that historians overstate the role of common seamen in the production of newspapers. "Common seamen" means the crew who inhabited the forecabin before the mast, in contrast to the ship officers who walked the quarterdeck, meaning shipmasters and mates. Printers drew from a slice of mariners' communications when composing newspapers from "the freshest advices both foreign and domestic," chiefly because mariners brought prints and ship letters into port. The *Boston News-Letter (BNL)* was the longest-running colonial newspaper and the archetype for other country printers. Its printers mainly credited mariners with prints and other items from England, items about war and peace, and items related to merchant's financial interests in voyages. The mariners the *BNL* printers credited news to were usually the shipmasters who represent merchants' interests in voyages. The *BNL* credited items to common seamen very rarely, which calls in to question historians'

belief that newspapers depended on printing reports from common seamen.² Generally, the *BNL* printers credited common seamen only when the ships' officers were missing or dead. The news the *BNL* did attribute to common seamen still generally concerned merchant interests. Straggler and fugitive advertisements ordering the return of seamen to their vessels hint at otherwise-unprinted stories of the talk of seamen and sailors. Seamen were free to read prints or use the post office, but maritime communication meant they did not need printers or the Post Office to be informed. These maritime communications are a little-understood aspect of early political mobilization and action.

Before the Imperial Crisis, mariners and colonists widely disregarded the requirements under the Postal Act of 1710 that they use the Post Office to send letters because private letter conveyance was faster and less expensive. Maritime communication from ship to ship to shore connected land-dwellers of all genders to reports that arrived by sea, as illustrated by the diffusion of news of the sieges of Quebec, Havana, and St. John's. Benjamin Franklin proposed increasing the regulations on ship letters in the colonies as a revenue measure in 1763. Lord Grenville's reforms to postage rates and regulations in the Postage Act of 1765 changed postal regulations more or less as Franklin recommended. Franklin does not appear to have predicted how provincial resistance to these reforms remade maritime communication into a matter of contesting imperial policy. Historians usually overlook how this legislation that coincided with the Grenville reforms to colonial administration aggravated colonists during the imperial crisis. Before the act, widespread private letter conveyance outside the post office had been

² e.g., Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic*, 27; Uriel Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Press and Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain and America*, SVEC, 2012:03 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2012), 10–11.

expedient. After the 1765 Act, widespread communication outside of the post office took place in the context of contemporary debates about Parliament's taxation of the colonies. This often-illicit private conveyance of letters by ship and other carriers became a form of collective political action when colonists and mariners began to justify these long-thriving practices by saying this was resistance to illegitimate taxation by parliament. During the imperial crisis, colonial mariners continued to read both provincial prints and England's prints, but they still did not need the prints to inform themselves. For their communications, Massachusetts and Rhode Island mariners and other provincials remained independent of both the imperial post office and Patriot-dominated printers and postmasters. These provincial Americans used postal communications to understand and resist political authority well before the United States Post Office became the most ubiquitous federal institution.³

After the War of Independence, these communication networks retained independence from the early national post office and printers and American shipping expanded into the Indian and Pacific worlds. In the Indian Ocean, French governors recognized the danger that American mariners' communication posed to French colonies with slaves. These governors attempted to restrict how Americans informed enslaved people about the rights of enslaved people in French colonies.

³ Joseph Adelman's piece on the Constitutional Post is one of few interpretations of the colonial and provincial-era post office that are not mainly about Franklin Joseph Adelman, "'A Constitutional Conveyance of Intelligence, Public and Private': The Post Office, the Business of Printing, and the American Revolution," *Enterprise and Society* 11, no. 4 (December 2010): 709–52; Richard Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information 1700s-1860s* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989); John, *Spreading the News*; Rich, *United States Post Office*, n.d.

I. Printers and Postmasters

Some historians now disagree about whether printers were at the core of political mobilizing during the American Revolution. This revision to historical consensus comes from recent works that argue printers did not have the capacity to be as influential as printers themselves once claimed. Previously, historians broadly agreed that printers were at the core of revolutionary and early national politics and debated the Whig and progressive interpretations of whether the reason was political ideas or economic conflict.⁴ Most influentially, Bernard Bailyn argued that ideas caused the revolution above all else, especially ideas that political pamphlets expressed.⁵ Recently, historians argue that newspapers' contents created a sense of common identity among readers, especially after about 1740.⁶ Among these historians, Robert Parkinson argues that newspapers promoted a common cause for white Americans based on fear of the external enemy of Britain and fear of internal enemies represented by Indian Wars, slave uprisings, and Hessian atrocities.⁷ However, others argue that printers were not overtly partisan before the Revolution; only during and after the Revolution did printers take partisan sides and did printing offices become central institutions

⁴ Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, vol. I, 2 vols. (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967); Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1979).

⁵ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, vi.

⁶ Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, 1; David A. Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers: Character and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 272; See also, Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665-1740* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

⁷ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*; Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, 1; Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers*, 242.

for political organizing.⁸ On the economic side, Joseph Adelman argues that printers' business interests drove the prints, with political consequences when the networks that printers relied on for their news later became an infrastructure for the Patriot cause.⁹

Recent interventions ask whether prints were so politically influential after all, and where the prints circulated – especially in Indian Country. Trish Loughran argues that printers' self-promotion, which historians have taken at face-value, overstated their technological capacity and influence among readers; a national print culture did not exist during the Revolutionary era.¹⁰ Meanwhile, historians of the book in Indian Country identify the extensive circulation of printed texts such as bibles and devotional texts written in Indigenous languages and how Indigenous peoples used print for their own ends. This chapter contributes to these arguments that printers were not as influential as historians once believed because of the importance of maritime communication to printers themselves and other provincials.

Historians of postal communication debate the importance of state institutions to the formation of national political culture. Some argue that a national political culture grew with improvements to the post office, the increased accessibility of letter-writing materials, and the exchange of newspapers through the post connected regions of British America and the United

⁸ Stephen Botein, "'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 11, 257, 222; Charles Clark argues that early America newspapers until 1740 were mostly uniform in their political-ideological content, that this content was the mentalité of their readership among a slice of voting men in the British American colonies that was a relatively coherent, Hanoverian-era gentleman's (Whiggish) consensus Clark, *The Public Prints*; Jeffrey L. Pasley, *"The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic*, Jeffersonian America (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

⁹ Joseph M. Adelman, *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763-1789*, Studies in Early American Economy and Society from the Library Company of Philadelphia (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019).

¹⁰ Loughran, *The Republic in Print*, xviii–xx, 35–36.

States.¹¹ Joseph Adelman argues that the printers' business interests in postage had political consequences: printers saw they needed an American post office to resist the imperial post office, so Providence printer William Goddard established the short-lived Constitutional Post from 1774-1775.¹² Others argue that private networks of letter exchange were important for elite families, lawyers, and clergy, not to mention Indigenous communications.¹³ For example, Katherine Grandjean found that during the seventeenth century and early eighteenth century, the eminent Winthrop family of New England used various messengers to carry letters on their behalf including Indigenous American couriers and a small number of merchant seamen.¹⁴ Earlier in the eighteenth century, informal, non-state institutions connected regions, not the state institution of the Post Office. This chapter argues for the importance of ship letters that skirted post office regulations as one of these non-state, informal institutions.

II. Before the Imperial Crisis

Communication via mariners gave provincials, and mariners themselves, independence from using the Post Office where the severely written regulations belied its willy-nilly operations. Settlers tended to pass outgoing mail from one hand to another and, when going by

¹¹ e.g., Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 289; Kielbowicz, Richard, "The Press, Post Office, and Flow of News in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1983): 255–80; Kielbowicz, *News in the Mail: The Press, Post Office, and Public Information 1700s-1860s*; John, *Spreading the News*, viii, 281; Adelman, "'A Constitutional Conveyance of Intelligence, Public and Private'"; Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*.

¹³ Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*, chap. 2; Nord, "Teleology and News," 10; Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*, 283–85; Alejandra Dubcovsky, "One Hundred Sixty-One Knots, Two Plates, and One Emperor: Creek Information Networks in the Era of the Yamasee War," *Ethnohistory* 59, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 489–513.

¹⁴ Grandjean, *American Passage*, 28–29.

water, put letters into the mailbag of a ship headed in the intended recipient's direction. The Post Office (Revenues) Act of 1710 (The Act of the Ninth of Anne) required that all letter conveyance use the post office with four exceptions: letters related to cargo carried by known carriers of cargo over land; letters related to vessels and cargo carried by shipmasters; court-issued legal documents; and “any letter or letters to be sent by any private friend or friends, in their way of journey or travel, or by any messenger or messengers sent on purpose for or concerning the private affair of any person or persons.”¹⁵ None of these legally-excepted groups were allowed to make a profit from their conveyance of mail.¹⁶ To prevent letters from being stolen, opened, or delayed “to the great damage of the merchants and others,” as soon as a vessel arrived in port, the act required shipmasters to deliver letters directly to the post office. The Post Office was supposed to credit shipmasters a penny for each item to encourage compliance. To punish noncompliance, the act authorized fines up to £5 sterling on offending shipmasters who failed to deliver their ship letters.¹⁷ Enforcing these regulations was easier said than done in the colonies, partly due to the act’s ambiguous wording.¹⁸ Not all colonial towns had post offices, and those towns that did have post offices had their own set of problems.

The post office in the colonies operated loosely and relied on postmasters’ goodwill more than strictly enforced regulations. When Swedish naturalist Pehr (Peter) Kalm arrived in

¹⁵ “Post Office (Revenues) Act, 1710, 9 Ann. c.10” (1710), ss.2-3.

¹⁶ Post Office (Revenues) Act, 1710, 9 Ann. c.10, s.3.

¹⁷ Post Office (Revenues) Act, 1710, 9 Ann. c.10, s.15.

¹⁸ Postmasters General, “The Postmasters General to the Lords of the Treasury: Memorandum on the American Postal Service, 28 January 1764,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 11: January 1, through December 31, 1764 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), note 4.

Philadelphia in 1748, he marveled at the haphazard delivery of ship letters. When the vessel made port, Philadelphians met the ship on the wharf to start pestering the shipmaster to give them their incoming letters, pawing through the mailbag for items to bring directly to recipients, doing so illicitly before the shipmaster carried the bag to the postmaster.¹⁹ The Deputy Postmasters General, who directed the Post Office in British America, resigned themselves to being frustrated in their attempts to get local postmasters to observe their systems of accounting for the mail. In 1763, Deputy Postmasters General Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft explained how there were few advantages to holding the office of local postmaster in British America, unlike in England. When appointing a local postmaster, the Deputy Postmasters General just “were glad to find an honest, careful man who would at our request undertake it, to oblige us and his neighbors.”²⁰ When the Inspector of the Post Roads Hugh Finlay inspected the postal system in 1773-1774, he wrote that local postmasters variously held mail for pickup at taverns, coffee houses, printing offices, shops, and even private residences.²¹ In addition to this service of holding letters, those taverns and coffeehouses were communication hubs where guests informed themselves when having a drink, rehearsing political views, and getting updates from other guests, chalkboards, register

¹⁹ Pehr Kalm, *Travels into North America.*, trans. Johann Reinhold Forster (Warrington: Printed by William Eyres, 1770), 27; J. A. Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. Volume 2: Printer and Publisher, 1730-1747 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 385–86.

²⁰ Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft, “Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft to Anthony Todd, 10 June 1763,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Vol. 10, January 1, 1762, through December 31, 1763*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1959), 276–84, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-10-02-0147>.

²¹ Hugh Finlay, *Journal Kept by Hugh Finlay, Surveyor of the Post Roads on the Continent of North America, during His Survey of the Post Offices between Falmouth and Casco Bay, in the Province of Massachusetts, and Savannah in Georgia, Begun the 13th Sepr., 1773 and Ended 26th June, 1774* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: F.H. Norton, 1867), passim.

books, and newspapers.²² The postmasters rarely placed the local post office in a room rented just for the purpose.²³ When shipmasters arrived at the post office, they typically tossed letters onto a table where anyone could access the incoming letters. Not surprisingly, many letters went missing, and users did not trust that postal conveyance was secure.²⁴ So, mid-century colonists observed post office regulations only loosely when sending ship letters.

Printers often held the office of postmaster because it gave them certain advantages in their trade. Printers who were postmasters scooped news from the incoming mail before other colonists read or heard the just-arrived, freshest advices. Printers who were also postmasters enjoyed the franking privilege that allowed them to use the mail for free by receiving newspapers that they exchanged with printers in other towns. On top of this, some refused to distribute the publications of their competitors.²⁵ The printers who held the office of local postmaster included, most famously, Benjamin Franklin, who was both a printer and postmaster in Philadelphia. Postmasters published two of the three Boston newspapers: John Campbell published the *Boston News-Letter*, and William Brooker published the *Boston Gazette*.²⁶ William Goddard, son of the New London postmaster, established the first printing

²² Alexander Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh (Chapel Hill: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1948), passim; Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch & Revolution: Taverngoing & Public Life in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 7, 203–4; David W. Conroy, "In the Public Sphere: Efforts to Curb the Consumption of Rum in Connecticut, 1760–1820," in *Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History*, ed. Mack P. Holt, English ed (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2006), 42.

²³ e.g. Finlay, *Journal*, 16 (Oct. 2, 1773); Finlay, passim.

²⁴ Finlay, *Journal*, 69, 70, 92.

²⁵ Walter Isaacson, *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003), 126.

²⁶ Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 1967, l:93, 102 n2, 110.

press in Providence, printed the *Providence Gazette*, and became deputy postmaster. After Goddard moved to Philadelphia, where he established the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, his mother, Sarah Goddard, took over the press in partnership with John Carter from 1766 to 1768. Carter took over the press in 1769, continued printing the *Providence Gazette*, and was postmaster both before and after the War of Independence.²⁷ So, printers and postmasters in Massachusetts and Rhode Island were often the very same people.

Unlike how the trade of printer overlapped the office of postmaster, almost no mariners became printers, and very few printers had been mariners. In the short biographies of New England's early printers that early printer and historian Isaiah Thomas composed, most printers were bred to the trade through apprenticeships and family. There were rare exceptions. According to Thomas, John Waterman of Providence "was bred a seaman," became a shipmaster, built a paper mill outside Providence, and purchased a press and types in 1769 to operate a printing office. However, in the end, Waterman printed very little.²⁸ Another apparent anomaly was Solomon Southwick, who was born to a fisherman and printed the *Newport Mercury* after 1768.²⁹ Printers often held the office of postmaster, but printers were rarely mariners.

The extent of extralegal letter conveyance by shipmasters and other carriers was so vast that it was one reason why the colonial post office did not generate revenue effectively. According to the preamble of the Post Office (Revenues) Act of 1710, "An act for establishing a

²⁷ Thomas, I:201, 204.

²⁸ Thomas, I:204.

²⁹ Thomas, I:196.

general post office for all her Majesty's dominions, and for settling a weekly sum out of the revenues thereof, for the service of the war, and other of her Majesty's occasions," establishing the post office in the colonies was supposed to generate revenues for the Crown. Among other purposes, the act was supposed to help "preventing the undue collecting the delivery of letters by private posts, carriers, higglers, watermen, drivers of stagecoaches, and other persons, as all other frauds to which the revenue might otherwise be liable."³⁰ However, the postage rates in the act were so expensive that many people could not afford to use the post office.

The price of postage rates meant that the post office was for merchants, officials, and the learned professions. The act calculated postal rates based on a letter's route between major centers, the distance the letter traveled away from those major centers, and the number of pages in the letter. The rates for sending send a letter to or from New York and the New England capitals of Newport, Boston, or Portsmouth was one shilling (twelve pence) for a single letter of one leaf of paper folded, two shillings (24 pence) for a double letter that included another leaf as an enclosure, three shillings (36 pence) for a triple letter written on three leaves of paper or four shillings (48 pence) for a letter with paper that weighed an ounce. The act assessed additional rates to convey letters beyond these urban hubs in steps that increased according to distance: for a single letter to travel up to 60 English miles to or from one of the primary New England hubs was four pence, and the rates were higher for a double, triple, or ounce letters and for letters to travel further than 60 English miles to or from a hub.³¹ In this scheme, postage to send a single letter between New York and the secondary New England

³⁰ Post Office (Revenues) Act, 1710, 9 Ann. c.10, s.1.

³¹ Post Office (Revenues) Act, 1710, 9 Ann. c.10, s.6.

hubs of Salem, Ipswich, and Piscataqua was 1s. 3d. (fifteen pence). Sending a single letter from the most northeastern American post office at Falmouth in Casco Bay to the most southwestern post office at Norfolk in Virginia end cost 2s. 9d. (33 pence).³² These rates were too high for workers. The mean wage of seamen in Boston between 1740 and 1774 was about £1 10s. per month (360 pence), or about fourteen pence per day. This price means that it cost about a day's wages to receive a single letter sent from New York to Boston.³³

That was the catch, for recipients paid to pick up their letters. Because postage was not prepaid, addressees often left their mail unclaimed, postmasters struggled to collect the postage, and postmasters printed newspaper advertisements with lists of people who had neither collected nor paid for letters that piled up in the post office.³⁴ This was one of many reasons the post office never succeeded in remitting funds to England until 1764, after Deputy Postmasters General Benjamin Franklin and John Hunter reorganized the continental postal system.³⁵ The reorganization to make the system more extensive and efficient. Among the changes to the system, Franklin and Hunter gave postmasters detailed instructions for how to account for these many unpaid-for letters, although attempting to get local postmasters follow

³² B. Franklin and J. Foxcroft, *Tables of the Port of All Single Letters Carried by Post in North-America. as Establish'd by Act of Parliament, in the Ninth Year in the Reign of Her Late Majesty Queen Anne, Entitled, An Act for Establishing a General Post-Office, for All Her Majesty's Dominions*, Early American Imprints, Series 1, No. 41342 (Woodbridge: Printed by James Parker, By Order of Post-Master General, 1763).

³³ Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, 1979, 392–94.

³⁴ e.g., "Post-Office, Boston, March 31, 1760. List of Letters Remaining in the Office before Advertised," *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2606 (April 4, 1760).

³⁵ Postmasters General, "The Postmasters General to the Lords of the Treasury: Memorandum on the American Postal Service, 28 January 1764."

these instructions proved difficult.³⁶ Nevertheless, reducing the number of unaccounted-for letters contributed to the Post Office's first surplus under Franklin.

In addition to communications via seamen giving port dwellers independence from the post office, communications facilitated by mariners reduced port residents' dependence on printers for information. Printers often credited the shipmasters of incoming vessels for the latest advices in the colonies' newspapers. The information that arrived in these ports by sea allowed print trades to thrive even as port dwellers had many other information sources through letters and other manuscripts, proclamations, and word of mouth. Richard Brown identified this paradox: northern ports had the most advanced printing trades in early America and the least need to rely on print for news because so many people brought news into ports. As late as the 1780s, more prints arrived in British America from overseas than printers pulled on local presses, although statistics on early printing are uncertain.³⁷ In summary, historians are aware that there was a relationship between mariners and printers since so much news arrived by ship. However, they do not yet understand the nuances of this relationship.

Provincials' orality and private letter conveyance—talking with each other and carrying letters for each other—meant that Massachusetts and Rhode Island residents did not depend on printers and postmasters alone for their communication. A description of orality and private

³⁶ B. Franklin, *Directions to the Deputy Post-Masters, for Keeping Their Accounts* (Philadelphia [?]: Printed by Benjamin Franklin and David Hall [?], 1753); Franklin and Foxcroft, "Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft to Anthony Todd, 10 June 1763."

³⁷ James Raven, "The Importation of Books in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, History of the Book in America, v. 1 (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : [Worcester, Mass.]: Cambridge University Press ; American Antiquarian Society, 2000), 195; Hugh Amory, "Appendix One: A Note on Statistics," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, History of the Book in America, v. 1 (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : [Worcester, Mass.]: Cambridge University Press ; American Antiquarian Society, 2000), 519.

letter conveyance independence comes from Alexander Hamilton's travelogue about an overland journey from Maryland to Maine and back in 1744. During the trip, this Scottish-born physician of Annapolis, Maryland, and his enslaved servant Dromo carried letters to and from various parties.³⁸ From one end to another of the colonies' roads, Hamilton and Dromo found that colonists were a talkative crowd. When travelers clustered at ferry crossings, inns, taverns, clubs, and even when just passing each other on the road, people eagerly voiced views about religion (especially the New Lights), politics, news, and privateering. On the roads of Massachusetts, Hamilton conversed with many "inquisitive rustics."³⁹ In Portsmouth, Hamilton and Dromo stayed at Slater's, an inn kept by a widow where "a numerous company" read the news after the post arrived. Hamilton complained that "their chit-chat and noise kept me awake three hours after I went to bed."⁴⁰ At the Newburyport ferry, Hamilton and Dromo met an old man, "who was very inquisitive about news."⁴¹ On the road from Newburyport to Salem, they met a young sailor who, Hamilton wrote, "entertained me with his adventures and voyages, and dealt much in the miraculous, according to the custom of most travelers and sailors."⁴² Breakfasting in Providence at Angell's tavern at the sign of the White Horse, Hamilton saw a broadside about religious controversy pasted up on the wall, as well as some engraved

³⁸ Alexander Hamilton, *Hamilton's Itinerarium: Being a Narrative of a Journey from Annapolis, Maryland, through Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, from May to September, 1744*, ed. Albert Bushnell Hart (St. Louis, MO: Printed only for private distribution by William K. Bixby, 1907), e.g. 198 (Aug. 27, 1744).

³⁹ Hamilton, 152 (Aug. 1, 1744).

⁴⁰ Hamilton, 153 (Aug. 1, 1744).

⁴¹ Hamilton, 156 (Aug. 3, 1744).

⁴² Hamilton, 156 (Aug. 3, 1744).

prints that he recognized from seeing the same engravings for sale in London.⁴³ After visiting the Philosophical Club in Newport, Hamilton wrote the club's conversation was entirely about privateering, building vessels, and history but no "philosophy" at all.⁴⁴ And so on and so forth, so went the visit of Hamilton and Dromo to Massachusetts and Rhode Island, where Hamilton found the people abuzz with their opinions and news, buoyed up by the prints and post, but not solely dependent on the prints and post for their facts and beliefs.

Mariners passed news of the 1759 fall of French Quebec from one ship to another before this news later appeared in print and song in Massachusetts towns. After the Siege of Quebec, new, overland postal routes opened from the St. Lawrence River to New York, including new and more frequently operating freshwater postal routes that opened between Montreal and New York in 1766. Until then, the rivers and lakes of this route passed first through the territory of French-allied Algonquian nations then through the territory of British-allied Haudenosaunee nations. Before the freshwater route opened, the news of the Siege of Quebec, the Battle of the Plains of Abraham that ended the siege, and the deaths of generals Wolfe and Montcalm all traveled to the British-American colonies by a saltwater route. On this saltwater route, ships passed this news to each other, then to shore. Then, over the days that followed ships bringing the news to shore, printing presses caught up with word of mouth and letters.

News of the fall of Quebec passed from ship to ship before appearing in Massachusetts prints, illustrating how colonists relied on the saltwater route of maritime communication.

⁴³ Hamilton, 182 (Aug. 18, 1744).

⁴⁴ Hamilton, 185 (Aug. 20, 1744).

News of Quebec was the most well-documented of all news events in New England sources before the American Revolution. In 1759, the British navy blockaded the St. Lawrence River at the narrows of Quebec, where the guns of the French fortress guarded the river's access to the continent. Ashley Bowen, a sailor from Marblehead, was at the siege itself as a midshipman on HMS *Pembroke*, master John Simcoe, where he participated in and reported on the siege and how news of the siege came to Massachusetts.⁴⁵ In the days after the Battle of the Plains of Abraham on September 13, Bowen himself saw the French hoist two flags of truce on September 18. On September 30, Bowen was told that all the Marblehead men were to be transported to Boston, and he informed ratings on the *Pembroke* of this news.⁴⁶ Sailing from Quebec on October 8, his vessel spoke a sloop from Quebec near Canso, Nova Scotia, on October 27. On October 29, the vessel was close to Halifax when they spoke two more sloops from Quebec, one on its way to Boston.⁴⁷ By November 11, Bowen was back in Marblehead.⁴⁸ Bowen's account of how this news traveled from ship to ship is verified by other, similar accounts. Timothy Nichols was a soldier in Capt. John Williams' Marblehead Company at Quebec and was downriver from the main fleet that besieged the town. Similar to Bowen,

⁴⁵ Ashley Bowen, *The Journals of Ashley Bowen (1728-1813) of Marblehead*, ed. Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1973), 57.

⁴⁶ Bowen, 97, 100.

⁴⁷ Bowen, 102.

⁴⁸ Bowen, 104, 103.

Nichols wrote in his diary about reports coming to this ship from other vessels in the main fleet.⁴⁹ Bowen and Nichols had seen both the siege and how news of the siege circulated.

Thanks to maritime communication, by the time the *Boston News-Letter* printed reports about the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, the news had been in Boston for a week. The first unofficial reports arrived at John Draper's printing office by John Atwood of the schooner *Betsey*. Atwood heard the guns downriver from Quebec on September 13 and was in Louisburg on October 2 when Captain Weston of Plymouth arrived there with the official letters from the army and navy that related the battle. That same Friday as Atwood's arrival, the bells of Boston "set to Ringing," indicating that the news had the imprimatur of respectable Boston, and at noon the guns of Fort George fired a royal salute, indicating the official authority of this news.⁵⁰ Over the next day, more letters relating the same events arrived in Boston. Weston arrived in Boston on Saturday and confirmed what was already widely known.⁵¹ News about Quebec suggests how maritime communication circulated from ship to ship to shore and how that maritime communication preceded and informed print.

People who lived outside Boston also listened for news that came by sea. On Cape Cod during the 1750s and 1760s, the by-then land-bound Benjamin Bangs followed news of the global Seven Years War and the associated conflict of the Anglo-Cherokee War, noting news of both in his diaries. Bangs received Boston newspapers by vessels from the nearby city every

⁴⁹ Timothy Nichols diary, 1759, Pre-Revolutionary diaries microfilm, Massachusetts Historical Society, reel 6.24, July 6, 1759; July 12, 1759; July 16, 1759; July 18, 1759.

⁵⁰ Deborah Lubken, "Joyful Ringing, Solemn Tolling: Methods and Meanings of Early Tower Bells," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (October 2012): 823–42.

⁵¹ *Boston News-Letter* no. 2042 (Oct., 18, 1759), 1.

week or so. Bangs was on Cape Cod on October 15 when he heard of Quebec's surrender and the death of Wolfe a month after these events took place. The next day, Bangs read details of the surrender and Wolfe's death when his father "brought a private letter and my newspaper." The letter relating the battle, the surrender, and the death of Wolfe and Bangs noted that the "newspaper was printed before the news got to Boston."⁵² Finally, on October 20, Bangs received Boston newspapers dated October 15 with print news from Quebec.⁵³ In outlying ports just as in Boston, print trailed what people already knew from seamen and the letters seamen conveyed.

This picture of maritime communication of news and rumors can be generalized to other areas because reports of other events such as the siege of Havana in 1762 spread similarly. On August 11, 1762, the British took Havana from the Spanish. Bangs had followed the events in Cuba since July 1762, but as of September 6, it was not certain in Massachusetts whether Havana had been taken or not. In Bangs's words, "it is thought but not known, that the Havana is taken"⁵⁴ On that same day, September 6, General Amherst in New York wrote to Rhode Island Governor Samuel Ward to inform him of the news. The next day, September 7, Capt. Samuel Tillinghast at Warwick, Rhode Island, heard the news.⁵⁵ The day after that, September 8, diarist Experience Richardson who was inland at Sudbury, wrote that she had

⁵² Bangs, "Diary," vol. 2, 21-22.

⁵³ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 2, 21-22.

⁵⁴ Bangs, vol. 2, 88.

⁵⁵ Samuel Tillinghast, *The Diary of Capt. Samuel Tillinghast of Warwick, Rhode Island*, ed. Cherry Fletcher Bamberg (Greenville, R.I.: Rhode Island Genealogical Society, 2000), 248, 248 note.

heard the news of Havana.⁵⁶ On September 11, Bangs wrote “We have verbal news of Havana City being taken and Admiral Saunders great victory by sea over the enemy and prince Ferdinand over the French etc.: Hope it’s true.”⁵⁷ On September 14, a friend of Bangs brought the Boston newspapers to Cape Cod, where Bangs read many of the details he had previously heard verbally. On September 15, Bangs went to Boston, found the city in celebration, and read even more details in print there.⁵⁸ Bangs took in a sermon about the occasion the next day. Bangs and everyone else in earshot heard the firing of the city’s guns that marked the victory, and printer Ezekiel Russell of Boston noted this rejoicing in his almanac diary.⁵⁹ News about Havana spread in much the same way as news about Quebec – from ship to shore.

All genders participated in maritime communication when news of Havana spread through the middle colonies and northern colonies of British America. To the south of Boston, Elizabeth Drinker Crane in Philadelphia heard about the Reduction of Havana by letter on September 3, three to four days earlier than these New Englanders.⁶⁰ On September 15, Mary Holyoke in Salem wrote, “Schoolhouse illuminated, fireworks for taking the Havana.”⁶¹ Far to the north, merchant Benjamin Lester in Trinity, Newfoundland heard the news three weeks after Tillinghast in Rhode Island. On September 28, Lester wrote, “Garret Landers from St. Johns

⁵⁶ Richardson, 91 (Sept. 8 1762).

⁵⁷ Bangs, “Diary,” vol. 2, 89.

⁵⁸ Bangs, “Diary,” vol. 2, 91.

⁵⁹ Ezekiel Russell Diary in Ames’ Almanac (1762) 1762, Pre-Revolutionary diaries microfilm, Massachusetts Historical Society, reel 7.15, Sept. 16, 1762.

⁶⁰ Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, vol. 1 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 179.

⁶¹ Mary Vial Holyoke Diary, Sept. 15, 1762, in George Francis Dow, ed., *The Holyoke Diaries, 1709-1865* (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1911).

brings a certain account of the Havana being taken the 12th ultimo, with twelve sail Spanish of the line in the harbor and three more on the stocks.”⁶² Town dwellers of all genders participated in extended maritime communication when news of Havana spread from south to north in Britain’s middle colonies and northern colonies.

Other news spread from north to south, still with print catching up with letters and word of mouth. In 1762 the British recaptured St. John’s after the short French occupation there. On one of the many occasions when he did not record the name of his source, Bowen heard of the French invasion of St. John’s, Newfoundland of June 26-27, 1762 on July 13, 1762, when his schooner, *Rambler*, spoke another schooner near Sambro, the headlands near Halifax.⁶³ The British retook St. John’s on September 15. A month later, on October 15, Bangs on Cape Cod still hoped to hear that news but had not yet read it in his prints. On October 16, printer Ezekiel Russell in Boston recorded the news in his diary, and on October 23, Bangs finally read the news in the newspapers from Boston.⁶⁴ The spread of news of the retaking of St. John’s and the Siege of Havana resembled news of the Fall of Quebec, suggesting that Quebec was not a unique instance of maritime communication.

III. Mariners and the *Boston News-Letter*

Many mariners did not depend on newspapers such as the *Boston News-Letter* to provide them with the news. Instead, according to the *BNL*’s attributions, mariners transmitted

⁶² Benjamin Lester Diary Typescript, Sept. 28, 1762.

⁶³ Bowen, *Journals*, 133.

⁶⁴ Bangs, “Diary,” vol. 2, 100; Russell, Diary, Oct 16, 1762.

news to printers, who then chose which contents to disseminate to others in colonial newspapers. When it came to spreading information, mariners were suppliers to the *Boston News-Letter* and other newspapers. For the most part, the *BNL* printed only a slice of what mariners communicated about, mainly items related to merchants' commercial interests in voyages. When *BNL* printers credited news to mariners, they usually wrote that the sources were shipmasters who were merchants' agents. Printers credited items to crew members very rarely, and when they did so, this was usually when the shipmasters and mates were dead or gone. When crediting crew members, the news items were still usually related to merchant interests. When the printers published stories about crews, it was usually in the advertisements seeking the return of stragglers, runaways, deserters, and fugitives from vessels, hinting in print at the seamen's complex world when a seaman's absence inconvenienced a shipmaster.

Mariners' communication preceded the provincial prints. The most fundamental way maritime communication preceded provincial prints was that all news transmitted between the continents of Europe and Africa and the continents of the Americas traveled by ships. Items from Britain and continental Europe printed in the *BNL* accounted for about one third to one-half of most *BNL* issues.⁶⁵ At least 16% of items the *BNL* printers attributed to mariners were about British news, from British prints, about Britain's parliament, or letters from Britain. These

⁶⁵ These claims about the printers can be generalized because they are based on a systematic sample of the longest running and most influential colonial paper, the *Boston News-Letter*. The *BNL* was the first continuously printed newspaper in the colonies, the prototype for other colonial newspapers, it regularly reprinted items from other colonial newspapers just as other colonial newspapers reprinted items from the *BNL*, and other members of the Green family that printed the *Boston News-Letter* printed half the other newspapers in New England before 1750. This makes the *BNL* an effective window into the colonial press as a whole. The figures cited here and are calculated from coding a sample of 1 in 8 issues, being the first issue of each month, equalling 11.43% of the issues and an estimated 12.43% of the pages of the *BNL* from 1740 until 1776, when the newspaper ceased publication. Consequently, the characteristics of this sample are representative of those year of the *BNL* as a whole.

items could amount to half of the column inches in a *BNL* issue; column-inches measures the length of items a newspaper prints to compare the emphasis of newspaper coverage. This British news often took up the first page of a two-page issue. On the first page, the *BNL* reprinted passages from the prints of London and other British cities, especially ports such as Falmouth, Bristol, or Glasgow. Reprinting from other publications was also typical of country printing,⁶⁶ and the *BNL* reprinted many items from other colonial newspapers. Roughly half (48%) of the news the *BNL* attributed to mariners had datelines of colonial cities outside of Massachusetts, usually New York or Philadelphia, and to a lesser extent, Charleston, Newport, Portsmouth, Providence, or other ports including Louisburg in Cape Breton and St. John's in Antigua. Provincial printers relied on maritime communication for all the news from Britain and Europe and a portion of the news from the British American colonies.

Mariners talked about many things, but the news printers attributed to mariners was only the slice of maritime communication related to merchants' commercial interests. (See, Table 5 Topics of Items BNL Printers Attributed to Mariners, on page 127) In addition, these items printers attributed to mariners were only a slice of all the topics that newspapers covered. As David Copeland and Uriel Heyd argue, early American newspapers emphasized news about war and politics plus everyday concerns related to the sea, Indigenous peoples, crimes, slaves, home life, or religion. Newspapers printed little local news because readers already knew what was happening nearby.⁶⁷ Besides merchants' commercial interests, some of

⁶⁶ Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley, eds., *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*, A History of the Book in America, v. 2 (Chapel Hill: Published in Association with the American Antiquarian Society by The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 148.

⁶⁷ Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers*, 22, 24, 271–72; Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, 11–12.

the many other concerns sailors expressed in other communications by letter, word of mouth, and song included impressment and capture, harsh masters, women and courtship, news of family and friends, the dangers of whaling, storms, and the slave trade, foreign port towns, and the dangers of disease, merchants, privateers, and the French and Indigenous people allied with the French. Seaman talked about many things, yet the most frequent type of news item the *BNL* printers attributed to maritime sources was military news. Thirty-seven percent of the items the printers attributed to mariners were military news, including 2% of items attributed to mariners that were about wars with Indigenous Americans. This war and peace affected merchant shipping because enemy ships might capture merchants' vessels. News about private men-of-war, or privateers was connected to military news. News about privateering was another 13% of items the printers attributed to mariners. News about privateering addressed merchant interests; such economic warfare increased the risk of merchants' vessels and cargo being captured. Other news about shipping, such as the arrival or departure of vessels from various ports and including storms that affected vessels, accounted for 15% of the items the printers attributed to mariners. Once more, this bore directly on merchant interests in shipping, lost vessels, and lost cargo. News about commercial conditions such as the prices of commodities was 2% of items printers attributed to mariners. News about deaths, especially the deaths of the shipmasters whom merchants entrusted to sell their cargos, accounted for another 2% of items the printers attributed to mariners. News about slave uprisings, including uprisings on slave trade vessels, was 1% of items the printers attributed to mariners. These concerns about slave uprisings were not humanitarian because, to merchants, an uprising

represented the loss of valuable cargo and vessels. For these reasons, most items that *BNL* printers attributed to mariners related to merchants' interests in shipping and maritime trade.

Another indicator that news printers attributed to mariners was mainly about merchants' interests was how the printers mainly credited news from vessels to shipmasters who were merchants' agents. Moreover, most times (72%) when the *BNL* printers attributed items to mariners, they credited shipmasters or captains (See, Table 6 Sources of Items *BNL* Printers Attributed to Mariners , on page 127). The top topics of items the printers credited to these shipmasters were roughly the same as the top topics for items the printers credited to mariners as a whole: military (34%), British news (18%), shipping (17%), and privateering (13%). Shipmasters' letters of instruction typically made them responsible for merchants' cargo and said to sell the cargo "to the best advantage."⁶⁸ Consequently, when the printers cited shipmasters as the source of items in the *BNL*, they were citing the agents of the merchants who had interests in overseas voyages.

The *BNL*'s news from mariners was so oriented to merchant interests that even the rare stories that *BNL* printers credited to crew members still related to merchants' interests. The *BNL* printers named crew members as the source for only 2% of the items attributed to mariners.⁶⁹ In five of the twelve items in the sample where the printers attributed items to crew members, French or Spanish vessels had captured British vessels and taken the crews prisoner. Being about the capture of vessels and cargos meant that these items were still about merchants' interests. In most other cases, the vessels met disasters such as wrecks or the death

⁶⁸ E.g. Brig Salley letter of Instruction, 1764. JCBL.

⁶⁹ 12 items of 518 attributed items.

of shipmasters. For example, the *BNL* reported that an English privateer took a French privateer prize and brought it into Antigua in July 1758 with 100 prisoners, fully 30 of whom were Black (one of many signs of how many seamen were Black, especially on Caribbean vessels.) Some of the prisoners informed their captors that French vessels had captured three vessels from Antigua bound for Glasgow and they related to their captors how they had captured the brig *Scorpion*, master Warren, bound from Rhode Island for Antigua.⁷⁰ This *BNL* item directly addressed merchants' commercial interests, updating them on the current risk of privateering and the fate of recent shipping voyages in which they or their competitors might have owned shares. Even if they were not directly affected by the capture of the *Scorpion*, the dangers of privateering affected merchant's investments in other voyages. In these instances, even the news printers credited to common seamen usually concerned merchants' interests.

Early Americanists have overestimated how often common seamen informed printers, for the best evidence is that printers usually credited shipmasters instead.⁷¹ The origins of this belief are understandable, given how seafaring was a trade of many ranks, with some mariners working as crew and others working as mates and shipmasters. Moreover, according to John Campbell, the first printer of the *Boston News-Letter*, one of the chief tasks when creating the newspaper was waiting on shipmasters, merchants, and others when ships and vessels arrived.⁷² Charles Clark reconstructs how that printer's routine included regular visits to the

⁷⁰ "July 19 The French Privateer Carried into Tigua [Sic] the 10th Instant..." *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2930 (September 7, 1758).

⁷¹ e.g., Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic*, 27–28; Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, 10–11.

⁷² Clark, *The Public Prints*, 88.

waterfront to collect packets of prints from London, retrieve the post, and interview incoming shipmasters and important passengers.⁷³ Printers did rely on mariners for news – but they preferred to credit the shipmasters, not the crew.

Indeed, the *BNL* credited items to seamen before the mast very rarely and only when the shipmasters were dead or gone. Of the items the *BNL* attributed to mariners, it only credited 2% to common seamen. In an instance from 1744, the *BNL* credited the ship's boy of a Marblehead schooner with a story about how Indigenous people killed the other six crew when the schooner touched at Cape Sable on its way to Cape Breton.⁷⁴ In a March 1770 instance, the *BNL* credited "one of the hands belonging to the Brigantine Betsey, lately commanded by Capt. English" with a report that the vessel suffered many setbacks after sailing from Hispaniola for Boston on November 8. The master and the mate both died and the vessel lost its foremast in a gale before turning back and refitted in Jamaica. At last, the *Betsey* made it to Martha's Vineyard during the final week of February – three months late, but not lost at sea after all.⁷⁵ When the *BNL* printers credited crew instead of ship officers, the shipmasters and mates were generally missing or dead.

Merchants' interests even shaped how *BNL* printers credited items to seamen about crews' collective labor actions. In 1760, the *BNL* printed a story related to a mutinous crew aboard a French vessel, a story that would inflame the greed of any merchant invested in

⁷³ Clark, 88–89, 95–96.

⁷⁴ "Some Time Ago a Schooner with Six Men and a Boy on Board...", *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2092 (May 3, 1744).

⁷⁵ "By One of the Hands Belonging to the Brigantine Betsey...", *Boston News-Letter*, no. 3465 (March 4, 1770).

privateering. According to the *BNL*, the sloop *Province*, master Saunders brought into Boston several seamen who had run away from the French armed frigate *Two Brothers*, commander “Bushee,” (perhaps meaning “Boucher,”) bound from Bordeaux to Quebec. According to the crew, the vessel was a sitting duck. As the *Two Brothers* sailed up the St. Lawrence during the autumn of 1759, the master heard about the British Conquest of Quebec. The master decided to overwinter on shore in the Gaspésie region of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, hoping that the French would liberate Quebec in the spring. The crew reported that in the meantime, the *Two Brothers* was icebound and hauled up in a creek.⁷⁶ The vessel was an enormous 500 tons and mounted only 22 guns (cannon), not its full complement of 26 guns. The cargo was provisions, armaments, wine, brandy, and trade goods, and the *Two Brothers* had with it a Boston-owned sloop that it had captured. According to these former crew, the French captain was “a very austere man, that by his severity to the crew, he has rendered himself odious, and that they are ready to revolt upon the first occasion,” and many of the crew were “disaffected uneasy Spaniards, Italians, etc.” who had run away already. This disgruntled crew was spreading the word that the *Two Brothers* was vulnerable to attack in a port that was home to merchants invested in privateering. Consequently, even when the *BNL* printed items about mariners’ collective resistance, these items were still related to merchants’ interests.

The *BNL* also related crew actions to merchants’ interests by printing advertisements for straggling and runaway seamen. The shipmasters who were agents of merchants or officers of the navy placed these advertisements. Stragglers were those seamen and sailors who returned

⁷⁶ “On Wednesday Last Arrived Here Capt. Saunders...,” *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2606 (April 4, 1760).

to vessels belatedly but still arrived before the vessel sailed. Runaways or fugitives were crew who ran and never returned, forfeiting their wages but sometimes taking items from the ship when they left. Some historians have characterized running from a vessel as resistance; other historians argue that running was an accepted part of seamen's ongoing negotiation of the terms of their wages.⁷⁷ Reading these advertisements for stragglers and runaways adopts the methodologies of fugitive advertisements that scholars of African American history use to analyze the skills and characteristics of enslaved people. Those who sought to re-enslave fugitives created these records and so typically described fugitives' distinguishing features. Historians find in these descriptions an archive that records the complexity of early African American life, showing discontent and resistance, engagement with politics, retention of African culture, self-fashioning, and the history of African American families.⁷⁸ Similarly, advertisements for stragglers and runaway seamen documents the lives of seamen, especially Black seamen, as refracted through the biases of ship officers who worked for merchants and the navy.

These advertisements point to the maritime communication that sailors and seamen enjoyed beyond print when talking and drinking together. When six seamen ran from HMS *King-George* in 1760, the advertisement noted the fugitives frequented the Salutation Tavern in

⁷⁷ Valerie Burton, "Sourcing Maritime History over Four Decades: Crew Agreement Scholarship at Memorial University of Newfoundland," *International Journal of Maritime History* 31, no. 2 (May 2019): 308–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0843871419832300>.

⁷⁸ e.g., Smith and Wojtowicz, *Blacks Who Stole Themselves*, 4; Waldstreicher, "Reading the Runaways," 244; Bly, "Pretends He Can Read," 264–265 n3; Bly, "A Prince among Pretending Free Men," 88 n5, 108.

Boston's North End.⁷⁹ In 1770, Samuel Swift wrote an extravagantly-worded advertisement for an enslaved, Black thirteen-year-old named Scipio, who "inclines much to the sea" and whom Swift believed had shipped on a vessel. Swift called on stereotypes of smooth-talking enslaved men when he warned readers that he found Scipio "very artful—speaks plain but something inward and hollow." Swift negotiated with Scipio in print, where he offered to sell Scipio to a shipmaster if Scipio returned voluntarily.⁸⁰ This world of seaman's talk appeared in print only when merchants and ship officers noticed that their vessels were suddenly a little too quiet.

In summary, the communication networks of mariners as represented by the *BNL* did not depend on colonial printers for three reasons. First, the items the *BNL* attributed to mariners preceded the colonial prints; the news items printers credited to mariners were mostly items from Britain and Europe that came by ship. Second, merchants' commercial interests were the common denominator for many of these items. Third, the items mostly came from shipmasters and mates who were agents of merchants. Even when crediting crew members instead of shipmasters when the shipmasters and mates were dead or missing, the news printers credited to mariners was still mostly about merchants' interests, such as the potential for privateering voyages. Advertisements for stragglers and runaways hint a richer story of how maritime workers talked among themselves.

⁷⁹ "Deserted His Majesty's Service from on Board the Ship King-George...", *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2911 (September 4, 1760).

⁸⁰ "To All Worthy Brothers ...," *MG & BNL*, no. 3482 (July 5, 1770).

IV. The Imperial Crisis

The delivery of ship letters became politicized during the 1760s when imperialists and Whigs debated whether the Post Office Act of 1710 was a historical precedent for Parliament legislating taxation in the colonies. At stake was whether Parliament had exercised the authority to tax in the colonies before the Townshend Acts, especially the Stamp Act. Ironically enough, the dispute originated with Benjamin Franklin during the optimistic year of 1763. That year, the Postmaster General tasked Deputy Postmasters General Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft with continuing their work that had improved the Post Office and packet service.⁸¹ While taking a tour to inspect the Post Offices that summer, Franklin and Foxcroft advised the Postmaster General that funds from a rate on ship letters could improve the packet service. The catch was that this scheme needed to find a way to get all shipmasters to bring their ship letters to local Post Offices instead of delivering the letters privately. Franklin and Foxcroft suggested measures that included “a clause inserted in some Act of Parliament relating to the Revenue” that would require shipmasters to take an oath at Customs Houses attesting to the delivery of their ship letters, require coffee houses to bring mail bags to be sealed at the Post Office in return for a fee that paid them for their trouble, and permit only Post Officers to open mailbags of ship letters.⁸² The Postmaster General accepted Franklin and Foxcroft’s recommendations, noting that interference in the post was a problem indeed because letters “at present appear to

⁸¹ Antony Todd, “Anthony Todd to Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft, 12 March 1763 (I),” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 10, January 1, 1762, through December 31, 1763, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1959), 217–220, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-10-02-0117>.

⁸² Franklin and Foxcroft, “Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft to Anthony Todd, 10 June 1763.”

be too much exposed to the curiosity of private persons, who often destroy or delay them.”⁸³

As it happened, the Post Office Act already required shipmasters to bring ship letters to the Post Office, but this was not enforced for various reasons, including confusion over whether the Act even applied to the colonies. In 1764, the Postmaster General recommended to the Treasury new regulations for ship letters based on the suggestions of Franklin and Foxcroft, and in 1765 the Postal Act came into effect. At the time, the Postmaster General anticipated that merchants and planters in the colonies and plantations would gladly hand over another two-pence per ship letter to fund reliable delivery. He wrote that, in Great Britain and Ireland, “no tax whatever is so cheerfully paid ... as the postage upon ship letters.”⁸⁴ This optimism was premature.

While visions of merchants’ pocket-books danced in the Postmaster General’s head, colonial Whigs had different ideas and agitated against the claims that the 1710 Post Office Act was a historical precedent for Parliament taxing the colonies. According to John P. Reid, imperialists argued that Post Office Act was an internal act that raised revenue and extended authority to tax the colonies. In contrast, Whigs argued that the Act was only an instance of legislating and regulating in the colonies, not raising revenues through taxing the colonies.⁸⁵ In 1764, for instance, Rhode Island's government wrote to the King protesting “duties on

⁸³ Anthony Todd, “From Anthony Todd to Benjamin Franklin and John Foxcroft, 13 August 1763,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 10, January 1, 1762, through December 31, 1763, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1959), 322–24, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-10-02-0174>.

⁸⁴ Postmasters General, “The Postmasters General to the Lords of the Treasury: Memorandum on the American Postal Service, 28 January 1764.”

⁸⁵ John Phillip Reid, “Precedents for Taxation,” in *Constitutional History of the American Revolution*, Volume II: *The Authority to Tax*, Fifth edition (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 171–73.

importations of diverse kinds of goods, by the Post Office, by stamp duties, and other internal taxes.”⁸⁶ Whigs attempted to dismiss the appearance that the Act taxed the colonies: they argued that even if it was a tax, it still was not a tax on the types of goods the Townshend duties taxed. Furthermore, they argued that postage was not taxation without consent, whether postage raised revenue was irrelevant, the Act merely enriched officeholders, and an inappropriate legislature had enacted the Act. In Reid’s opinion, these arguments were not very strong; Reid writes that many Whigs “were so troubled by the potential force of the precedent that they either dismissed it for inapposite reasons or, when discussing it, avoided discussing the merits.”⁸⁷ Thus, this imperial crisis controversy politicized visions for how the Post Office should operate into imperialist and Whig camps.

This dispute reduced some Whig objectors to complaining that the historical precedent for taxation set by postage rates was blatantly unfair. An anonymous letter-writer argued this in a 1765 item printed in the Whig *Providence Gazette* and reprinted in the Whig *Boston Post-Boy* and *Boston Evening-Post*:

It is well known by all, who are but a little versed in history, by what silent and almost imperceptible degrees the liberties of subjects may be encroached upon, and how much they will endure before they will make any general complaint; and it is unfair to cite as a precedent our submission to an unconstitutional proceeding, although then unattended with any evil consequences.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ “Petition of the Governor and Company of Rhode Island to the King, 29 November 1764,” in Rhode Island Colony Records 6:415, in Reid, 173.

⁸⁷ Reid, 176.

⁸⁸ *Providence Gazette*, May 11, 1765, reprinted in *Boston Post-Boy*, July 15, 1765; *Boston Evening-Post*, July 29, 1765, in Reid, 177. Constitutionally-speaking, this argument was weak since the letter did acknowledge that the 1710 Post Office Act set an example for later revenue acts of the 1760s. .

The letter-writer's legal reasoning did not need to be sound, for he was appealing this grievance to the court of readers' emotions. Over the next ten years, colonists reframed their long-standing disregard for the Post Office as political resistance.

The Postage Act of 1765 imbued maritime communications with even greater significance because, similar to other contested revenue acts, accepting the Postage Act acknowledged the Parliament's authority to raise revenues in the colonies. The timing of the Postage Act could not have been worse. It took effect on October 10, 1765, amid Grenville's reforms to colonial administration to increase revenues after the Seven Years War and just three weeks before the Stamp Act took effect in November 1765. Grenville's reforms to the taxation of molasses reduced the value of tariffs at the same time that it was supposed to renew what had previously been lax enforcement of these tariffs. Similar to this taxation of molasses, the Postage Act reduced the assessed value of many postage rates while increasing the severity of enforcement and punishments by increasing the statutory fines for noncompliance, among other measures. The Postal Act clarified the earlier Post Office Act; it unambiguously applied to the colonies and plantations. The Postal Act also simplified and lowered postage rates: one, lower set of rates applied to any ship letter sent from any port in the colonies and plantations of British America and the West Indies to any other port.

The lower rates made the post accessible but challenged colonists to tacitly accept the authority of Parliament to set the rates for the colonies. The new rates were one-third of the old rates for letters sent between New York and major ports in New England. The old rate of one shilling (twelve pence) to send a single letter of one folded leaf became a fourpence, the old rate of two shillings (24 pence) to send a double letter of more than one folded leaf became

eightpence, the old rate of three shillings (36 pence) to send a triple letter of three leaves became twelve pence, and the old rate of four shillings (48 pence) to send a letter weighing an ounce became one shilling four pence (sixteen pence).⁸⁹ Postages was not cheap, but these lowered rates made the Post Office accessible to people who were not merchants and professionals. Under the new rates, someone earning a seaman's wages in Boston of about fourteen pence per day who received a single letter from New York through the Post Office paid the equivalent of a few hours' wages instead of a day's wages. Because the old Postal Act's £5 sterling fine for not bringing ship letters to the Post Office had been ineffective, the new Postage Act increased the fine to £20 sterling per infraction and incentivized informants by giving them a reward of half this amount. Similar to Grenville's reforms to molasses taxation, these reforms forced colonists to reckon with the authority of Parliament since by accepting these rates, they acknowledged the authority of Parliament to levy the rates in the first place. Were these colonists motivated by constitutional politics, or did they mainly want to pay less money?

Both politics and finances motivated colonists. Colonists had long avoided paying for postage when travelers carried letters on their behalf by not bringing letters to the Post Office. After the Postal Act of 1765, colonists and shipmasters justified their widespread resistance to Parliament's regulation of conveyance by ship and other carriers by saying that they believed that the Post Office Act was an illegitimate revenue act. They used wording to express their opposition that drew from the anti-authoritarian vocabulary of tyranny, political slavery, and

⁸⁹ "Postage Act, 1765, 5 Geo. 3 c.25" (1765), s.2; cf. Post Office (Revenues) Act, 1710, 9 Ann. c.10, s.6.

the other Whig keywords.⁹⁰ Ten years after Franklin and Foxcroft's survey of 1763, Hugh Finlay, Royal Surveyor of the Post Roads, inspected the Post Office in British America in 1773-1774. Finlay discovered that colonists justified private conveyance as resisting illegitimate taxation by Parliament in Westminster. In Salem, he found a private and illicit stagecoach took letters to Boston every other day. His informants told him that no Massachusetts jury would have decided against these interlopers because "it is deemed necessary to hinder all acts of Parliament from taking effect in America" and no informant dared complain lest they "get tarred and feathered."⁹¹ In Newport, Finlay reported that private conveyance was so entrenched that,

It is next to impossible to put a stop to this practice in the present universal opposition to everything connected with Great Britain. Were any Deputy Post Master to do his duty, and make a stir in such a matter, he would draw on himself the odium of his neighbours and be marked as the friend of slavery and oppression and a declared enemy to America.⁹²

Shipmasters in the South said that they refused to bring letters to the Post Office because they believed the Act was revenue act and,

they have no inclination to pay obedience to any revenue act, and at present they say that if they are obliged to put letters into the Post office they must pay for them before they can get them out again, and this is one mode of taking money from them without their consent, therefore they will pay as little regard to that law as is possible to be done.⁹³

⁹⁰ Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, ix, 233–46.

⁹¹ Finlay, *Journal*, 23-24 (Oct. 11, 1773).

⁹² Finlay, 32 (Oct. 28, 1773).

⁹³ Finlay, 56.

Every postmaster who informed Finlay about this illicit conveyance pled with Finlay to withhold their names for fear of the consequences if their towns found out they had informed him about the way the post actually worked in early America.⁹⁴ After the Postal Act of 1765, postal regulations were ineffective, actively flaunted, and colonists and shipmasters used arguments about illegitimate taxation to justify their actions and threaten the postmasters.

Economic expediency did continue to motivate some users who evaded postal regulations because graft continued to rampage through the Post Office. Finlay found that *all* the official overland post riders between Falmouth in Northern Massachusetts (Maine) and New York City carried letters privately, “pocketing the postage.” The harsher punishments of the Postage Act of 1765 made this universal practice a felony.⁹⁵ Finlay found that Providence printer and postmaster John Carter, the very person appointed to be the imperial government’s official in charge of the post office there, received the newspapers from New London fully twelve to fourteen hours faster by private conveyance than by the post rider.⁹⁶ In addition to the ideological reasons colonists cited for resisting postal regulations, economic reasons also appeared to be at play because of the money some made or saved by illicit conveyance.

By 1773, this thriving private conveyance of letters exceeded the volume of letters in the official post. The post office depended on the very same shipmasters, colonists, and even the King’s post riders who resisted Parliament for their private gain.⁹⁷ The Deputy Postmaster at

⁹⁴ Finlay, 45 (Nov. 15, 1773).

⁹⁵ Finlay, 45 (Nov. 15, 1773); Postage Act, 1765, 5 Geo. 3 c.25, s.3, s.19.

⁹⁶ Finlay, *Journal*, 31 (Oct. 26, 1773).

⁹⁷ Postmasters General, “The Postmasters General to the Lords of the Treasury: Memorandum on the American Postal Service, 28 January 1764,” 36.

New Haven claimed to Finlay that his office's revenue would double if all the ship letters made it to the Post Office.⁹⁸ In northern New England, the conveyance of letters by ships dwarfed conveyance by road. Finlay reported that in Casco Bay (Maine), two to three packet vessels (meaning they ran a regular route, not meaning they were in the government's packet service), traveled about twenty times a year between Falmouth and Boston, "and every trip they carry many hundreds of letters."⁹⁹ During the summer at Portsmouth in New Hampshire, the post rider from Falmouth often brought no letters at all when all the letters went by coasting vessels instead. During the winter months, the post rider carried "tolerable mails between Boston and Falmouth."¹⁰⁰ During good weather in the northern part of the New England coast, ships carried most of the mail, and in southern New England, perhaps half of ship letters never made it to the post office at all. By 1773, this illicit conveyance of letters by ship thrived to the detriment of the Post Office, which is significant because it worked through a combination of legal exceptions to the postage regulations and outright illicit activity undertaken for profit and politics.

Finlay found that this conveyance of letters by ship persisted because shipmasters and colonist defended the practice aggressively against postal officials' attempts to enforce the postage regulations. Shipmasters argued that they were not required to deposit any of their letters at the Post Office because the law exempted letters that accompanied cargo from going

⁹⁸ Finlay, *Journal*, 40 (Nov. 13, 1773).

⁹⁹ Finlay, 17 (Oct. 2, 1773).

¹⁰⁰ Finlay, 19 (Oct. 5, 1773).

to the postmaster, and, in a sense, all ship letters “accompanied” a cargo.¹⁰¹ The Deputy Postmaster at Falmouth told Finlay that local postmasters were resigned to this loophole. Finlay related that “it is well known that not one letter in ten accompanies goods, yet the law is so defective that the act can never be put in force.”¹⁰² When this Falmouth postmaster had attempted to intervene by taking a vessel’s mailbag directly to the post office, “it made such a bustle and noise in town that he dared never attempt it again.”¹⁰³ When the Deputy Postmaster at New Haven attempted to intervene in illicit conveyance, the shipmasters in the port there used to “insult and threaten his messengers.”¹⁰⁴ Consequently, these practices persisted because when postal officials attempted to enforce the postal regulations on ship letters, shipmasters and colonists aggressively defended private letter conveyance. The little-known story of this resistance during the Imperial Crisis brings postal history from a historiographical backwater into core debates about how colonists understood authority, resistance, and authoritarianism.

The Post Office’s appearance in core debates about the colonies’ relationship to London figured peaked in 1774-1775 when prominent Whigs organized against the Post Office. In 1774 printer William Goddard agitated for Committees of Correspondence to replace the Post Office, claiming, in part, that the Post Office Act taxed provincials without their consent. Goddard founded the *Providence Gazette*, the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, the *Maryland Journal*, and later

¹⁰¹ Finlay, 56.

¹⁰² Finlay, 17 (Oct. 2, 1773).

¹⁰³ Finlay, 17 (Oct. 2, 1773).

¹⁰⁴ Finlay, 40 (Nov. 13, 1773).

the *Baltimore Advertiser*, and was formerly postmaster of Providence. Fed up with the imperial Post Office monopoly, Goddard spent fifteen months organizing an alternative, subscription-based post office. After visiting New York, he met with Committees of Correspondence in the chief trading ports of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. He argued that the existing Post Office was not secure and that the Post Office Act was unconstitutional. The Corresponding Committees generally adopted Goddard's arguments against the Post Office.

The Corresponding Committees put into writing the politics that the Royal Surveyor of Post Roads heard the year before and associated postage with revenue acts, including the Stamp Act. The Boston Committee of Correspondence enunciated these arguments in a circular letter they sent to Newport, Salem, Marblehead, Newburyport, and Portsmouth in March 1774. The Committee complained "the present office is founded on an act of the British Parliament and raises a revenue from us without our consent in which view it is an equally obnoxious as any other revenue act, and in the time of the Stamp Act as well as since it has been pleaded as a precedent against us." The Committee wrote that colonists had acquiesced to the Post Office because it at least provided a public service. However, the British administration disrupted the mail and prevented the free communications on which the colonies depended.¹⁰⁵ The Boston Committee sent similar letters to Newport and Providence, and New York.¹⁰⁶ When Goddard

¹⁰⁵ Boston Committee of Correspondence to The Towns [Committees of Correspondence of Marblehead, Salem, Newburyport, and Portsmouth], March 24, 1774, Boston Committee of Correspondence records, 1772-1784. Boston Committee of Correspondence Minute Book IX, 734-736, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts Division.

¹⁰⁶ Boston Committee of Correspondence to Newport Committee of Correspondence and Providence Committee of Correspondence, March 29, 1774, Boston Committee of Correspondence records, 1772-1784. Boston Committee of Correspondence Minute Book IX, 748-749, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts Division; Boston Committee of Correspondence to The Committee of Correspondence of New York, March 24,

returned to Boston from the Eastern and Northern ports in late April 1774, he printed a broadside with a plan for a new post office for subscribers to endorse.¹⁰⁷ The broadside opposed the imperial Post Office because “the maintenance of this dangerous and unconstitutional precedent of taxation without consent” was expensive, the funds went to a hostile administration, and the mail was often opened.¹⁰⁸ Shortly after this, the Boston Port Bill passed and overshadowed the historical memory of the Constitutional Post Office.¹⁰⁹

Rhode Island endorsed Goddard’s Constitutional Post Office for similar reasons as Boston. Newport and Providence each sent replies in favor of the plan back to Boston. The Providence Correspondence Committee assured Boston that Providence “will cheerfully second every rational plan that should be concerted by our American brethren.” The Newport Correspondence Committee was supportive in principle, although they were unsure of the town’s sentiment as a whole.¹¹⁰ The Continental Congress later adapted Goddard’s short-lived Constitutional Post when organizing the Continental Post Office and appointed Franklin, not Goddard, Postmaster General. The mail in Rhode Island was especially vulnerable to

1774, Boston Committee of Correspondence records, 1772-1784. Boston Committee of Correspondence Minute Book IX, 737-739, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts Division.

¹⁰⁷ Boston Committee of Correspondence, “Minutes, April 25, 1774” (April 25, 1774), Boston Committee of Correspondence records, 1772-1784. Boston Committee of Correspondence Minute Book IX, 752, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts Division.

¹⁰⁸ William Goddard, *The Plan for Establishing a New American Post-Office*, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 42609 (Boston, 1774).

¹⁰⁹ Adelman, ““A Constitutional Conveyance of Intelligence, Public and Private.””

¹¹⁰ Newport Committee of Correspondence to Boston Committee of Correspondence, March 10, 1774, Boston Committee of Correspondence records, 1772-1784. Boston Committee of Correspondence Minute Book IX, 746-747, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts Division; Providence Committee of Correspondence to Boston Committee of Correspondence, March 17, 1774, Boston Committee of Correspondence records, 1772-1784. Boston Committee of Correspondence Minute Book IX, 747-748, New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts Division.

interception by the navy because the imperial Post Office crossed on the Newport ferry. After HMS *Rose* intercepted the post rider on the Newport Ferry, this vulnerability propelled Rhode Island's plans to join the subsequent Continental Post that replaced the Constitutional Post.¹¹¹ The Constitutional Post encapsulates how the post office was political for colonists.

Seamen also read and repurposed prints from local presses and presses in England. The best evidence of how New England seaman drew from, read, and circulated local prints is in seamen's almanac diaries. Almanacs such as *Poor Richard's Almanac*, *Ames's Almanac*, and *Bickerstaff's Boston Almanac*, among others, were pocket-sized, locally-printed booklets containing reference information that ranged from the vital to the absurd. These were the most widely purchased publication in any given community.¹¹² Many colonists, including many seamen, recorded their diaries on blank pages they interleaved into their almanacs. Joseph Henfield, a fisherman from Salem, interleaved his diary for 1761 in *Ames's Almanac* of Boston.¹¹³ Ashley Bowen, a seaman from Marblehead, kept his diaries for 1759-60 and 1772 to 1776 interleaved in almanacs. Bowen pasted some newspaper clippings into these diaries,

¹¹¹ Rhode Island, "Proceedings of the General Assembly, Held of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, at East Greenwich, on the Second Monday in June, 1775," in *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England: Printed by Order of the General Assembly*, ed. John Russell Bartlett, vol. VII: 1770 to 1776 (Providence, R.I.: A. Crawford Greene, State Printer, 1862), 338, 351–53; Nicholas Cooke, "To Benjamin Franklin from Nicholas Cooke, 15 August 1775," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 22, March 23, 1775, through October 27, 1776, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1982), 171–72, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-22-02-0097>.

¹¹² Elizabeth Carroll Reilly, "Customers and the Market for Books," in *A History of the Book in America*, vol. 1: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 392; Marion Barber Stowell, *Early American Almanacs: The Colonial Weekday Bible* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), 13–36; Thomas A. Horrocks, "Rules, Remedies, and Regimens: Health Advice in Early American Almanacs," in *Right Living: An Anglo-American Tradition of Self-Help Medicine and Hygiene*, ed. Charles A. Rosenberg (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 115, 134.

¹¹³ Joseph Henfield, "Joseph Henfield Almanac-Diary," 1761, DIA 77, Phillips Library, Peabody-Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

including items about the Ohio Country, Virginia, and France, which also shows his engagement with the prints.¹¹⁴ An anonymous mariner who kept a diary in *Ames's Almanac* for 1774 recorded mariners and women circulating print pamphlets when he loaned Josiah Quincy's 83-page pamphlet about the Boston Port Bill to Sarah Loring and loaned to "Mr. Byard" the 96-page pamphlet of the leaked Hutchinson letters that Patriots believed confirmed that Britain intended to reduce the colonies' rights and liberties.¹¹⁵ These diary entries demonstrate how one seaman appreciated reading radical pamphlets enough to pass on these materials. When owning, annotating, borrowing, and lending, mariners circulated prints among readers in colonial ports, including women. American-printed almanacs, pamphlets, and other items were embedded within maritime communications without mariners and other colonists needing these local prints to be informed.

In addition to reading American imprints, mariners read prints from England that colonial booksellers imported and sold. Cape Cod whaler Samuel Atkins transcribed satire printed in England that voiced scorn for England's parliamentarians. Atkins was a poor man who went to sea for lack of better prospects on land after his father, who was a landless laborer,

¹¹⁴ Ashley Bowen, "Almanac-Diary, 1759-1760, 1772-1776" (1760, 1772-1776 1759), DIA 24, Phillips Library, Peabody-Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, "Anonymous Sailor Diary in Ames Almanac 1774" (1774), June 2, 1774; June 23, 1774, Pre-Revolutionary Diaries Microfilm, reel 1.15, MHS; Anonymous, "Anonymous Sailor's Diary 1774-1775" (1774), June 2, 1774; June 23, 1774, Pre-Revolutionary Diaries Microfilm reel 1.15, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; Josiah Quincy, *Observations on the Act of Parliament Commonly Called the Boston Port-Bill: With Thoughts on Civil Society and Standing Armies* (Boston: Printed for and sold by Edes and Gill, 1774); Thomas Hutchinson, *The Representations of Governor Hutchinson and Others, Contained in Certain Letters Transmitted to England, and Afterwards Returned from Thence, and Laid before the General-Assembly of the Massachusetts-Bay. Together with the Resolves of the Two Houses Thereon*. (Boston: Printed and sold by Edes and Gill, in Queen-Street, 1773); Perl-Rosenthal, "Atlantic Cultures and the Age of Revolution," 684–89.

died while Atkins was a young boy.¹¹⁶ In September 1774, approaching two hundred days out from Nantucket and off the Guinea Coast at 6° 24' N, Atkins transcribed 28 lines of satirical verse, in his words, "Written from the London Magazine."¹¹⁷ He took these 28 lines from the 40 lines of the *Gentleman's Magazine's* anonymously-written "An Epistle Written from the Author to his Mistress."¹¹⁸ The authorship and readership of the *Gentleman's Magazine* was polite society: the attributions for 2,362 of the 25,585 pieces in the *Magazine* are now known to have included Samuel Johnson and many gentlemen of independent means who wrote pseudonymously.¹¹⁹ The *Magazine* published this piece in 1773, Lord North's government passed the Coercive Acts during the Spring of 1774, and Atkins transcribed the verses in September 1774.¹²⁰ (The next month of that same voyage, on October 7, 1774, while en route from Africa to the West Indies and just south of 5° 38' N, a sloop from Dartmouth, master Ripley, told Atkin's vessel about the blockade of the Port of Boston; news by word of mouth traveled vast distances by ship.)¹²¹ Perhaps, like Atkins, other seamen read the content of prints from England.

¹¹⁶ For the biography of Atkins, see, Vickers, "Nantucket Whalemen in the Deep-Sea Fishery," 277–83.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Atkins, Journal on the brig *Polley* 17 Mar. 1-16 Jan. 1775. Nicholson Whaling Log Collection, no. 562. Providence Public Library, Providence, R.I.

¹¹⁸ "An Epistle Written from the Author to His Mistress," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 43 (January 1773): 40.

¹¹⁹ William Stafford, "Gentlemanly Masculinities as Represented by the Late Georgian Gentleman's Magazine," *History* 93, no. 309 (January 21, 2008): 47–68, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-229X.2008.00413.x>; Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, "Introduction," Attributions of Authorship in the Gentleman's Magazine, 1731-1868: An Electronic Union List, April 21, 2008, <http://bsuva.org/bsuva/gm2/index.html>.

¹²⁰ O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America*, 47–82.

¹²¹ Samuel Atkins, "Journal on the Brig Polley, Master John Barnard, 17 Mar. 1- 16 Jan. 1775" (1775), 7 Oct., 1774, Nicholson Whaling Log Collection, no. 562, Providence Public Library, R.I.

Reading prints from England meant being exposed to the politics of England and the emerging culture of sensibility. Atkins' verses from the *Gentleman's Magazine* expressed emerging values of sensibility by deriding aristocratic excesses such as vice, extravagance, and immorality.¹²² The verses satirized the Duke of Grafton's "pimps," the extramarital affairs of Richard the first Earl Grosvenor and his wife, Henrietta Vernon, and the gambling and womanizing of Member of Parliament and later Prime Minister Charles James Fox. The verses derided the cupidity, profligacy, and corruption of Governor of Bengal Robert Clive, East India Company Chairman Sir George Colebroke, and lesser East India Company officers and merchants, disparaged as Nabobs who "love to rob." It poked at the foibles of three Whig prime ministers — North, Chatham (Pitt the Elder), and Grafton — and one Tory — Bute. It doled out the same scorn to excessive virtue as excessive vice in lines about the religious enthusiasm of two prominent Methodists: the Earl of Dartmouth, who was Secretary of State for the Colonies, and Lady Huntingdon. And so on: the great and the good, the wicked and the wise, Whig and Tory, Parliament and Crown, House of Commons and House of Lords, England and the Indies, the magazine satirized them all. England's transatlantic print culture kept this seafaring reader apprised of emerging values of sensibility and related attitudes about decadent aristocrats.

Other verses that Atkins and other mariners wrote out further show this colonial mariner and others participating as readers and consumers of the print culture of England. They may have read colonial imprints, but they also had other sources of information beside that. To

¹²² Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, The New Oxford History of England (Oxford : Oxford ; New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1989), 564–66; Karen Harvey, "The History of Masculinity, circa 1650–1800," *The Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2005): 296–311, <https://doi.org/10.1086/427126>; Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (New York: Walker & Co., 2007).

take but one example, Atkins wrote out an adaptation of a late seventeenth-century English broadside ballad titled “The Seamen’s Complaint for his Unkind Mistress of Wapping” in the “New Song,” or “One Morning Early in the Spring I went on board to Serve the King” on July 12, 1774.¹²³ Imports of prints from England to the British American colonies increased even faster than the output of colonial print offices until at least 1780, a year when the number of English titles exported to British America exceeded the number of titles printed in America.¹²⁴ During the imperial crisis, other New England seamen besides Atkins also read these prints from England, including Ashley Bowen, Joseph Henfield, and many others. Atkins, Bowen, Henfield, and other seamen participated in England's print culture as readers; they did not read American imprints only.

V. War

These vast maritime communications mean that Patriot dominance in the New England printing trades during the War of Independence was not as significant as historians have often supposed. Historians argue that the printers of Massachusetts and Rhode Island were predominantly patriots and a leading political force for the patriot cause in those colonies during the war.¹²⁵ Preceding the outbreak of war in 1775, the colonial prints led radical political expression according to several measures. Charles E. Clark counts that between 1764 and 1776, American printing offices issued 231 pamphlets about the imperial crisis. Bailyn starts counting

¹²³ Atkins, “A New Song,” in *Journal on the brig Polly*, Jul. 12, 1774, n.p. EBBA 22192, 33977, 34684.

¹²⁴ Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, eds., *History of the Book in America, Volume 1: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 12, 477–80, 514, 519; Raven, “The Importation of Books in the Eighteenth Century,” 183, 195, 196; E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005), 392.

¹²⁵ Adelman, ““A Constitutional Conveyance of Intelligence, Public and Private””; Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, 1967; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, vi.

earlier in the century and puts the number at 400 pamphlets by 1776. Patriot printer Isaiah Thomas, who published the *Massachusetts Spy* of Boston and later Worcester, argued in his *History of Printing in America* that Patriots had control of the New England presses by 1776. Thomas's claim stood largely unchallenged until Joseph Adelman's 2019 monograph on Revolutionary-era printers.¹²⁶ No Tory, Loyalist, or British government-supporting newspapers in Massachusetts survived the war. In 1770, Whig merchant John Hancock drove out of business the Tory printers of the *Boston Chronicle*, Mein and Fleeming.¹²⁷ In the week after Lexington, the moderate *Boston Evening-Post* closed, as did the Tory *Salem Gazette*. By paying printers to publish the official government gazette, the British government supported *The Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Weekly News-Letter (MG&BNL)* and the *Massachusetts Gazette and the Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser (MG&BPBA)*. The *BNL* stopped printing with the British evacuation of Boston in 1776. In 1783 the printer of the *Post-Boy and Advertiser* left Boston for New York, a Loyalist redoubt. Both printers in Rhode Island supported the patriot cause. One was Solomon Southwick of Providence, a Whig and a patriot who bought Samuel Hall's press when Hall relocated to Salem in 1768. Southwick printed the *Newport Mercury* until he fled Newport's British occupation in 1776; the *Newport Mercury* resumed printing in 1780. The other active Rhode Island printer was John Carter of Providence, who printed the *Providence Gazette* and whose broadsides included partisan accounts of the June 8, 1772

¹²⁶ Adelman, *Revolutionary Networks*, ix, 15–17, 81.

¹²⁷ Amory and Hall, *The Colonial Book*, 364.

burning of the *Gaspee*.¹²⁸ However, seamen's communications did not have to depend on these patriot-dominated prints.

During the war, Patriots gained ascendancy among northern postmasters. Similar to the prevalence of prints, the significance of this is limited because of the ongoing independence of ship letters from the post office. The most renowned patriot postmaster was Benjamin Franklin, printer, former postmaster of Philadelphia, and Deputy Postmaster General for the American Colonies. Franklin returned to America in 1775 following the Hutchinson Letters Affair, when Franklin leaked the candid letters Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson exchanged with Lieutenant Governor Andrew Oliver, in which Hutchinson appeared to plan to curtail the liberties of provincials. The Privy Council called Franklin to the Whitehall Cockpit for a hearing where Franklin endured an hour of humiliation by Solicitor General, Alexander Wedderburn.¹²⁹ Two days later, the Postmaster General dismissed Franklin from the office of Deputy Postmaster General.¹³⁰ Franklin left London in March 1775 and arrived in British America in April, just as the fighting began in Massachusetts.¹³¹ Outspoken Tory postmasters were scarce.

¹²⁸ Robert G. Parkinson, "Appendix A: A Note on Newspapers during the Revolutionary War," in *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 675–81, 700–703; "A New Song, Called the Gaspee," in *Early American Imprints*, Series 1, no. 4236 (Providence: Printed for the Purchasers, 1772).

¹²⁹ Perl-Rosenthal, "Atlantic Cultures and the Age of Revolution," 684–89.

¹³⁰ Anthony Todd, "To Benjamin Franklin from Anthony Todd, 31 January 1774," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. 21, January 1, 1774, through March 22, 1775, ed. William B. Willcox (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1978), 73–74, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-21-02-0021>.

¹³¹ Lemay, *Benjamin Franklin Vol. 2*, Volume 2: Printer and Publisher, 1730–1747:376–401; Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. Volume 3: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748–1757 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 328–50, 627, 635–36; Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 151. The question of when Franklin became Americanized has attracted considerable debate, summarized in Lemay, *Franklin*, Volume 3: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748–1757:635–36.

An exception was Thomas Vernon who was the Royal Postmaster of Newport, who Patriots imprisoned in 1776. Showing the reach of oral communications about politics, Vernon wrote of his jail keeper: "Our landlord inclined more to talk of liberty we endeavored to wave the conversation ... its impossible for the human mind to undeceive them such is their prejudices."¹³² Nevertheless, the significance of Patriots controlling the post office was limited because colonists had always communicated verbally and via private letter conveyance, especially ship letters that never reached the post office.

Provincials, especially mariners, sent and received letters by ships that often circumvented the formal postal system. They had the option to use printers and the post office to be informed during the war, but laws and regulations notwithstanding, they did not have to use the post office and the prints to be informed. Hence, printers and postmasters did not monopolize communication in early America. For local news, mariners and other colonists were independent of printers because they listened to fast-moving word of mouth instead of reading newspapers and broadsides that took time to print and distribute. Printing a newspaper took at least two days because after drawing the imprint on one side of the expensive paper, the printers let the ink dry for a day before drawing the other side of the page. Then, the printer let the second side dry for a second day before distributing the issue. Consequently, printers typeset very little recent local news, preferring to print what was unlikely to have changed recently and what was not already widely known by word of mouth.

¹³² Thomas Vernon, *Reminiscences of Thomas Vernon: An American Loyalist: Royal Postmaster at Newport from About 1745 to 1775 or '76 and for Twenty Years Registrar of the Court of Vice-Admiralty* ([s.l.: s.n., 1880]), 23: June 26, 1776.

Massachusetts seaman Ebenezer Fox described how local news spread faster by word of mouth than prints. When he was in his eighties, Fox published memoirs that looked back on the War of Independence that began six decades prior. He claimed that in 1775 most of the conversation in his town of Roxbury, Massachusetts, had been about the Imperial Crisis. He wrote that “expressions of exasperated feeling against the government of Great-Britain, which had for a long time been indulged and pretty freely expressed, were now continually heard from the mouths of all classes.” He continued, “Almost all the conversation that came to my ears related to the injustice of England and the tyranny of government.”¹³³ In April of that year, the fifteen-year-old Fox and another youngster ran away to find employment on a vessel in Providence. Along the road to Providence, people frequently asked Fox for the news from Boston —his experience exchanging news with passers-by on the road resembled that of the travelers Alexander Hamilton and Dromo three decades earlier. When the boys stopped on the road at Mann’s tavern in Walpole, they had a conversation with the tavern keeper about sailors’ wages—exchanging economic information. During this stop, a stagecoach arrived at the tavern and brought news of the Battle of Lexington. Immediately after this, Fox shipped on a Providence vessel. In the months and years that followed, he apprenticed for a barber and wig maker in Boston, served in the Continental Army, returned to the barber, and then shipped on various privateers. Fox’s privateering career started when his “excitable feelings were aroused” by a recruiting officer. The recruiting officer appealed to listener’s patriotism and the desire for unfree laborers to have liberty from their masters by singing comical verses in the street to

¹³³ Ebenezer Fox, “The Revolutionary Adventures of Ebenezer Fox of Roxbury, Massachusetts,” in *Narratives of the American Revolution as Told by a Young Sailor, a Home-Sick Surgeon, a French Volunteer, and a German General’s Wife*, ed. Hugh F. Rankin (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1976), 10.

recruit privateers from crowds of boys.¹³⁴ In Roxbury, Walpole, and Boston, this patriot seaman and other provincials like him found the information they needed right away from sources other than prints and the post office.

The pre-war relationship between mariners and printers continued during the war because ship news continued to inform printers. When Samuel Hall in Salem printed news that Cornwallis had surrendered at Yorkton on the October 18, 1781, the report had traveled from the Chesapeake by the schooner *Adventure*, master Lovett, departing October 20 for Newport. In Newport, Solomon Southwick printed the news on the morning of October 25. News arrived in nearby Providence where an express schooner brought the news to the Deputy Governor and where printer John Carter printed a bill by three that afternoon. From Providence, a schooner brought the news to Boston, where a “gentleman” brought the report to the Samuel Hall in Salem on the 26.¹³⁵ In summary, the pre-war networks of ship news continued to supply printers with advices during the war, showing how printers turned to mariners for news.

Ashley Bowen wrote of how the news in Marblehead traveled by word of mouth before appearing in prints during the war. During the war, Ashley Bowen worked as a rigger in Marblehead and made ends meet by shipping on merchant vessels. For Bowe, prints lagged behind word of mouth during the war because he could sometimes see events unfolding in

¹³⁴ Fox, 40.

¹³⁵ Samuel Hall, “Boston, October 26 This Morning Arrived Here a Gentleman from Providence, Who Has Favoured Us with the Following Glorious Intelligence” (Boston, 1781); “Newport, October 25, 1781. Glorious Intelligence! Yesterday Afternoon Arrived ... the Glorious News of the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis ...” (New London, Conn. : Newport, printed: New London: Re-printed by T. Green, 1781); “Providence, October 25, 1781. Three o’clock P.M. This Moment an Express Arrived at His Honor the Deputy-Governor’s from Col. Christopher Olney, Commandant on Rhode-Island, Announcing the Important Intelligence of the Surrender of Lord Cornwallis” (Providence, R.I.: Printed by John Carter, 1781).

nearby Boston faster than he heard the significance of these events. Furthermore, he heard about the significance of those events faster than he read the prints. On February 8, 1777, Bowen heard in Marblehead that "'tis said that there hath lately been terrible times in [New] Jersey but no handbills out" — he heard news orally before reading print versions for confirmation and correction.¹³⁶ It generally took Bowen at least a day to confirm happenings in nearby Boston in Marblehead, fifteen miles away. Bowen saw and heard the increased intensity of the siege of Boston in the week before the British evacuated; usually a day elapsed until he confirmed the meaning of his observations of the sea. On March 10, 1776, he lamented "Poor poor poor Boston! Much firing above all the night." Of the night of March 11, he wrote, "Great talk of the King's troops are about moving off for somewhere. . . . This night much firing above."¹³⁷ On the night of March 15, "This night a great light appeared from Boston. . . . Tis said that Boston is to be demolished."¹³⁸ The next day, March 16, Bowen wrote that, "Tis said the fire was at Prospect Hill. Two barracks burnt and two men burnt in them, so said. This night many cannon fired above."¹³⁹ He heard about the evacuation on the same day that it happened, March 17. The Continental Army took possession on March 18. On March 20, he could see the light from fires that he heard burnt at the castle in Boston harbor. Beginning on March 23 the British vessels, previously windbound, began to sail past Marblehead, and the stream of these vessels continued for the next two days. Bowen supposed that the fleet was

¹³⁶ Bowen, *Journals*, 511.

¹³⁷ Bowen, 479.

¹³⁸ Bowen, 480.

¹³⁹ Bowen, 480.

bound for Halifax, and at a distance, he could tell the men-of-war from the merchantmen.¹⁴⁰

Bowen followed these events first-hand, instead of at a remove of hundreds or thousands of miles. It took about a day for him to confirm why these were significant. He does not appear to have depended on the prints because maritime communication often preceded the prints.

VI. Postwar

After the war, United States shipping grew into the Pacific and Indian oceans, eventually reaching the Chinese trading port of Canton (Guangzhou). So, too, did maritime communication by word of mouth and private letter conveyance. In 1795, the young Nathaniel Bowditch, who later became America's foremost navigator, met a seventy-four year-old United States national living on Réunion Island in the Indian Ocean. Bowditch wrote that "nothing pleased him so much as to have good news of the affairs of his native country."¹⁴¹ While in Port St.-Louis on Île-de-France (Mauritius), mariner John Williams of Boston wrote home to his wife "somewhere near Boston North America" and his father "Near Oliver's Docks, Boston, in America." It was the first letter he had sent to his wife since departing Madeira. Two months later, while Williams was still in Port St-Louis, he received a letter from his wife that she had sent via another ship to him in Canton, his intended destination.¹⁴² In these respects, the seamen's communication of the Atlantic extended to the Indian and Pacific oceans.

¹⁴⁰ Bowen, 479–81.

¹⁴¹ Nathaniel Bowditch, "Journal of a Voyage from Salem to the East Indies in the Ship Henry, Henry Prince Master, 1794-1795" (December 13, 1794), 166 (May 12, 1795), Boston Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, Boston, Mass.

¹⁴² Robert Williams, Jr. to Robert Williams, Sr., 16 Oct. 1790. Massachusetts Historical Society, Vinson family papers, Ms. N-1705; Robert Williams, Jr. to Bethiah Williams, 15 Oct. 1791. Massachusetts Historical Society, Vinson family papers, Ms. N-1705; Robert Williams, Jr. to Bethiah Williams, 11 Oct. 1791. Massachusetts Historical Society, Vinson family papers, Ms. N-1705. 1791: Letter from Port Luis Isle of France Dec. 11th 1791.

The independence of mariner's communication from printers had political significance in the Indian Ocean because French governors there feared what American mariners might tell enslaved people about liberty. Consequently, these governors attempted to stop the spread of slave uprisings via shipping.¹⁴³ These actions resembled how French governors attempted to prevent the spread of the Haitian revolution via West Indian shipping. French governors in the East Indies attempted to restrict imports of additional enslaved people to their islands to suppress news of liberty. Arriving at Réunion in 1795, Bowditch found the French governors fearful of invasion and slave uprisings. To suppress the decree of the French "National Convention for Liberating the Blacks," the island ceased importing enslaved workers from Madagascar; small smuggling operations continued. Bowditch wrote that the island's Committee of Safety "desired us not to speak of" the decree. Bowditch wrote that except for American shipping, there was no "communication," (meaning connection) between Reunion and Île-de-France (Mauritius) just 110 miles away. Twenty to thirty formerly enslaved Blacks from the Republic of France had been captured attempting to stowaway from Mauritius on the *Cybele & Prudent*. According to Bowditch, these stowaways intended to spread the fight for liberty to Réunion. While awaiting their forced return to Mauritius in a Réunion prison, "they kept singing always the Marseillaise hymn."¹⁴⁴ The Island reprinted its own local and abridged edition of the French constitution that left out the Bill of the Rights of Man and Citizen. According to Bowditch, this was "for fear of the slaves," some of whom were imprisoned "for

¹⁴³ Scott, "The Common Wind," 1986.

¹⁴⁴ Nathaniel Bowditch, "Journal of a Voyage from Salem to the East Indies in the Ship Henry, Henry Prince Master, 1794-1795," Boston Public Library Rare Books & Manuscripts Department, 166, 177.

speaking too freely I have been informed privately that they were put in prison for saying they had a good right to be free as the whites. The place where they are kept is far distant from the common prison and the guards patrol the place day and night no-one being permitted to speak to them.”¹⁴⁵ Bowditch and other seamen brought this news back to the United States. These French governors understood the importance of mariners who connected one colony to another and informed the people they encountered.

VII. Independence from Colonial Printers and Postmasters

Early Americans communicated with formal institutions that included the Post Office and newspapers and less formal institutions that included maritime communication. Indeed, Post Masters and printers themselves depended on a slice of mariners’ communication for what printers called “the freshest advices.” During their absences, seamen attempted to use their maritime communications to send letters home via other ships. Sam Gould did this when he was mate on the snow *Fox*, master William Taylor, on a 1758 voyage from New London. When the vessel was at 24° 55' N 24° 4' W (about as far West as the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands, and about halfway between the two island chains, at a longitude somewhat further south than the Canaries), the vessel spoke a Bristol, Rhode Island privateer that was bound for South Carolina. Gould gave a letter to the master of that vessel to bring to Gould’s father.¹⁴⁶ Such communication by American mariners gave provincials and mariners independence from using only printers and the post office to be informed before, during, and after the War of

¹⁴⁵ Nathaniel Bowditch, “Journal of a Voyage from Salem to the East Indies in the Ship *Henry*, Henry Prince Master, 1794-1795,” Boston Public Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Department, June 14, 1795, 180- 181.

¹⁴⁶ Journal of the Snow *Fox*, master William Taylor, kept by Sam Gould, Apr. 23, 1758, New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, International Maritime Archives.

Independence. Colonists' reactions to the Postal Act of 1765 politicized the longstanding practices of shipmasters' and colonists' often-illicit letter conveyance outside the post office.

This politicization of letter conveyance was one of the changes during the 1760s when maritime communication led early Americans to question British rule and aided them when resisting British rule. Postal history was also a history of conflict over Britain's legitimate political authority in the colonies. Private letter conveyance saved provincials some money, and opponents of the 1765 Act said they resisted illegitimate taxation. During and after the war, these informal communications gave mariners independence from Patriot and nationalist printers and postmasters. Postwar, United States shipping and mariners expanded to the Pacific and Indian oceans, bringing communication by letters and prints, face to face reports, and songs that could intersect with print without depending entirely on print. Given the prevalence of maritime communication as an alternative to and precursor of communication by prints and postmasters, historians need to understand maritime communication better.

VIII. Tables

Table 5 Topics of Items *BNL* Printers Attributed to Mariners

Topic	Number of Items	Percent of Total Items
Military – All	188	37%
Military - Indigenous	9	2%
Privateering	65	13%
British News	88	17%
Shipping	80	15%
Government	35	7%
Other - Disaster	17	3%
Other - No news	15	3%
Commerce	8	2%
Other - Death(s)	8	2%
Other – Indians	4	1%
Other - Settlement	4	1%
Other - Slave uprising(s)	4	1%
Other	2	<1%
Total	518	100%

Table 6 Sources of Items *BNL* Printers Attributed to Mariners

Source	Number of Items	Percent of Total Items
Capt.(s)/Master(s)	373	72%
Crew	12	2%
Navy Officer	7	1%
Other - Indigenous	1	<1%
Other – Pilot	1	<1%
Other - Ship's Papers	2	<1%
Vessels – All	122	24%
Vessel(s) - Other	85	16%
Vessel(s) - Navy	12	2%
Vessel(s) - Packet	25	5%
Total	518	100%

3. “Rumors Every Day”: Seamen and News-Mongering about Nations and Empires

How seamen and Massachusetts provincials expressed anti-authoritarian attitudes using maritime communication changed during the 1760s. How provincials adopted seamen’s changing attitudes to authoritarianism is significant since seamen informed the anti-authoritarian pamphlets that British American printers issued, while also being an alternative to printers for anti-authoritarian ideas. The source of these anti-authoritarian ideas was seamen’s experiences with French and Spanish prisons and the British navy. This nests inside a series of problems about interpreting common sailors’ politics. In the view of N.A.M. Rodger, eighteenth-century British sailors were British patriots. In the view of Nicholas Rogers, they were anti-navy. In the view of Niklas Frykman, they were radical transnationals whose solidarity trumped their national allegiances. These problems of interpreting sailors’ attitudes towards state authority and national identity are even knottier in scholarship on British-American merchant seamen because of how American national identity differentiated from British national identity during the eighteenth century. Bernard Bailyn claims that British-American mariners did not have a political ideology apart from a diffuse anti-authoritarianism. Contrary to Bailyn, Jesse Lemisch argues that these so-called “inarticulate” seamen did have a political ideology that they expressed by defending their liberties with crowd actions.¹

This chapter listens in on the words these allegedly inarticulate early American mariners used to express their hopes and fears in rumors and news where they verbalized their politics,

¹ Bailyn and Garrett, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776*, I: 1750-1765:581–83, 740; Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets,” 390, n81, 404–5, nn130-133.

which changed over time. During the 1760s, the most important object of their fears about authoritarianism changed. Earlier, naval impressment was an aberration from mariners' usual liberties, and their most pressing fears about authoritarianism and captivity were about the dangers of Catholic despotism and French prisons. However, during the 1760s, British American mariners believed that British tyranny, naval impressment, and English prisons were the core threat to their liberties. Moreover, other Massachusetts provincials also adopted these fears.

No hard line separated news from rumors; each was an unstable category that overlapped with the other. Nevertheless, social scientists have attempted to define rumors as beliefs about current topics that audiences communicate without official sanction or proof. Scholars argue that communities use rumors to express their shared hopes and fears because people repeat a rumor when it seems plausible enough to justify passing on. Consequently, when enough people have hopes or fears that prime them to believe that a report is plausible enough to be correct, the report spreads as a rumor. Supposing that is an accurate definition of rumors, Massachusetts and Rhode Island mariners spread rumors that articulated plausible enough ideas about the British and French empires to inspire either hope or fear that they were correct. Changes over time in what mariners thought was possible reflected changes in these mariners' attitudes to the respective empires. These attitudes showed how mariners participated in receiving and propagating rumors and other reports about British and French armed vessels that conscripted them through impressment or captured them as prizes. These rumors were a venue for seamen to refine and act on their attitudes about navies, nations, and empires.

During the 1760s, British-American mariners shifted their tactic of using rumor to resist impressment by the British navy and capture by French vessels to resist British armed vessels in general. By 1769, provincials at large started sharing seamen's interests in resisting armed vessels. These shared concerns connected maritime communication to inland communities. This change was a turning point in how settler and arrivant mariners in the colonies understood their relationship to Great Britain and how mariners' communications became associated with the politics of resisting Great Britain. Therefore, the news-mongering and rumoring that sailors used to defend themselves against their fears of Catholic despotism and an overreaching navy fueled Massachusetts provincials' fears of British tyranny.

Colonial mariners' conflict with the navy focused on impressment because the navy used impressment to address the ongoing "manning problem" of recruiting sailors. Meanwhile, British-American colonists believed that impressment violated their corporate liberties, specifically, their rights and privileges to be exempt from impressment in colonial waters. This conflict over impressment was politically significant because it was the leading issue that caused seamen to fight for what they believed it meant to be a British subject in the Americas.

In the 1740s, mariners resisted the navy by spreading rumors that expressed their fear of impressment. During these years of the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748), the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748), King George's War (1744-1748), and the Jacobite Rising of 1745, British-American mariners also feared capture by the privateers and navies of Britain's despotic, Roman Catholic enemies. Mariners rumored to avoid impressment. When they rumored they also expressed fears that fixated on Roman Catholic Jacobites, the Spanish, the French, and the Wabanaki and Algonquian nations who allied with the French.

During the 1750s, British-American mariners' fears of the French grew because they were pessimistic about British power. They expressed this pessimism in their verses, rumors, and at-times desperate actions to escape capture by French vessels during the early years of the interrelated conflicts of the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), and the Anglo-Cherokee War (1758-1761). Seamen became more optimistic after the 1758 surrender of Louisburg and the 1759 Fall of Quebec, when Britain seemed to have delivered mariners and provincials from the threat of French Catholics in North America. The spread of news about the capture of Quebec, Havana, and St. John's shows the mechanics of how maritime communication from ship to ship to shore connected colonists on land to distant locations. This rumoring and news-mongering by mariners informed the political attitudes of settlers who did not go to sea themselves.

The optimism of British-American mariners changed by the late-1760s. Even as these mariners continued to claim membership in the English nation, they associated their old fears of impressment with growing fears about British tyranny. At first, these fears focused on whether impressment was legal in the colonies and whether Admiralty courts infringed upon colonists' liberty to trial by jury. By the 1770s, mariners and settlers passed on wilder and wilder rumors about the navy's alleged misdeeds. When land-dwelling colonists participated in these rumors about what mattered to seamen, they associated what had previously been a struggle between mariners and the navy with what they saw as British abuses of authority, tyranny, and what they called "slavery." These rumors seemed plausible enough to these mariners and colonists and confirmed their fears that the navy and the British Parliament had run amok, which made the rumors worth repeating. Some of these rumors did turn out to be

correct while others turned out to be incorrect and sometimes far-fetched. Regardless, all of, these rumors motivated episodes of conflict between seamen and colonists and the navy. These episodes include the case of press resistance turned violent on the brig *Pitt Packet*, master Thomas Power, in 1769; Ansell Nickerson's ludicrous yet ultimately successful defense against charges of piracy in 1772; and incorrect rumors that the navy burnt Newport to the ground in early 1775.

During the War of Independence, British-American seamen continued to express their vernacular political beliefs that they were "slaves" to the tyranny of Britain's navy, parliament, and army, especially when they wrote and sang songs while in British prisons. In these expressions of vernacular political attitudes, mariners' communication connected the sailors of British America to other British prisoners of war imprisoned in the hulks of New York and the prisons of England. In these hulks and prisons, early American seamen articulated their grievances against England. How they spoke, wrote, and sang about British captivity resembled how earlier mariners spread fear of French captivity. By the late 1760s, British American seamen and provincials used maritime communication by rumoring and news-mongering to express and act on their fears of British tyranny.

I. Rumor and News

"Rumor" is an unstable category that resists definition and documentation.² Broadly speaking, rumors are beliefs about topical issues that audiences spread without official sanction

² Jean-Noël Kapferer, *Rumors: Uses, Interpretations, and Images* (New Brunswick (U.S.A): Transaction Publishers, 1990), 1; Cass R. Sunstein, *On Rumors: How Falsehoods Spread, Why We Believe Them, and What Can Be Done*, First Princeton edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), para. "There is no settled definition."

or proof.³ Early functionalist psychologists, political scientists, and sociologists debated whether rumors are falsehoods that arise from ambiguity⁴ or whether rumors are what Tamotsu Shibutani called “improvised news” that turn ambiguity into meaningful knowledge.⁵ Later social scientists argued that the lifecycle, actors, content, and uses of rumors follow specific rules, are sites for group identity formation and contesting power.⁶ Among the attempts to define the rules or logic of rumors was Michel-Louis Rouquette’s “rumor syndrome,” of conditions that predict when communications are highly likely to be rumors. For Rouquette, rumors create group cohesion and answering enduring problems that concern a group.⁷ Influentially, James R. Scott understands rumor within power relations. He analyzes the “hidden transcripts” where dominated peoples critique systems of domination with rumors, gossip, songs, and similar forms. Dominating groups also have hidden transcripts that express beliefs and practices they do not usually acknowledge openly, that “say the quiet part out loud.”⁸

In most cases, social scientists do not historicize rumor in the sense that their attempts to distinguish news from rumor do not reflect how the categories of rumor and news are

³ Robert H. Knapp, “A Psychology of Rumor,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1944): 22–23; cf. Kapferer, *Rumors*, 2.

⁴ Gordon W. Allport and Leo J. Postman, “The Basic Psychology of Rumor,” *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* 8, no. 2 Series II (December 1945): 61, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2164-0947.1945.tb00216.x>.

⁵ Tamotsu Shibutani, *Improvvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966), 17.

⁶ Kapferer, *Rumors*, 145; Sunstein, *On Rumors*, sec. Learning from Others.

⁷ Michel-Louis Rouquette, “Le syndrome de rumeur,” *Communications* 52, no. 1 (1990): 119–21, <https://doi.org/10.3406/comm.1990.1786> i.e., the transmitters of the message have strong feelings about the message, the message is attributed to a trustworthy source –such as the friend of a friend–, the content of the message is negative or noir, and the message itself is unstable and changes over time.

⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), xii–xiii.

unstable and changed over time. It is easier to understand how to historicize communication with the example of the physical medium of newspapers. This shared name of newspaper belies how little a seventeenth-century newspaper reads like a twenty-first-century newspaper. As Andrew Petegree argues, early newspapers created their readerships out of people accustomed to being informed by balladry, pamphlets, letters, and other media.⁹ Early newsprints regularly printed ostensibly private letters that the authors knew might become public, yet printing other letters, such as the Hutchinson-Oliver correspondence, breached protocol grievously.¹⁰ The content of newspaper items was often so ambiguous and unstable that even a single newspaper issue might contain multiple, contradictory items on the same topic. In this ambiguity, early news and rumors alike resembled what later social scientists called rumor.¹¹ Taking one instance of many un-historicized theories, Rouquette's rumor syndrome is deceptively straightforward because it is so difficult to document historical communications that approach his definition of rumor. That social scientists often avoid defining rumor at all affirms that what rumor is and how rumor creates group identity and hosts power struggles is historical, meaning it varies with time and place. Rumor and news were unstable categories.

Historians of rumor argue that it is a source for understanding subordinate groups' attitudes and reveals the organization of communication networks and power relations.¹² The

⁹ Petegree, *The Invention of News*.

¹⁰ Perl-Rosenthal, "Atlantic Cultures and the Age of Revolution."

¹¹ Kapferer, *Rumors*, 160 Kapferer does acknowledge that why a particular rumor arises in a particular time in a particular group needs to be explained, but he does not question whether that category of rumor itself is stable or historical.

¹² e.g., Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (New York: Parthenon Books, 1973), 4, 209.

most influential of these historians is Ranajit Guha, who uses reports of rumors and reports of insurgencies from nineteenth-century India to argue that rumor was necessary as a “trigger and mobilizer” transmitting peasant insurgency.¹³ Also working on India but from a British imperial perspective, C.A. Bayly argued that the East India Company (EIC) administration relied on state communications such as military intelligence and social communications that included monitoring rumor. Failures in this “information order” led to the EIC collapsing when the company did not foresee the Mutiny of 1857-8.¹⁴ Historians of Africa and the Americas use rumor as a source for the lived experience of colonialism and subaltern agency.¹⁵ Even colonial record-keepers relied on these rumors.¹⁶ Colonial rumors recurred over time, and the effects included wars, panics, population movements, and government policy.¹⁷ For instance, Gregory Evans Dowd argues that rumors about riches or disease often preceded violence in early America, as happened when reports of gold in Cherokee territory preceded Removal.¹⁸

¹³ Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 256; cf. C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society 1 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1.

¹⁴ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 1.

¹⁵ Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 54–55; Lauren Derby, “Beyond Fugitive Speech: Rumor and Affect in Caribbean History,” *Small Axe* 44 (July 2014): 132, 124, <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2739893>.

¹⁶ Tom Arne Midtrød, “Strange and Disturbing News: Rumor and Diplomacy in the Colonial Hudson Valley,” *Ethnohistory* 58, no. 1 (2011): 91–112; Dubcovsky, *Informed Power*, 2–3.

¹⁷ Gregory Evans Dowd, *Groundless: Rumors, Legends, and Hoaxes on the Early American Frontier* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 290–91.

¹⁸ Dowd, 292.

Occam's razor can cut through the confusion that arises when social scientists fail to define rumor by declaring that rumor is not one single, historically-stable phenomenon. Historians of rumor usually cite LeFebvre's study of the Great Fear of food hoarding in Revolutionary France, without pausing to acknowledge that the Great Fear was something more and less than a rumor; it was a shared emotion that preceded the jacqueries.¹⁹ Guha's formulation that rumor is both "trigger and mobilizer" for insurgency is deceptively simple. Guha's formula conflates two separate and difficult-to-identify actions: when a rumor accomplishes the political mobilization of readying a group for action, and when rumor triggers an already-mobilized group that is ready to act. Furthermore, Guha's oft-quoted summary that rumor was "a universal and necessary carrier of insurgency in any pre-industrial, pre-literate society" ²⁰ verges on two overlapping tautologies: one, that illiterate people who cannot use prints must use alternatives to these prints, and two, that authoritative communications by insurgents' opponents do not carry non-authoritative messages for the insurgents. Perhaps due to the difficulty of finding documentary records for early rumors, histories of rumor lean heavily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the category of rumor is more recognizable and rumors were better documented than in eighteenth century records.²¹ To conclude, early American rumors contained evidence of events, evidence of communication practices, and

¹⁹ e.g., Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France*, 4, 209.

²⁰ Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, 268.

²¹ Adding even more confusion, rumors that recur over time become folklore. Folklorists who historicize urban legends find that these rumors share many of the defining features of traditional, agrarian legends. Both are concerned about interactions with the Other, especially in sexuality, food, and violence. However, instead of blaming supernatural beings such as trolls and ghosts, contemporary legends blame other humans, such as ethnic minorities. Timoty K. Tangherlini, "From Trolls to Turks: Continuity and Change in Danish Legend Tradition," *Scandinavian Studies* 67, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 32, 60.

were a form of resistance. However, the simplest explanation for how difficult it is to define rumor is that “rumor” was not a historically-stable category, and it overlapped with other communications, including news.

II. Impressment and the British Nation

Impressment conscripted maritime people who were British subjects into the navy. The significance of impressment is a problem for maritime historians’ competing interpretations of seamen. Were seamen British nationalists who tolerated this hated institution, American patriots who rejected the legality of impressment, or early transnational workers whom impressment radicalized? Representing the nationalist view characteristic of administrative histories of the navy, N.A.M. Rodgers argues that, for the most part, British subjects tolerated impressment and that most resistance of impressment happened in the courts.²² Social historians disagree and argue that these court actions demonstrated that British subjects rejected impressment as illegal, unconstitutional, and illegitimate. Social historians emphasize the opposition to impressment expressed through crowd actions, including impressment riots and affrays, and note how the practice of impressment differentiated the colonies from Great Britain. Radical historians argue that navies’ indiscriminate demand for maritime labor forged a cross-national identity across European nations’ lower decks.²³ The most comprehensive work

²² Rodger, *Wooden World*; Contrast with John Masefield, *Sea Life in Nelson’s Time* (London: Methuen, 1905).

²³ Nicholas Rogers, “British Impressment and Its Discontents,” *International Journal of Maritime History* 30, no. 1 (2018): 52–73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0843871417745731>; Lemisch, “Jack Tar in the Streets”; Keith Mercer, “Northern Exposure: Resistance to Naval Impressment in British North America, 1775–1815,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 91, no. 2 (2010): 199–232, <https://doi.org/10.1353/can.0.0304>; Frykman, “Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships.”

on British impressment, by Denver Brunsman, argues that the institution varied from place to place according to balances of imperial and local interests; impressment was widespread in the Thames Estuary's home counties and southeastern England, but irregular and infrequent in the colonies.²⁴ For other histories, whether the authors take either an administrative or a social approach their works tend to correspond to the conclusions they draw about what impressment meant to maritime people and whether they fought impressment as an institution.

When they fought impressment, British American seamen fought for what they believed it meant to be a British subject and later, for what they believed it meant to be an American citizen. After the War of Independence, impressment remained a grievance between Americans and Britain as the navy continued to press American seamen as if they were still British subjects. These seamen sought to prove their citizenship in new ways that included patriotic tattoos and Custom House protection certificates.²⁵ This scholarship of resistance to impressment raises questions about whether seamen used their national identities instrumentally to avoid impressment or whether their nationalism was a sincere motivation to serve in the navy. In any case, seamen experienced their relationship with the British Empire and the English nation through their relationship with the navy and they experienced their relationship with the navy through impressment. Thus, British-American sailors' rumors about the navy and impressment indicate these seamen's relationship to British subjecthood and American citizenship.

²⁴ Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity*, 90, cf. 53.

²⁵ Newman, "Reading the Bodies"; Perl-Rosenthal, *Citizen Sailors*.

Wherever the navy and maritime peoples who were British subjects met, they conflicted over the so-called “manning problem” of recruiting crewmembers for navy vessels. The manning problem was that the navy needed large numbers of skilled seamen to operate the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’ ever-larger vessels, especially during wartime. Impressment was a solution to the manning problem where warrants authorized the navy to conscript “maritime peoples” into service. These maritime peoples were usually merchant seamen, fishermen, and other workers in various maritime trades, usually from port towns, and mostly from England. One method of impressment used press gangs to round up maritime peoples from the streets, taverns, inns, and watersides of ports. Another method intercepted vessels under sail, especially vessels entering port at the end of a voyage. Recruitment on the water had several advantages over recruitment on shore since the recruits were certain to be experienced sailors and it was less likely, though not impossible, for potential recruits to run away. Nevertheless, no matter how the navy implemented impressment, impressment put the navy in conflict with the liberty of seamen.

Mariners resisted impressment because they believed it infringed upon their legal liberties, especially their constitutional right not to be held prisoner without appearing before a jury. Typically, the navy took custody of seamen when a press-gang confronted a potential recruit and the press officers gave the recruit an ultimatum to enlist “voluntarily” and receive a bounty plus his choice of berth in the fleet, or to be conscripted, receive no bounty whatsoever, and have no choice where he served. Consequently, it was common knowledge that many navy “volunteers” were simply men who realized that they would end up in the navy no matter what and decided to earn the bounty and their choice of vessel. Nicholas Rogers writes, “One admiral

in Portsmouth commented in 1741 that seamen 'are all volunteers as soon as they find they can't get away.' Admiral [Thomas] Smith thought the same, writing in 1755 that, 'seven out of eight [volunteers] take that name only for the bounty...'"²⁶ So, how the navy threatened seamen's liberty was widely known among British people.

How seamen resisted the navy was also widely known among British people. Some seamen who met the press-gang rejected the hard bargain of being forced to volunteer and, aided and abetted by their shipmates and port residents, resisted impressment in ways that were limited only by their ingenuity.²⁷ While on vessels, seamen hid away or fought with the armed press gangs using hooks, harpoons, marlinspikes, lines, blocks and tackle, swords, pistols, muskets, and whatever other sharp edges, blunt objects, or sidearms they found. Some seamen even jumped overboard, hoping to swim to shore. On shore, when a prospective rating ran, a press-gang sometimes chased him through taverns, boarding houses, and crooked streets, leading to the seaman's escape, to his violent capture, or sometimes, to all and sundry along the way attacking the press-gang. After all, the escapee was a neighbor, friend, cousin, brother, father, husband, customer, or just another person like these bystanders. When the navy managed to capture these potential ratings and hold them in custody, press resistance continued through judicial and extrajudicial means. Through judicial means, family, friends, masters, and creditors petitioned the local governor and ship officers, seeking writs of habeas corpus to release captives who were legally ineligible for impressment, had protection

²⁶ Rogers, "British Impressment and Its Discontents," 68; cf. Rodger, *Wooden World*.

²⁷ Brunsmann, *The Evil Necessity*, 171–209 NB Brunsmann argues sailors acclimatized to the navy. Mercer, "Northern Exposure."

certificates, were debtors, were apprentices, or were enslaved to a master who did not want to lose his property in human beings and their labor. A large proportion of people who were impressed regained their liberty this way: on one infamous night in 1757, the navy took almost 800 men from New York City, but later released about 400 of them. Through extrajudicial means, the crowd actions of press riots and “affrays” culminated in forcing the release of mariners from custody. Mariners who did not successfully resist or appeal their impressment entered the navy where their liberty, in the form of personal freedoms, was sharply curtailed. These judicial and extrajudicial actions were some of the ways that mariners and port dwellers resisted the navy’s attempts at impressment because they believed it infringed upon their liberties.

In addition, colonists in British America justified resisting impressment by the navy because they saw it as an attack on their corporate liberties. Corporate liberties were those rights that belonged to groups such as a particular guild or a particular port. One such example was that the colonies were supposed to be exempt from impressment. That liberty notwithstanding, the navy did press seamen in American waters often enough that it became a grievance for colonists. The seamen of both America and England saw impressment as a form of detention that denied them their liberty to be judged by a jury. They believed this was an unconstitutional violation of their liberties as Englishmen. So, impressment put the manning problem in conflict with the liberties of maritime peoples in colonial ports in multiple senses of the word.

III. From the War of Jenkins' Ear to the Seven Years War (1739-1754)

Rumoring and news-mongering about French vessels and the British navy changed seamen's behavior; it was part of how they avoided captivity. When Britain was at war with France and Spain during the 1740s, British-American seamen participated in rumors about impressment because their participation allowed them to stay a step ahead of naval recruitment. Relying on these rumors entailed gambling with their lives, partly because of the risks of injury and death they undertook while evading impressment and partly because of the risks of injury, disease, and death if they served in the navy. A canny seaman who found himself in a port with a hot press kept out of sight and got out of town as fast as he could. A hot press meant that the government had suspended all protections against impressment, such as certificates of protection. One effect of a hot press was that those who could usually get a writ of habeas corpus to be released after being impressed—such as apprentices, debtors, and the like—could not regain their freedom through these usual judicial methods.²⁸

The demise of seaman George Mitchell in 1739 illustrates the stakes for mariners who relied on rumors to resist impressment during a hot press. It also shows how mariners communicated the effects of impressment on their movements. In September 1739, mariner John Hammet of Newport, Rhode Island, heard the news that Mitchell had recently arrived in New London, Connecticut, where he had found exaggerated reports of his own death. Notwithstanding rumors to the contrary, Mitchell was not dead, just very ill, so he stayed in New London to regain his health and ran into debt while convalescing. Following his recovery,

²⁸ E.g. Bangs "Diary," vol. 1, 27, 33.

Mitchell shipped on a voyage from Connecticut to South Carolina. Like so many other mariners, Mitchell carried a letter on behalf of friends and family, addressed from his friend Hammet to Mitchell's father on this voyage to Carolina. Upon arriving in South Carolina, Mitchell discovered a "very hot" press there, so he shipped right away even though the vessel he signed onto sat low in the water, had sails in poor condition, and November storms were on the way. Sure enough, shortly after Mitchell sailed from Carolina, a storm hit the Carolinas. Under normal circumstances, Mitchell's intended route from Carolina to Newport might have taken two to three weeks. However, Mitchell's vessel did not arrive in Newport, not even three months after departing Carolina. In the meantime, other vessels arrived in Newport from every other regional port. It became clear that the vessel and everyone on it was lost, including Mitchell and, along with Mitchell, Hammet's letter that Mitchell carried for Mitchell's father – similar to so many other seamen who conveyed letters on behalf of friends and families.²⁹ When Mitchell found the hot press in Carolina, he gambled on escaping impressment by taking a dangerous voyage out of town. In that gamble, he lost his life. George Mitchell's story is significant because this mariner changed his behaviors after hearing about a hot press. Rumoring was one more way that seamen resisted impressment.

Rumors about the navy also changed shipmasters' behaviors, for rumoring about impressment changed vessels' routes when sympathetic ship masters helped seamen avoid a hot press by setting them ashore in alternative ports instead of the vessels' originally-intended destinations. When setting seamen ashore in an alternative port was impossible, seamen could

²⁹ Copy of John Hammet to John Mitchell, Jan 10, 1739, Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport, Rhode Island, May term 1742, Mitchell v. Hammet Decon # 223 (Judicial Archives, Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket, R.I.).

still avoid press officers by hiding on the vessel. These methods of press resistance began when two vessels passed at sea and “spoke” each other through hailing trumpets that exchanged the ships’ names, the masters’ names, the ports of departure, how many days they were at sea, and their intended destinations. In the days before reliable time measurement and therefore reliable longitude measurement, “speaking a vessel” aided navigators in estimating their longitude. During these exchanges, the ships could also exchange warnings of which ports had a hot press. When a vessel heard that its intended destination had a hot press, the shipmaster was able to redirect the vessel to an alternative port. Hearing about a hot press also gave crewmembers time to hide before a press boat intercepted them.

An instance of a shipmaster aiding resistance after hearing about impressment occurred on a 1741 voyage of the snow *Hawke*, master Peter Hall from Philadelphia to Marblehead, its home port. Shipmaster Peter Hall heard that there was a press in Marblehead, and so touched at the Graves, the outermost island of Boston Harbor, about thirty miles south of Marblehead. At the Graves, Hall signaled for a boat to come to take away three local men whom the navy was likely to impress from the snow’s crew: Jacob Hawkins of Marblehead, Robert Knight of Marblehead, and Jacob Waters of Charlestown. However, a navy barge (longboat) in Boston Harbor saw this signaling and, guessing the master’s intentions correctly, rowed out to intercept the *Hawke*. In a race against this oncoming barge, the shipmaster had the cabin boy, Ashley Bowen, hide the three local men inside press lockers on the vessel. Once aboard the vessel, the navy’s men began to search the *Hawke* for the crewmembers they correctly suspected were hiding on board. Just as a navy midshipman was about to open the lockers that contained the hidden seaman, the clever young cabin boy interrupted the midshipman with

well-timed gifts of rum and a loaf of sugar as a way to convince the midshipman not to look too closely at the press lockers. So, instead of taking the three local men who remained hidden, the navy barge took two apprentices from the *Hawke* instead, William Clemons and James Master. As the shipmaster guessed, the navy later released both of these apprentices since apprentices were ineligible for impressment.³⁰

Spreading the news about impressment through rumor changed where and how seamen and shipping landed because seamen and sympathetic shipmasters did what they could to avoid harbors where they had heard impressment was likely. When vessels could not reroute, this news at least gave time to hide away vulnerable seamen before meeting press boats. In another instance, when seaman Benjamin Bangs approached Boston from Cape Cod home in 1743, he avoided a hot press by hiding himself in a hold of oats. On another occasion, Bangs avoided impressment by landing just outside Boston Harbor on Spectacle Island instead of entering the port itself.³¹ Later in the 1740s, after Bangs became a shipmaster, he helped his crew avoid impressment in similar ways, sometimes by hiding them in the cargos of his vessels or setting them ashore just outside of Boston at Scituate, Cohasset, or Nantasket.³² Just after Boston's 1747 Knowles Riots against impressment, crewmembers from Bangs' vessel avoided impressment by not boarding a vessel bound for the Carolinas in Boston Harbor itself and

³⁰ Bowen, *Journals*, I: 9-10.

³¹ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 1, 8, 24.

³² Bangs, "Diary," vol. 1, 25, 67, 41, 81-82, 82-83, 103.

traveling overland to board the vessel outside the harbor instead.³³ These rumors about impressment changed the behaviors of shipmasters and seamen.

Mariners also listened closely to rumors and news about the threat of being captured by privateers and the opportunity to win prize money as privateers themselves. Privateers did much of the fighting in the wars in the Americas during the 1740s. Ashley Bowen first heard of the War of Jenkins' Ear between Spain and England when he was in Boston on September 24, 1739. On that day, HMS *Tartar* arrived from England after five weeks and conveyed news of the outbreak of war. The *Boston News-Letter* newspaper elaborated on what Bowen recorded: "though we don't hear that war was actually declared against Spain; yet we hear that advices are come granting liberty to the subjects of the British colonies to act offensively against those of that nation."³⁴ These liberties meant that the governor would issue letters of marque that authorized privateering to harass and capture Spanish shipping. During 1748, colonists often had the threat of Spanish and French ships on their minds: Benjamin Bangs described the principal topics of conversation in Boston in July 1748 as, "rumors every day hear something done by sea or land by our enemies."³⁵ In June 1748, because of these rumors, Bangs wrote that "We hear of abundance of enemies off the Capes of Philadelphia they have taken many English vessels which discourages us from going that way."³⁶ Thus, when leaving Boston,

³³ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 1, 69.

³⁴ Bowen, *Journals*, 7.

³⁵ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 1, Jul. 4, 1748.

³⁶ Bangs, vol. 1, 84, Jun. 20, 1748, Jun. 23, 1748.

Bangs's vessel sailed to the north instead of to the south to avoid those enemies.³⁷ Similar to how mariners participated in and responded to rumors of impressment, mariners also participated in and responded to rumors and news of war and privateering during the 1740s. These rumors shaped how seamen made decisions about the risks and opportunities privateering posed. Again, rumoring changed behavior.

A final focus of mariners' apprehensions in their news and rumors during the 1740s involved fears of Roman Catholic despotism and their hopes that the British navy could protect them from that despotism. Anti-papism motivated Massachusetts mariners and, indeed, Massachusetts settlers at large. Mariner Benjamin Bangs noted Pope's Day in his diary on November 5 in many years. This New England holiday derived from Guy Fawkes' Day involved youth in New England ports parading and burning effigies of the pope and other enemies, including Guy Fawkes. Historians long wrote that Pope's Day in Massachusetts was a plebeian critique of local patricians. However, Brendan McConville's argues instead that Pope's Day was actually a Royalist holiday for broad-based, popular expression by elites and youths alike of affinity for the empire and support for the Protestant succession of the British monarchy.³⁸ The Jacobite Rising of 1745 brought this anti-Catholicism to a head. That spring, Bangs heard of the victory over the Catholic Young Pretender at the Battle of Culloden while he was fishing. Bangs wrote as his last entry for April 1746 that, "We have certain advice that on the 16th of this

³⁷ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 1, Jul. 1, 1748.

³⁸ Brendan McConville, "Pope's Day Revisited, 'Popular' Culture Reconsidered," *Explorations in Early American Culture* 4 (2000): 264, 268, 279.

month the Duke William had a battle with the pretender at Culloden.”³⁹ Experience Richardson, who lived twenty miles inland at Sudbury, Massachusetts, spelled her fears of Jacobites and Catholicism in her diary. Upon hearing of the events in Scotland, she wrote, “I know not what come of me I fear ... I shall turn to be a papist.”⁴⁰ In June 1747, an anonymous mariner who was a prisoner of war of the French outside the town of Quebec recorded that he “was informed by the gentlemen who came in here the 12th, that the Pretender and his party were entirely routed by the conduct and vigilance of His Royal Highness William Duke of Cumberland.”⁴¹ Wherever they were, seamen from Massachusetts and Rhode Island paid attention to and noted the waxing and waning of this Catholic threat.

In the verses and songs of seamen from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, this Catholic threat meant despotism, and the navy protected them from this threat. These mariners’ songs featured Admirals Warren, Anson, and Vernon in heroic struggles against papist, Bourbon monarchs defending Britons from what colonists called “slavery.” For colonists, slavery meant, in the words of Bernard Bailyn, “the inability to maintain one’s just property in material things and abstract rights, rights and things which a proper constitution guaranteed to a free people.” Many peoples suffered this condition of insecure property and liberties, notably the French,

³⁹ Benjamin Bangs Journal Volume 1: 1741-1749. MHS Pre-Revolutionary Microfilm, Manuscript diary, Apr. 29, 1746, Bangs, “Diary,” vol. 1, 41-42. N.B. Presumably, this news crossed the Atlantic so quickly due to the April winds that carried shipping from Britain to the Grand Banks in as little as two weeks.

⁴⁰ Experience (Wight) Richardson, diary, 1728-1782, transcribed and compiled by Ellen (Richardson) Glueck and Thelma (Smith) Ernst (s.l: s.n., 1978), 6, Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁴¹ Anonymous, “Remarkable Occurrences from the year 1745 to 1748, during the far greater part of which time I was a prisoner in the hands of the French and Spaniards: transcribed from my private notes in Rhode Island, anno 1748,” John Carter Brown Library, 14 June 1747.

and chattel slavery was an extreme instance of this condition⁴² English midshipman Henry Tiffin transcribed a ballad in 1747 that connected British admirals to defense against political subjugation. His lyrics included, “While Anson and Warren commands on the waves / Bold Britons never will yield to be slaves.”⁴³ So, during the 1740s, mariners hoped that the navy would protect them from the specter of “slavery” under Catholicism as represented by the Jacobite rising and the Bourbon monarchs; these hopes and fears motivated their participation in rumors and news.

These seamen told each other stories and sang about how British Admirals delivered them from political slavery of French rule to the liberties of English rule. Similar to Tiffin, the anonymous mariner who was imprisoned at Quebec wrote in May 1747 that they had learned of a rumor that Admiral Warren had gone to Europe the fall before and was expected to arrive in America that month with a fleet of eighteen ships of the line (large battle ships, third rate or larger with 64 guns or more each). Warren consequently wanted troops to be ready “in order for the entire reduction of all Canada,” meaning that Warren intended to capture of the entire colony of New France on the St. Lawrence.⁴⁴ The mariner hoped this would have freed the

⁴² Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 8; David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 8; John M. Murrin, “England and Colonial America: A Novel Theory of the American Revolution,” in *Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic*, ed. Ignacio Gallup-Diaz et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 9–19; Andrew Shankman, “A Synthesis Useful and Compelling: Anglicization and the Achievement of John M. Murrin,” in *Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic*, ed. Ignacio Gallup-Diaz et al. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 26.

⁴³ “A Song Composed in the year 1747,” Henry Tiffin Commonplace Book, 1748-1776. Peabody Essex Museum, n.p.

⁴⁴ Anonymous, “Remarkable Occurrences from the Year 1745 to 1748, during the Far Greater Part of Which Time I Was a Prisoner in the Hands of the French and Spaniards: Transcribed from My Private Notes in Rhode Island, Anno 1748” (1748), May 1, 1748, Codex Eng 21, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, R.I.

prisoners at Quebec. At the end of his captivity, the author wrote a paean to British rule with lines that included,

That slaves no more shall Britain's sons control
Thy sons O freedom to thine arms returned
Tis liberty that crowns Britannia's Isle
And makes the bleak rock a barren mountains smile.⁴⁵

His view, widely held at the time, was that despotism enslaved the French. He looked forward to enjoying English liberties once more.

Mariners' fear of French privateers and French despotism was entangled with their fears of death in French prisons. Seamen narrated these fears in lengthy stories about how they survived French imprisonment. Ashley Bowen nearly died after French privateers captured the sloop *Susannah and Mary* on January 10, 1746, and took the sloop and its crew into the privateering port of Petit Goâve on St.-Domingue. Black guards watched over Bowen and the other captive crewmembers. The French kept the captives in an outbuilding and fed them daily rations of just one pound of bread, one pound of salt beef, and "and nothing else." According to Bowen, one of the fifty-one prisoners died every day they were there. He had an ague (malaria) or a fever every other day, and the guards took him for dead twice. Bowen survived and eventually made a slow recovery during the months after he left the island.⁴⁶ Bowen survived this misadventure, and warned others what to expect in French prisons.

Other seamen told similar stories about the dangers of French captivity. In the north, the anonymous mariner wrote about being captured on a voyage from England on the

⁴⁵ Anonymous, July 26, 1747.

⁴⁶ Bowen, *Journals*, 25–27, (January 10, 1746).

Adventure, captain John Oldham, bound for Barbados. The French men-of-war *Castor*, mounting 28 guns, and the *Aurora*, mounting 50 guns captured the *Adventure* on April 4, 1746, just four days past Cornwall's landmark of the Lizard.⁴⁷ The *Aurora* held the anonymous seaman captive and sailed for Newfoundland, where it captured a snow from Dartmouth and where the captives became sickly.⁴⁸ The *Castor* and *Aurora* then took and sunk the sloop *Squirrel*, master Zepheniah Pinkham; the *Squirrel* was a whaler from Nantucket with an Indigenous crew and was in company with the whaling sloop *Raven*. The *Raven* escaped.⁴⁹ Hoping the *Raven* would spread the word to others about the danger of capture, the anonymous mariner wrote, "if the master have any brains, he may give a good account of us in Newfoundland where he is bound."⁵⁰ The French vessels captured the fishing schooner *Endeavor*, master John Cox of Salem, and sunk the fishing schooner *Tryal*, master Joseph Demen of Marblehead.⁵¹ By the end of June 1746, when the vessels made land at Chebucto (the future site of Halifax), a fever had incapacitated 42 of the French crew, and ten of the British captives were dead. Nevertheless, the French continued to capture even more vessels. By late July and early August, the mariner-journalist was very ill "with an ague [fever or malaria]."⁵² From Chebucto, the French marched

⁴⁷ "Remarkable Occurrances from the year 1745 to 1748, during the far greater part of which time I was a prisoner in the hands of the French and Spaniards: transcribed from my private notes in Rhode Island, anno 1748"

⁴⁸ Anonymous, "Remarkable Occurrances from the Year 1745 to 1748, during the Far Greater Part of Which Time I Was a Prisoner in the Hands of the French and Spaniards: Transcribed from My Private Notes in Rhode Island, Anno 1748," May 1, 1746, May 24, 1746.

⁴⁹ Anonymous, August 22, 1747.

⁵⁰ Anonymous, June 6, 1746.

⁵¹ Anonymous, June 24, 1746.

⁵² Anonymous, July 24, 1746. August 11, 1746.

the captives overland through Mi'kmaqi and Acadia to the Bay of St. Lawrence, then shipped them upriver to the town of Quebec. Once at Quebec, their captivity continued for nearly two more years, with the captives fenced into a prison camp, underfed, forbidden from getting fresh food through the fence from town dwellers, and continuing to sicken and die. Tallying the deaths on June 5, 1747, the mariner wrote that 66 of the 316 British and Indigenous crew and captives had died since landing on October 19 of the previous year.⁵³ By the new year, the militia who guarded the camp told these seamen and captives that a prison distemper had spread to the town of Quebec. By the new year, of a total of 277 captives, 239 were in "pretty good health." Twenty-seven were sick, twenty had died, sixteen had been sent away, and two had run away.⁵⁴ For these mariners, capture by French vessels meant the dangers of disease and death in French prisons, which they wrote about at length.

The line between rumors and news was permeable for these mariners during the 1740s because the unstable categories of rumor and news both included uncertain reports that audiences repeated and revised over time. In other words, the distinction was not clear between the authoritative communications of "news" and the non-authoritative communications of "rumors." An example that shows this permeability of news and rumors was how Bangs revised his rumors and news over time when he "heard of" the 1746 Duc d'Anville expedition to Chebucto (Halifax), then received a "certain account" of the same event six days later.⁵⁵ Contemporary to Bangs, Bowen wrote about hearing about the October 1746 Duc

⁵³ Anonymous, June 5, 1747.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, Dec. 26, 1746, January 3, 1747 Jan 6, 1747.

⁵⁵ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 1, 49.

d’Anville expedition but added to his autobiography a note that “there was an express from Annapolis Royal that a fleet of French men-of-war were at Chebucto, now Halifax, and was bound for Boston but sickness dis[s]ip[pated them] and they were all dispersed and lost. None returned to France.”⁵⁶ The overlapping communication of news and rumor was unstable and repeatedly revised.

Bangs and other mariners continuously revised the unstable news reports they received. Bangs added the caveat “if it be true” to his first note about the Battle of Lauffeld, in Belgium., Thirteen days later, he updated his account with more detail, including the number of casualties. Likewise, Bangs repeatedly amended news of the raid on St.-François and the Battle of Minden when reports about these events arrived in fits and starts. While imprisoned in Quebec during 1746 and 1747, the anonymous mariner similarly revised and reversed the news that he wrote down. That mariner wrote that news about the D’Anville expedition arrived by way of a new prisoner, “John Macane late of Sheepscot [Maine] who brings an account of 10 sail of French men of war and 40 transports being in Chebucto [Halifax].” Macane’s report was correct except for being mistaken about the exact number of vessels involved.⁵⁷ Not until April 26 did a Mr. Williams confirm and give more details to this report of the D’Anville expedition, when Williams said that the French intended to capture all of New England.⁵⁸ On May 18, George Savalon finally confirmed and elaborated on this news; Savalon was a Greek from

⁵⁶ Bowen, *Journals*, 28.

⁵⁷ Anonymous, “Remarkable Occurrances from the Year 1745 to 1748, during the Far Greater Part of Which Time I Was a Prisoner in the Hands of the French and Spaniards: Transcribed from My Private Notes in Rhode Island, Anno 1748,” November 21, 1746.

⁵⁸ Anonymous, April 26, 1747, May 4, 1747.

Corinth who had been the mate on a sloop captured in Acadia's Menis Basin.⁵⁹ Not until May of the next year did the prisoners at Quebec hear the outcome of the D'Anville expedition.⁶⁰ The anonymous mariner held captive at Quebec fancifully wrote about the news brought into the prison camp by a Captain Le Faux that "he brings us a great deal of news but it must be understood in the same manner as the Hebrews read: that is backward." The mariners knew they had to read some news exactly backward, right-to-left.⁶¹ So, both rumor and news were uncertain and subject to revision, meaning that audiences participated in the propagation of both authoritative and non-authoritative communications. Regardless of the errors in this rumor and news, these reports expressed hopes and fears that revealed seamen's attitudes.

Another reason mariners' news and rumors were not distinct during the 1740s was that both were inaccurate and imprecise. These reports did not express particular details effectively but did express diffuse hopes and fears about the British wars with the French. Many of the reports that Bangs described as "certain accounts" were inaccurate, sometimes wildly so. Bangs often acknowledged this with his editorializing, adding comments such as "a certain account, if it be true." The news and rumors Bangs recorded generally reflected hopes for better British outcomes than it turned out actually happened. For instance, Bangs described the Battle of Toulon as a British victory that captured twenty ships, when it was a fiasco that caused the navy to court-martial Admiral Thomas Matthews and relieve him of his command. Bangs believed that the battle of Lauffeld had twice as many French casualties (14,000) as British casualties

⁵⁹ Anonymous, May 18, 1747.

⁶⁰ Anonymous, 97-98 (May 4, 1747).

⁶¹ Anonymous, May 21, 1747.

when the French had won the battle with approximately 8,000 casualties and prisoners compared to the 8,600 British casualties and prisoners.⁶² In addition to identifiable incidents, Bangs received news that does not seem to have corresponded to any identifiable events except New Englanders' ongoing, diffuse fear of the French. These episodes of fear of the French in Bangs's diary included a 1747 declaration of war by France against the Dutch that, strictly speaking, was never issued. The line between news and rumors was not about news being accurate or precise; the news was neither of those things, and recipients knew it.

Those mariners whom the French had captured knew that neither news nor rumors were accurate or precise, which was another reason not to distinguish news from rumor. In May 1747, one year into his captivity at Quebec, the anonymous mariner wrote that "I have learned to place no great confidence in anything they tell us." "They" meant all of the French who communicated with the captives: from Governor Beauharnois to the Mayor of Quebec to the priests who visited them to the militia members who guarded the prison camp.⁶³ The mariner recorded how, over several days in June 1747, he first heard that four vessels of a squadron had arrived in Quebec from France as the only remains of a convoy that Admiral Warren's British fleet had attacked, and that there was a new governor for Canada in the squadron. The next day confirmed most of this but corrected that Admiral Martin led the fleet. On other days a few weeks later, he recorded and later dismissed news that was "not the first

⁶² M. S. Anderson, *The War of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748* (London ; New York: Longman, 1995); Reed Browning, *The War of the Austrian Succession* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993).

⁶³ Anonymous, "Remarkable Occurrences from the Year 1745 to 1748, during the Far Greater Part of Which Time I Was a Prisoner in the Hands of the French and Spaniards: Transcribed from My Private Notes in Rhode Island, Anno 1748," 107-8, (May 5, 1747).

time the French lie for we have now one for every day of the week.” He wrote about a rumor of a flag of truce in the St. Lawrence river that “this we may set down as the lie for the day.” In July 1747, he heard that Governor Shirley of Massachusetts had sent a letter to Governor Beauharnois of Quebec to negotiate the prisoners’ release. However, he dismissed this report, writing, “I take to be the lie for today, we shall have it contradicted tomorrow.”⁶⁴ Any news of the war was worth recording, but his primary concern was rumors of their release. He wrote that there was “great noise and bustle amongst us when any one comes into our camp, enquiring after news: as whether we are to go away and home: for our tormenter of *hopes and fears* rise and fall according to the current of news.”⁶⁵ In his own words, he wrote that news and rumors shaped their “hopes and fears” about the British wars with the French and French allies.

Mariners’ news and rumors also focused what affected their own families and neighbors, meaning that they experienced empire through local events. The anonymous mariner at Quebec noted the stories of incoming New England prisoners. Through them, he followed news of the New England campaign in Acadia, especially the actions of Gorham’s Rangers. (The Rangers were a company of Wampanoag, Nauset, and Pequawket soldiers who fought in Acadia with New England settlers as officers). Sometimes these local experiences of empire concerned mariners because the events in question had happened in New England: Bangs noted violence between settlers and Wabanaki people in the Eastern Parts of Massachusetts (Maine) where his family in Casco Bay lived, and he often fished. When he wrote of these

⁶⁴ Anonymous, July 1, July 5, July 11, 1747.

⁶⁵ Anonymous, June 10, 1747. Emphasis added.

events during 1746 and 1747, he wrote about people who were usually known to him: the killing of one Mr. Sweat, the kidnapping of one Mr. Stubbs, the family of Josh Freeman, who moved out of fear, plus the killing of twenty men.⁶⁶ Other times when Bangs experienced these events of empire locally it was because townsmen were at events that had happened far away from Massachusetts: Bangs described the Louisburg Expedition to Cape Breton in more detail than any other event. Many of his Cape Cod neighbors fought to capture the fortress and so this event combined both local news and imperial news into one report of superior interest for Bangs.⁶⁷ When Britain later ceded Louisburg back to the French after the war, this increased New Englanders' discontent with London because their communities had fought and died during the campaign for those territories. Bangs stated this directly, writing, "There is certain news of a peace concluded all over Europe and signed to deliver all places taken on all sides as they were before Not to the satisfaction of the English especially New England because of Cape Breton which has cost us so much."⁶⁸ Bangs was most likely to comment on the very local events that were least likely to appear in the prints, which suggests how the concerns of mariner communication networks differed from what newspapers printed. On the one hand, colonial newspapers mainly printed news that was not local, with only a few column-inches in each issue under a local dateline. On the other hand, British-American mariners' most pressing

⁶⁶ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 1, 45 (Aug 25, 1746), 48-49 (Sept 6-7, 1746); Bangs, "Diary," vol. 2, 58 (May 27, 1747), "Diary," vol. 1 58 (May 27, 1747).

⁶⁷ See, Carroll, "Savages in the Service of Empire: Native American Soldiers in Gorham's Rangers, 1744-1762."

⁶⁸ Bangs, vol. 1, 99 (Dec. 30, 1748).

concern about the British Empire appears to have been how it affected themselves, their families, and their local towns.

IV. The Seven Years War (1754-1763)

Rumors ebbed and flowed when British-American fears of the French rose during the 1750s then fell after Louisburg's surrender in 1758 and the Fall of Quebec in 1759. Before the Fall of Quebec, repeated defeats made it seem as if Britain could not win during the French and Indian War and the Seven Years War. After the Conquest, it seemed that Britain was winning all over. The attitudes of British-American seamen followed these changes in military fortune.

Narratives about the 1756 voyage of the privateer *Terrible*, captain William Death, encapsulated the flagging hopes and rising fears of English seamen early in the war. These narratives transited from sailors into British prints and back to sailors on all sides of the Atlantic. This story was an antidote to the shame Britons felt after the court-martial of Admiral Byng. In May 1756, Admiral Byng's fleet had failed to lift the Siege of Fort Mahon during the Battle of Minorca. On December 28, the Admiralty convened a court-martial that tried Byng for failing to engage the French fleet, found him guilty of "failing to do his utmost," sentenced him to death, and recommended mercy from the Crown. Byng did not receive clemency, and in March 1757, a firing squad of Royal Marines executed Byng on the deck of HMS *Monarch*. The siege, the court-martial, and the execution shook officers, the navy, Parliament, and Britain as a whole. As Voltaire famously wrote in *Candide*, "*Dans ce pays-ci, il est bon de tuer de temps en temps un amiral pour encourager les autres.*" The dishonor tarred on Byng stuck to other Britons.

The first element in how the story of the *Terrible* was an antidote to the indignity of Byng were the facts of the voyage itself, in which outnumbered and outgunned British seamen

engaged superior French forces. The *Terrible* sailed from London in November 1756, stopped in Plymouth to take on provisions and extra crew for a total of 203 men and boys, then departed Plymouth on December 8. On December 23, while in latitude 47° N they captured a larger vessel, the French privateer *Alexandre le Grand* from St.-Domingue bound for Nantes. Several men died during the engagement.⁶⁹ On December 27, just one day before Admiral Byng's trial, the English *Terrible* was convoying this prize at latitude 48° 22' N in the English Channel. The French privateer *Vengeance* closed in on the *Terrible* under a false flag, ran up French colors at the last moment, and engaged the *Terrible* in combat. The fight that ensued was mismatched because the English *Terrible* had 116 to 200 crew and 26 guns while the French *Vengeance* outmanned and outgunned the *Terrible* with 350 to 360 crew and 34 guns. The *Vengeance* first took the *Terrible's* prize ship, then used that prize ship to double the assault on the *Terrible*. Unlike the allegations against Byng, these seamen did not fail to do their utmost to engage the enemy.

The next element in how the story of the *Terrible* was an antidote to Byng was the losses the seamen sustained during and after this battle. All but thirty-seven of the *Terrible* crew died, including Captain Death himself. Sources reported that during the action, streams of blood flowed from the deck out the scuppers. The French *Vengeance* also sustained huge losses: two-thirds of its crew, including its captain.⁷⁰ The death toll increased after the battle when many English seamen suffocated to death while imprisoned in the hold of the French

⁶⁹ Samuel Stokes, *An Narrative of the Many Unparallel'd Hardships, and Cruel Sufferings, While in France; of the Crew of the Terrible Privateer, Commanded by Captain William Death* (London: Printed by J. Towers, in Piccadilly, 1757), 5.

⁷⁰ e.g. Stokes, 11–13.

Vengeance. Accounts varied, but perhaps twenty-seven of those who had survived the initial engagement later died. These conditions were reminiscent of the Black Hole of Calcutta earlier that same year when a similarly terrible-yet-disputed number of prisoners of war died of suffocation and heat exhaustion in a Calcutta jail after the fall of Fort William. Adding to how the facts of the voyage of the *Terrible* rehabilitated English martial honor, these English seamen paid dearly for engaging the French.

The next element in how the story of the *Terrible* was an antidote to Byng was how seamen memorialized the voyage in words and songs about revenge and resolve. The crew of the *Terrible* who survived to be jailed in Brittany, at St.-Malo, swore vengeance on the *Vengeance*. While imprisoned, these survivors ostensibly wrote a 22-verse ballad in which they committed to taking revenge for the death of Captain Death in the following lines,

But of our Valiant Captain's death
To our great loss resigned his breath
And the Vengeance was our overthrow
But with vengeance we'll revenge the blow.⁷¹

Furthermore, the seaman-balladeurs resolved never to turn away from engaging the French:

But still in this resolution we
Are still resolved to let them sea
That from Monsieur we'll never run
Kill or be killed God's will be done.⁷²

⁷¹ George G. Carey, ed., *A Sailor's Songbag: An American Rebel in an English Prison, 1777-1779* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976), 61.

⁷² Carey, 61.

Whether seamen themselves composed these lyrics or another author attributed the lines to the seamen, the lyrics said in as many words that the story of the voyage of the *Terrible* was about never running from a fight.

When the story of the *Terrible* propagated, it inspired popular declarations of English national honor. Subscribers took up a collection to support the widow of captain Death. At least three pamphlets publicized the story of the *Terrible* in words that connected the tenacity of the English crew to English national honor. One of these pamphlets advertised a subscription for Death's widow and opened with the epigraph "Honor is the satisfaction of the soul." That pamphlet included an ode that encouraged subscribers to use their generosity to "let that haughty power [France] see the spirit of true born *Englishmen*" Captain Death's widow sold this pamphlet from her house in Wapping, London's sailor town.⁷³ This location strongly suggests that the intended readership included seafaring people, and the prints say in as many words that subscribing was a matter of national honor.

English sailors memorialized the action of the *Terrible* in ballads that English printers then propagated in print, and the printers also wrote print pamphlets about the event. Anglo-American sailors then read and copied out these print ballads, bringing them back to British America. The circulation of these ballads was yet another instance when seamen connected Britain and British-American communications. The Lieutenant of the Marines of the *Terrible*

⁷³ Edward Lamport Swaby, *An Ode Most Humbly Inscribed to the Right Hon. Lord Blakeney, on His Arrival to England from Minorca. To Which Is Added, An Occasional Ode of Consolation upon the Loss of Captain William Death, Late of the Terrible Privateer. By Mr. Swaby*. (London: printed for the benefit of the widow of Captain Death, and to be had at her house in Hillyard's Court, Old Gravel Lane, Wapping; at Lloyd's Coffee-House, Lombard-Street; and at all pamphlet shops, 1757), 8, 9.

authored another one of the pamphlets that detailed the combat.⁷⁴ Another pamphlet, this one authored by survivor Joseph Hart, printed the twenty-two verses of the ballad the survivors are supposed to have written. Later, during the War of Independence, Massachusetts privateer Timothy Connor was imprisoned in Forton Prison in England. He copied lyrics that were nearly-identical to Hart's ballad into a homemade songster. That Connor's lyrics are almost identical to those of the printed ballad means that Connor probably transcribed from a print or a copy of a print. That Connor took the lyrics from paper instead of a singer is significant because it shows how British sailors' ballads appeared in British prints, which American seamen wrote down and sang.⁷⁵ The *Terrible* later inspired the most influential of all American pamphlets, for Thomas Paine had intended to join the crew of the *Terrible*. In *Common Sense*, Paine cited the story of the *Terrible* in passing to argue that a small number of sailors could train a large number of landsmen to be effective on a warship. The communications of common seamen informed British prints, then British prints re-informed common seamen and larger British readerships on all sides of the Atlantic. National honor and fear of capture motivated these communications.

British fortunes during the Seven Years War turned after the surrender of Louisburg in 1758 and the fall of Quebec in 1759—but British American seamen still feared French captivity. During an early 1759 case of piracy on the schooner *Francis*, master John Honey, Jr., a rumor about the threat of French capture prompted a panicked mutiny by sailors, with deadly

⁷⁴ Stokes, *An Narrative of the Many Unparallel'd Hardships, and Cruel Sufferings, While in France; of the Crew of the Terrible Privateer, Commanded by Captain William Death*, frontispiece.

⁷⁵ "A Sea Song" in, Carey, *Sailor's Songbag*, 59–63; Joseph Hart, *A Genuine and Faithfull Narrative of the Unfortunate Captain William Death, Commander of the Terrible Privateer* (London: Printed by Thomas Bailey, in Leadenhall-Street, 1757); Mark Benson, "The Unfortunate Captain Death of the Terrible Privateer," *Royal Museums Greenwich: Museum Blog* (blog), September 7, 2018, <https://www.rmg.co.uk/discover/behind-the-scenes/blog/unfortunate-captain-death-terrible-privateer>.

consequences—illustrating how rumors spread and what was at stake. On the *Francis*, rumors and counter-rumors compelled seamen to confront the power and authority of ship officers. When the schooner departed St. Kitts for Savannah, Georgia on February 21, 1759, the vessel appeared to be just another small, sixty-ton, intercolonial merchantman with a cargo of rum, an assortment of other trade goods, and thirteen enslaved people.⁷⁶ Even before the vessel left port, trouble was afoot.

Rumors in port planted the seeds for the mutiny. The mate, Samuel Parks, later claimed in court that before the voyage began, he warned the shipmaster about rumors that two French periaugers or Petit-Goâvers (Petit-Goâve was a privateering hub) were cruising their intended route. Parks pled with Honey to take an alternative, safer route.⁷⁷ Sure enough, soon into the voyage, a privateer flying French colors came out of the Dutch freeport of St. Eustatius and overtook the schooner *Francis*. Luckily, the privateer turned out to be an English vessel flying false colors.⁷⁸ Honey offered the English privateer a gift of rum to convoy the *Francis* in safety, but during the negotiations, Honey decided not to take the privateer's protection after

⁷⁶ "Tryal of Pirates" Jul. 23, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 145, Rhodes Island State Archives, Providence; James Honeyman to Stephen Hopkins. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 153, RISA. cf. Petition of Francis Goffe. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 152, RISA. cf. Inventory of Schooner Frances. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 151. RISA. The inventory reports seven slaves, the petition of Goffe reports ten, and the letter by Honeyman, Advocate General of the Court, reports thirteen: three slaves had been castaway along with Honey, Goffe, and the two passengers. On the intercolonial slave trade, see Gregory E. O'Malley, *Final Passages: The Intercolonial Slave Trade of British America, 1619-1807* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

⁷⁷ Copy of Examination of Samuel Parks. Apr. 5, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 146, RISA.

⁷⁸ Copy of Examination of John Gibbs. Apr. 5, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 147, RISA.

all. As a result, the *Francis* proceeded unescorted and with a disgruntled mate and crew who preferred an alternative course with less risk.

This dissatisfaction then broke into an open argument. The master and mate disagreed at length and with great “passion” about the intended course. The mate wanted to run the vessel ashore rather than proceed toward what he believed was French captivity.⁷⁹ Later, crewmember Benjamin Hawkins testified that when the vessel was about eight or nine leagues (35 to 40 miles) from St.-Croix, the mate, Parks, stormed onto the deck, declared that the shipmaster was about to let the crew be captured by the French and sold “like dogs,” and called for the crew to rally around him to take over the ship.⁸⁰ When recounting these events to the Vice-Admiralty court in Newport, Hawkins explained that because the master was not on deck, the crew had no choice but to obey Parks, who, as mate, was the commanding officer on deck. Besides, Hawkins pointed out, Parks was armed with pistols, a cutlass, and a hatchet, and he was threatening to “blow their brains out” if the crew did not do as he ordered.⁸¹ So, the crew rallied around the mate, who led them in putting the master, the merchant, three enslaved people, and two additional men into the ship’s boat.⁸² Parks took command of the vessel and

⁷⁹ “Tryal of Pirates” Jul. 23, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 145, RISA; Petition of Francis Goffe. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 152, RISA.

⁸⁰ Copy of Examination of Benjamin Hawkins. Apr. 5, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 148, RISA.

⁸¹ Copy of Examination of Benjamin Hawkins. Apr. 5, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 148, RISA.

⁸² Along with four oars, a rudder, a spar to use as a mast, two Dutch blankets for sails, water, the navigational instruments of a quadrant, compass, and a scale, as well as a knife to cut the rope that tied up the master— enough equipment and water to ensure that when Parks set the ship’s boat adrift on the high seas he did not send them to their deaths because these castaways could still travel to shore and safety.

sailed it far away from the *Francis's* master, the supercargo, and the rest of the castaways to the slaving and privateering port of Newport, Rhode Island, where they arrived on April 2.⁸³ There, Park assumed the identity of the erstwhile captain, going by the name of Capt. John Honey.⁸⁴

Someone in Newport spread a rumor about this voyage that pulled at the loose threads of Parks' yarn and caused it to unravel. That unknown person informed the Vice-Admiralty court that Parks was going by the name of the vessel's true master, John Honey, and alleged that Parks unlawfully held the *Francis* and its cargo. Within three days of arriving in Newport, the Newport Court of Vice-Admiralty had Samuel Parks, Benjamin Hawkins, and John Gibbs arrested, held in custody, and charged with piracy. Crewmember William Devine confessed and testified against the other three, claiming that he had "conference" with Parks and Carter in the weeks after signing on to the vessel but before they voyage sailed. During that time, the three conspired to capture the *Francis* after it was out of port.⁸⁵ They did not tell Gibbs about their plans because they were afraid Gibbs "would go and tell."⁸⁶ Once at sea, the three conspirators

⁸³ James Honeyman to Stephen Hopkins. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 153, RISA.

⁸⁴ Copy of Examination of Samuel Parks. Apr. 5, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 146, RISA. He later claimed a privateer had stopped the *Francis* and when the Lieutenant boarded the schooner he was "ashamed to let them Catch me in a Lie as the papers were in the Name of Honey I therefore assumed it" This was a terrible mistake. The first act in any successful mutiny was to destroy the ship's papers, usually by sinking the portage bill, manifest, inventories, waste books, account books, logbooks, passports, letters of instruction, letters of marque, and any other documents that might betray them. Moreover, any master with something to hide knew to destroy the ship's papers before being captured by a privateer and to hope for better luck when libel for prize was heard in a Vice-Admiralty court, thereby consigning the vessel to the testimony of its crew, inverting the usual power relations of merchant and crew.

⁸⁵ Copy of Confession of William Devine. Apr. 5, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 149, RISA; "Tryal of Pirates," 5.

⁸⁶ "Tryal of Pirates," 11.

kept the rest of the crew drunk until Parks announced, "it was time." Armed with pistols, cutlasses, knives, and a hatchet, the three confederates spat in their hands, shook on the deal, then captured and tied up the shipmaster and the merchant.⁸⁷ During the scuffle, the master reached for the pistols he had stashed in his cabin only to find Gibbs had already taken the pistols away. In court, Park and Hawkins pled not guilty before reversing their pleas to guilty, and the court sentenced them to death.⁸⁸ The court acquitted Gibbs after he pled not guilty, and no witnesses said he had a part in the plot.⁸⁹ Park and Hawkins were hanged on August 21, 1760, in Newport. Historians believe that a crowd of five or six thousand people likely watched the executions. Capt. Samuel Tillinghast of nearby Warwick heard that the crowd approached ten thousand people.⁹⁰ The fear of capture by the French "to be sold like dogs" drove seamen to desperate measures, accelerating rumor into a panic, overthrowing shipboard authority, and ultimately costing lives. This incident was more than a story about piracy, for it records how seamen spread rumors, acted on rumors, and the gravity of what was at stake.

In sailors' communications, fears of the French diminished after the 1759 fall of French military power in North America. In December 1759, seamen, many who were recently-dismissed soldiers, preferred to take the overland routes from Quebec to Boston to avoid the impressment they heard was underway in Massachusetts ports. Similar to avoiding impressment during the 1740s, rumors of impressment shaped how many Massachusetts men

⁸⁷ "Tryal of Pirates," 6; Copy of Confession of William Devine. Apr. 5, 1760. Court of Vice-Admiralty, Newport, Rhode Island, Admiralty Papers, Vol. 8, Miscellaneous Papers, 1754-1770, 149, RISA.

⁸⁸ "Tryal of Pirates," 2-3

⁸⁹ "Tryal of Pirates," 2, 9.

⁹⁰ Tillinghast, *Diary of Capt. Samuel Tillinghast*, 164. Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt*, 112.

at Quebec chose their routes of travel home after the siege.⁹¹ With the Fall of Quebec, mariners' fear of the authoritarianism that the French and their allies represented dissipated. Yet before the decade was over, mariners found a new object for their erstwhile fears of authoritarianism: the specter of English tyranny. During the 1760s, seamen added rumors motivated by fear of English tyranny to those motivated by French despotism.

These seamen and other provincials saw the war as a struggle between Catholics and Protestants, so British victories eased their fears of falling under Catholic rule. Hearing of English victories in Europe in 1759, Bangs wrote, "the Almighty God seems to fight for the Protestant cause. O may we not abuse his mercy by ingratitude." Of the fall of Montreal in 1760, Bangs wrote that he was "thinking now that the streams of English blood may be dried up which these papists have occasioned by sending their Indian bloodhounds on us these 120 years or more."⁹² After the British took Havana, Experience Richardson of Sudbury wrote, "We have great cause to bless God for the news we have from the Havana that it is taken. I can't but wonder God will do such great things for us when we are such a sinful people."⁹³ Other New Englanders elaborated on the Protestant valence of the victory when they celebrated the Fall of Quebec with the broadside ballads that included *Brave Wolfe* and *the Death of Wolfe* by Thomas Paine, alias Atlanticus,⁹⁴ and "A New Thanksgiving Song on the Glorious Conquest of Canada." The "New Thanksgiving Song" included at least ten verses praising Major General

⁹¹ Bangs, "Diary," vol. 2, 37.

⁹² Bangs, vol. 2, 19 (Sept. 29, 1759); Bangs, vol. 2, 112 (Oct 18, 1760).

⁹³ Richardson, 91 (Sept. 8 1762).

⁹⁴ Atlanticus, *Death of General Wolfe* (Laws Ballad A-1).

Wolfe, who was the commander, other British commanders, and the British troops; at least eight verses primarily expressing anti-popery; and at least eight verses predicting that Quebec's new Protestant government would propagate literacy, trade, the printing press, industry, and agriculture.⁹⁵ In popular consciousness, the war was about Protestant versus Catholic.

The sentiments these diarists and verses expressed were consistent with the Whiggish outlook that prevailed in Georgian print culture. Anglophones read about the superiority of Protestantism over Catholicism and other religions, the superiority of the English over the French and other nations, the legitimacy of the Hanoverian succession, the political value of liberty as opposed to tyranny, and related values.⁹⁶ That was about to change, for the imperial crisis of the 1760s broke that consensus when British-American colonists, mariners included, feared more and more that parliament, the navy, and the army threatened their English liberties.

V. The Imperial Crisis (1763-1775)

During the imperial crisis of the 1760s and 1770s, the most urgent object of British-American sailors' anti-authoritarianism turned from French and Catholic despotism to British tyranny. Popular historical consciousness has forgotten how colonists and seamen alike objected to Courts of Vice-Admiralty during the imperial crisis. Colonists adopted sailors' views that the Courts of Vice-Admiralty and impressment in the British American provinces were

⁹⁵ *A New Thanksgiving Song Revised, Enlarged and [Adapted to] The Glorious Conquest of Canada, Fitted to a Lively Tune, called The Grenadiers [sic] March proper for the Fife and Drums* (Boston: Sold at the New Printing-Office, near the Town-House, 1760). Early American Imprints, Series 1 Evans, no. 41155. Six of the final eight verses are torn from the Evans microfilm state of this broadside.

⁹⁶ Clark, *The Public Prints*, 222.

unconstitutional and illegal. The cases of the *Pitt Packet* and Ansell Nickerson litigated and publicized these constitutional and political debates. John Adams was the defense attorney in both cases, and he wrote that governor “Hutchinson dreaded, (and the apprehension of Hutchinson was the apprehension of all,) the public investigation, before the people, of the law applicable to that case [the *Pitt Packet*].” Adams believed this because he claimed that being forced to pronounce in favor of the legality of impressment in New England would have legal and political consequences throughout all the colonies, not to mention Great Britain. In retrospect, Adams wrote, “It would have accelerated the revolution more than even the impeachment of the judges, or Hutchinson’s foolish controversy about the omniscience and omnipotence and infinite goodness of Parliament did afterwards. It would have spread a wider flame than Otis’s ever did, or could have done.”⁹⁷ These two cases about the legality and constitutionality of impressment were touchstones for complaints about Britain by mariners and other colonists alike.

By 1769, the growing hostility to Parliament of land-dwelling colonists included concern about impressment in the colonies. This change was significant because previously seaside towns complained about impressment but not provincial colonists as a whole. The *Pitt Packet* case spread marked this change and even created this change. When John Adams reflected on the case decades later, he wrote that the *Pitt Packet* was even more significant to the American Revolution than the Boston Massacre. Adams wrote that it was “a tragical event, which excited much interest, and contributed largely, to render the sovereignty of Parliament odious,

⁹⁷ Adams, *Collected Words*, “Diary,” Jan. 16, 1770, note.

detestable and horrible to the people. And I can conscientiously add, accelerated the catastrophe [Boston Massacre] of the fifth of March 1770.”⁹⁸ The *Pitt Packet* case encapsulated and accelerated imperial-provincial conflict.

The case touched off imperial-provincial resentment when an attempt at impressment ended in homicide. In 1769, the brig *Pitt Packet*, master Thomas Power, was returned to Marblehead from Portugal with a cargo of salt. Lieut. Henry Gibson Panton, of HMS *Rose*, a frigate, captain Benjamin Caldwell, led a press-gang that boarded the *Pitt Packet* on the high seas off Cape Ann. Four of the *Pitt Packet* crew barricaded themselves below deck and armed themselves. The civilian shipmaster negotiated with Panton over which of the crewmembers the navy would take and pled with him not to take any married men. When Panton noticed that some of the *Pitt Packet*'s crew appeared to be missing, he summoned reinforcements from the *Rose* and searched the *Pitt Packet*.⁹⁹ While searching the vessel, Panton and his men attempted to approach the hidden crewmembers who were cornered in the hold. During the ensuing standoff, *Pitt Packet* seaman Michael Corbett threw a harpoon into Panton's neck. This blow mortally wounded Panton, who bled to death within a couple of hours. After this, the *Rose* took the *Pitt Packet* into Boston, where the seamen stood trial before a Special Court of Admiralty, defended by John Adams and James Otis. What started as a question of homicide soon became a question of provincial liberties.

⁹⁸ John Adams to Jedidiah Morse, January 5, 1816, Founders Online, National Archives, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-6564>.

⁹⁹ The British government later claimed that Panton was actually searching for contraband, not recruits.

Adam's strategy was to make the trial about the legality of impressment, which politicized the trial as an imperial-provincial conflict. The Special Court was composed of fifteen senior imperial officials, including the two governors of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the Commodore and Commander of the navy in New England, the Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, the Secretary of Massachusetts, two members of the Crown's Council of New Hampshire, the Province Secretary, two Admiralty judges from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and the three Customs officers from Boston, Salem, and Portsmouth. Adams had imported from London the only complete set of British statutes "at large" in Boston. He dog-eared the statute prohibiting impressment in the American colonies, which Adams alleged the Special Court did not want known or publicized in the colonies. Before Adams even presented his arguments that the seamen committed justifiable homicide, the court adjourned for the day. The magistrates returned a unanimous decision acquitting the seamen on the grounds of justifiable homicide, preventing Adams from publicizing his planned argument that impressment was illegal.

Even still, the case inflamed popular resentment of the navy and Britain.¹⁰⁰ Adams later wrote that "No trial had ever interested the community so much before, excited so much curiosity and compassion, or so many apprehensions of the fateful consequences of the supremacy of parliamentary jurisdiction, or the intrigues of parliamentary courts. No trial had drawn together such crowds of auditors from day to day; they were as numerous as those in

¹⁰⁰ Bowen, *Journals*, 208–9, note; John Adams, *Legal Papers of John Adams*, vol. 2: Cases 31-62 (New York: Atheneum, 1968), no. 57.

the next year, at the trials of Preston and the soldiers [from the Boston Massacre].”¹⁰¹ Even if Adams was self-aggrandizing, impressment rallied the crew on a ship to homicidal violence and rallied the province to support that crew. Provincials at large adopted seamen’s complaints that impressment infringed on their liberties.

By the Ansell Nicholson trial of 1772, New Englanders’ fears about British tyranny were so acute that ever-more outlandish claims seemed believable enough to catch on as rumors. When Ansell Nickerson stood trial for piracy in 1772, provincials’ dread of the navy was so real that the whole of the province chattered about Nickerson’s claims that the crew of a topsail vessel robbed his fishing schooner and massacred his crewmates. Some believed that a navy crew turned pirate committed this massacre, others thought a rogue press-gang had done it, and others thought Nickerson himself had committed the misdeeds.

On November 14, Ansell Nickerson was a passenger on the fishing schooner *Abigail*, master Thomas Nickerson, bound from Boston for Chatham on Cape Cod. The passenger and the shipmaster were cousins. The crew included another one of the shipmaster’s cousins, named Sparrow Nickerson, the shipmaster’s brother-in-law, named Elisha Newcomb, and a thirteen-year-old boy named William Kent. On November 15, Captain Joseph Doane, Jr. of Newport saw the schooner in distress, boarded it, and found the passenger Ansell Nickerson all by himself and “in a great fright.”¹⁰² Nickerson told Doane that a topsail schooner “brought to”

¹⁰¹ Adams concluded, “Panton and Corbet ought not to have been forgotten. Preston and his Soldiers ought [have been] forgotten sooner.” John Adams to Jedidiah Morse, January 20, 1816

¹⁰² “On Sunday the 15th Current, Captain Joseph Doane, Jun. Sailed from Chatham Harbour,” *Boston Evening-Post*, no. 1939 (November 11, 1772).

their schooner and sent four armed boats to board them. So, fearing that he was about to be impressed, Nickerson had hidden away by hanging overboard from the stern. Nickerson claimed that from this hiding spot, he witnessed the boarding party murder the other three men, throw the bodies overboard, kidnap the boy, rob the vessel of cash, and get into a barrel of rum.

After this encounter with Doane, Nickerson's story spread until it captured the attention of the Province as a whole. Doane took Nickerson to Cape Cod, where two Justices of the Peace examined Nickerson and then forwarded their examination by express to Governor Thomas Hutchinson in Boston. Hutchinson found Nickerson's claims unbelievable, so he had Nickerson apprehended and brought to the capital. As of November 27, John Adams wrote that Nickerson's allegations of piracy was one of the main topics of conversations in Massachusetts,

The conversation of the town and country has been about the strange occurrence of last week, a piracy said to have been committed on a vessel bound to Cape Cod, three men killed, a boy missing, and only one man escaped to tell the news-a mysterious, inexplicable affair! About Wilkes's probable mayoralty, and about the salaries to the judges. These are the three principal topics of conversation at present.¹⁰³

Ten months later, in August 1773, a broadside reported that this was "The story that is now current in the Town."¹⁰⁴ The story stayed in the news for the better part of a year and merited a broadside.

¹⁰³ John Adams diary November 16, 28 [i.e. 27], 1772 [electronic edition]. *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/>.

¹⁰⁴ *The Following Circumstances Relating to the Famous Ansell Nickerson*, Early American Imprints. First Series, no. 42475 (Boston: s.n., 1773), column 2.

Many disbelieved Nickerson's claims that a rogue press-gang murdered his shipmates, but the story confirmed enough people's fears about the navy that it stayed alive as a rumor. To some, Nickerson's claims about a murderous press-gang seemed plausible enough. The broadside claimed "The public in general are not fully satisfied with the judgement lately given in by the Honourable Judges."¹⁰⁵ Witnesses corroborated bits and pieces of Nickerson's story. Several vessels matching Nickerson's description seemed to have been near him about the time of the alleged attack. Two men from a vessel bound for the Eastern part of Massachusetts (Maine) said that the crew from a topsail schooner with four boats had boarded their vessel the same night as Nickerson's attack. A navy vessel was expected in Boston from Rhode Island about that time. A large armed schooner had recently sailed from Boston for Guyana. Others claimed the allegedly kidnapped boy was seen on an armed schooner or at Martha's Vineyard.¹⁰⁶ Popular opinions notwithstanding, the court did not accept Nickerson's claim. For legal and practical reasons, there were questions about whether to try Nickerson for murder, piracy, or both. In the end, a special court of Admiralty tried Nickerson for piracy during the summer of 1773. John Adams and Josiah Quincy Jr. defended Nickerson against the charge, and the court found Nickerson not guilty.¹⁰⁷ Adams was circumspect about the guilt or innocence of his former client. Adams wrote, "I know not, to this day, what judgment to form of his guilt or

¹⁰⁵ *The Following Circumstances Relating to the Famous Ansell Nickerson*, column 1.

¹⁰⁶ *The Following Circumstances Relating to the Famous Ansell Nickerson*, column 2.

¹⁰⁷ Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 422–24. The reason for this decision is not clear due to a lack of surviving records and could have been decided due to the lack of evidence or for procedural reasons.

innocence; and this doubt, I presume, was the principle of acquittal.”¹⁰⁸ These doubts and the witnesses’ testimony fueled rumors about a renegade press-gang.

To those who believed Nickerson, it seemed plausible enough that a navy crew could have turned pirate and massacred a local fishing crew. Certainly, it was politically useful to believe this, for the Sons of Liberty seized on Nickerson’s case and made it a *cause célèbre*. They took Nickerson’s side, visited Nickerson in prison, printed a defense of Nickerson, and argued that the Special Court of Admiralty denied Nickerson his liberty to a trial by jury.¹⁰⁹ The Sons of Liberty and Boston printers propagated the story, especially the radical Isaiah Thomas, publisher of the *Massachusetts Spy*, likely with the financial support of John Hancock.¹¹⁰ Adams mused about writing a pamphlet on the topics of how a trial in Admiralty Court denied the *Pitt Packet* crew and Ansell Nickerson their liberties to trial by jury, and the legality of the impressment of seamen in the colonies.¹¹¹ In the ensuing years, objections to Admiralty jurisdiction in the colonies as a court without juries became a minor cause of the War of Independence after the Court of Vice-Admiralty at Halifax took over the prosecution of smuggling; the courts of Massachusetts and Rhode Island did not convict smugglers due to having local magistrates who were sympathetic to, and often beholden to, provincial

¹⁰⁸ Adams, Collected Words, Diary, Jan. 16, 1770, note.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, Third edition, vol. III (Boston: Printed and sold by I. Thomas, near the market [and by Joseph Greenleaf], 1775), 422.

¹¹⁰ “On Sunday the 15th Current, Captain Joseph Doane, Jun. Sailed from Chatham Harbour”; *The Following Circumstances Relating to the Famous Ansell Nickerson*; Hutchinson, *The History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay*, III:417–22; Hanna, *Pirate Nests*, 422; Adams, *Legal Papers*, 2: Cases 31-62:No. 57, Rex v. Nickerson, 1772–1773; “Last Evening the Man Who Was Found on Board the Vessel...,” *The Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal*, no. 920 (November 23, 1772).

¹¹¹ Adams, Collected Words, “Diary,” Jan 16, 1770, note.

merchants.¹¹² The Nickerson and *Pitt Packet* cases sustained widespread interest by stoking provincials' fears of British tyranny in the form of out of control press-gangs and trials without juries.

The Nickerson case connected stories by seafarers to politics on land. Nickerson's story at sea traveled to shore via the mariner Doane. The story then traveled overland to Boston to the Governor, entered the newspaper in Boston on November 23, then propagated by print and word of mouth so that by November 27, it had become one of "the three principal topics of conversation" in "the town and country." For maritime communications, the case is significant because even Nickerson's outlandish claims seemed plausible enough to those on land who participated in these communications and shared seamen's fears of press-gangs. By advocating for Nickerson's cause, the Sons of Liberty verbalized the fears of British tyranny that mariners faced each time they met a navy vessel: fears that they might lose their lives or their English liberties, including the liberty to a trial by jury. Rumors about maritime fears became news about provincial fears.

VI. The War of Independence to the War of 1812 (1775-1812)

By 1774, Britain, not France, was the chief object of fear that motivated British American mariners' communication in the interpenetrated and unstable categories of rumors and news. Ashley Bowen participated in propagating rumors and news during these years and

¹¹² See, Carl Ubbelohde, *The Vice Admiralty Courts and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1960); L. Kinvin Wroth, "The Massachusetts Vice Admiralty Court and the Federal Admiralty Jurisdiction," *The American Journal of Legal History* 6, no. 3 (July 1962): 250–68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/844072>; L. Kinvin Wroth, "The Massachusetts Vice Admiralty Court and the Federal Admiralty Jurisdiction," *The American Journal of Legal History*, America, a cultural history, 6, no. 4 (October 1962): 347–67, <https://doi.org/10.2307/844107>.

reflected on how the reports he heard continued to be inaccurate and motivated by hopes and fears. The British-American seamen whom the British imprisoned expressed fear of Britain more than anyone else did. Their numbers included seaman, privateer, and onetime barber's apprentice Ebenezer Fox, privateer Timothy Connor, and George Thompson, all of Massachusetts. Fox was imprisoned in the British hulks and spread verbal news about the British threat to mariners. Connor was captive in Forton Prison in England. He recorded the verses of songs in which seamen expressed changes in their political ideas from seeing Britain as guarding seamen against the "slavery" of illegitimate government to seeing Britain as having an illegitimate government that enslaved these mariners. George Thompson was imprisoned at Forton at the same time as Connor.

During the 1770s, mariner's news and rumor alike continued to be inaccurate and revised over time. Bowen reflected on this when describing the news and rumors he heard. Relatively few of Bowen's reports were accurate representations of events that are identifiable today. The inaccuracy of these reports does not change the fact that these reports expressed an underlying fear of the British. For instance, in 1775, Bowen heard that the navy had burnt Newport to the ground, which did not happen, but the existence of this rumor indicates how it seemed plausible to provincials that the British might burn Newport to the ground. Sure enough, later that same year, Bowen heard of the navy razing Falmouth (Portland, Maine). Unlike Newport, the navy did attack Falmouth, confirming colonists' earlier fears that the navy might destroy a town.¹¹³ Newport and Falmouth were not unique cases when rumors expressed

¹¹³ Bowen, *Journals*, 461.

fears about British destruction or actual attacks because on January 1, 1776, the navy shelled Norfolk, Virginia, and in September 1776, Patriots blamed Britain for the fires Patriots set in Norfolk and fires in New York that Patriots likely set.¹¹⁴ Wartime rumor also expressed provincials' hopes: When Patriot seaman Ebenezer Fox heard about the Battle of Lexington from a stagecoach that arrived at a tavern on the road to Providence, the news exaggerated the British loss. The stagecoach said there were 200 British deaths to 30 American deaths when the battle was a closer-matched 73 British killed to 49 Americans killed.¹¹⁵ Since the details of these unofficial reports were ever-changing, these bottom-up accounts are useful mainly for how they expressed attitudes of hope and fear about the war.

Colonists' rumors expressed their hopes and fears about what might be true, even if the rumors themselves were exaggerated or even false. The diaries of Ashley Bowen, a Loyalist who lived in the Patriot town of Marblehead and went to sea from time to time during the war, contain ample evidence of this. Much of what Bowen heard during the war was untrue to some degree, reflecting the misapprehensions of Bowen and others in his town. These mistaken reports included false reports of deaths, later-disproven fears of British forces on the march towards Salem—the British did march on Salem eventually, just not that particular day—and whispers of peace years before the peace came.¹¹⁶ Sometimes Bowen consulted the local post rider when attempting to find the underlying cause of these reports. In one case, Bowen

¹¹⁴ Benjamin L Carp, *Rebels Rising: Cities and the American Revolution* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 215.

¹¹⁵ Fox, "Revolutionary Adventures," 15, note 15.

¹¹⁶ Bowen, *Journals*, 537, 453, 548.

recorded a false alarm that played out on December 11, 1776: Bowen heard that 8,000 European troops (i.e., Hessians) had been killed and taken. The next day, he had more details: 6,000 killed, 2,000 taken. Editorializing, Bowen wrote, “Tis the easiest thing in the world to be mistaken as well in the High Pit as the Low Pit.”¹¹⁷ On day three, Bowen checked these reports with a post rider and found that there had been no battle at all as of yet, although 18,000 troops under the command of General Howe had gathered thirty miles from Philadelphia. This rumor about a battle that had not happened yet reflected the people’s apprehensions in Marblehead.

Bowen reflected how apprehensions shaped the reports he heard when he wrote 250 words analogizing how news about enemy casualties resembled price inflation, currency devaluations, and the strong pound sterling and weak Massachusetts pound (Lawful Money). He applied his analogy to the reports of casualties at Bunker Hill. Bowen wrote that he heard it “said five hundred were killed but was soon reduced to the Old Sterling at ten for one so 400 the note which was borrowed, taken off, leaves just 50 and may be expected on other accounts.”¹¹⁸ Bowen was trying to say that although he had heard reports that five hundred people died, he doubted that even fifty people had died. Bowen’s Loyalist hopes led him astray, for the Massachusetts forces killed over one thousand British officers and troops at Bunker Hill. His hopes colored the news he believed.

On many other occasions, Bowen’s hopes, and the hopes of others in Marblehead, led how they assessed news and rumors. In June 1776, a month after Commodore Banks of HMS

¹¹⁷ Bowen, 505.

¹¹⁸ Bowen, 447.

Renown was supposed to have died, Bowen heard that the Commodore's floating body was, wearing his uniform and with his sword, gold watch, and coins still in his pockets. It turned out that the deceased was the lower-ranked Lieutenant Josiah Harris, and so the rumor had imagined how Patriots might take the Commodore's sword as a war trophy.¹¹⁹ Hearing news of Independence on July 10, 1776, Bowen received some unspecified "News from New York will make some talk."¹²⁰ Three days later, on July 13, he wrote, "All the New York news falls through, mostly."¹²¹ By July 15, he amended this by writing, "Tis said Lord Howe is gone to New York. Tis said independence is took place, so tis said Admiral Howe is one month too late for []."¹²² Bowen and these other wartime Americans wrote down rumors they thought confirmed their hoped-for triumphs, great and small.

During the Revolutionary War, fear of British imprisonment displaced fear of French imprisonment as a chief concern for American seamen when thousands of seamen died in British prisons. Seaman Ebenezer Fox spent the war attempting to avoid capture by the British or escape after they captured him. During a 1775 merchant voyage from Cap-Français, St.-Domingue (Le Cap or Cap-Haïtian) via Stonington, Connecticut to Providence, Rhode Island, two British ships and a tender cornered the vessel that Fox was on. Fox fled by jumping overboard and swimming to shore.¹²³ Another time, English privateers flying false French colors took the

¹¹⁹ Bowen, 491, note.

¹²⁰ Bowen, 494.

¹²¹ Bowen, 494.

¹²² Bowen, 494.

¹²³ Fox, "Revolutionary Adventures," Chapter II.

privateer he was sailing on.¹²⁴ On that day, English officers claimed that one-third of the American seamen—those who were “healthy, athletic-looking”—were English and impressed them into the navy.¹²⁵ The English officers then imprisoned another one-third of the American seamen, including Fox, in the *Jersey* hulk in New York, where reputedly 11,000 captives died from disease during the war. The food and conditions there were terrible, and these deaths, according to Fox, only deepened the captives’ hatred for England.¹²⁶ Fox and others escaped by signing on to the British Navy, which sent them to Jamaica. There, they ran away from the navy with the assistance of enslaved Jamaicans, who told the sailors about escape routes and warned them about army sentries on the road.¹²⁷ These moments are glimpses of how enslaved West Indians informed sailors and helped their resistance. For Fox and so many others, verbal information was how they maintained and regained their liberty.

During the War of Independence, some American seamen wrote about their political ideas using the political vocabulary of tyranny, “slavery,” and despotism. Looking back during the nineteenth century, Ebenezer Fox wrote that by April 1775 in Massachusetts, “Almost all the conversation that came to my ears related to the injustice of England and the tyranny of government.”¹²⁸ Fox also claimed that enslaved blacks’ bondage in Jamaica was akin to Americans’ political subjugation. His beliefs about slavery were not unusual for white Patriots,

¹²⁴ Fox, 63–64.

¹²⁵ Fox, 67.

¹²⁶ Fox, 68, 83, 99.

¹²⁷ Fox, 125.

¹²⁸ Fox, 10.

even when these beliefs misrepresented enslaved people's lives. Patriots were fond of playing with the slippage between "slavery," meaning being subject to tyrannical political rule, and "slavery," meaning chattel slavery. When Fox wrote of the willingness of Jamaican Blacks "to give any information that was in their power to furnish" to sailors who had run from the navy. He claimed that, "They appeared to feel a sort of sympathy for the soldiers and sailors; seeing some resemblance between their own degraded condition and that of the miserable military and naval slaves of British despotism."¹²⁹ Fox turns these encounters into political rhetoric about British despotism. The support these enslaved Jamaicans showed Fox did not stop him from attempting to murder several enslaved Blacks and maroons during the rest of his time in Jamaica.¹³⁰ When retelling this encounter, Fox recited political rhetoric about despotism to describe Hanoverian, Protestant England, not Bourbon, Catholic, France.

English prisons incubated Patriot sentiment among seamen. While imprisoned at Forton Prison in England, Timothy Connor compiled a songster that collected lyrics to 58 songs. His politics were avowedly patriot, and he interspersed into these lyrics inscriptions such as "Success to the Honorable Continental Congress and John Hancock Esq. 1778," "Success to the Continental Congress," and "Success to the Congress etc."¹³¹ In one song, titled "Gage's Lamentation," dated October 1778, the British forces' commander-in-chief laments the Patriots taking Cambridge, fears that Boston will be next, and curses Lord North, the prime minister.

¹²⁹ Fox, 125. NB the history of Euro-Americans claiming they were being treated like "slaves" makes me suspect that Fox's claims that Jamaican slaves saw Euro-Americans as being enslaved like them was a rhetorical device.

¹³⁰ Fox, E.g. 139-141, 142.

¹³¹ Carey, *Sailor's Songbag*, 106, 140, 145.

Presumably, Connor shared these songs with or learned these songs from his fellow captives. During Connor's two years, three months, and seven days at Forton Prison, 421 other American seamen were prisoners there, mostly from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Philadelphia, alongside an even larger number of French prisoners.¹³² Of the American seamen held captive at Forton, 110 escaped from the prison through frequent jailbreaks, 23 to 25 enlisted in the navy, and ten died. The French captives escaped and died at a similar rate.¹³³ These Forton prisoners heard and swapped songs among themselves, including Patriot songs, many of which Connor wrote down.

Even while locked up in England, these American seamen participated in rumors and news. Connor described the serpentine route that a rumor they were about to be released took. The rumor came via a sailor on a ship from Spithead. A waterman who boarded the ship in Gosport then told a prison guard named Thomas. The guard then informed the captive seamen that, in Connor's words, the said ship was "to carry the American prisoners home to America. No more news."¹³⁴ This report was a rumor that was a non-authoritative report that one person passed on to another, expressing the captives' hopes. Nevertheless, Connor himself categorized it as "news."

¹³² Timothy Connor, "American Prisoners at Forton Prison, England, 1777-1779.... Roll Appended to Journal of a Forton Prisoner," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 32, no. 3 (July 1878): passim; Timothy Connor, "A Yankee Privateersman in Prison in England 1777-1779 [Pt. I]," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 30, no. 2 (April 1876): passim.

¹³³ Timothy Connor, "A Yankee Privateersman in Prison in England 1777-1779 [Pt. V]," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 31, no. 3 (July 1877): 284 (July 5, 1778); Connor, "Privateersman Part VIII," July 1878, passim.

¹³⁴ Timothy Connor, "A Yankee Privateersman in Prison in England 1777-1779 [Pt. II]," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 30, no. 3 (July 1876): Apr. 29, 1778.

Connor assessed changes in the captives' hopes when they read English newspapers and received a steady stream of updates from American agents about their ever-anticipated release. Sometimes there was no news of the long-anticipated prisoner exchange. At times, the exchange seemed canceled. One day he wrote, "Out of all hopes once more." At other times, reports made the exchange seem imminent, such as when they heard a report from a gentleman who claimed to have seen the King's order for their exchange at the Navy Board in London, "which puts us in high spirits once more."¹³⁵ Connor recorded frequent rumors in his journal. The most frequent sources of their information were from the clergy who tended to them: a Presbyterian minister from Plymouth, Rev. Thomas Wren, and an almoner from Gosport named Mr. Duckett. Thus, Bailyn's claim that the crowd actions of impressment riots and Stamp Act riots were inarticulate is misdirected, for seamen themselves parsed the subtleties of the political and military news they heard and passed on. The verses and memoirs of these seamen voiced their fears that Westminster had degenerated into tyranny, their fears that this reduced provincials to political slavery, and their hopes that the Continental Congress was a remedy.

VII. Community of Seamen and Land Dwellers

Before the 1760s, seamen objected to British impressment as an unconstitutional infringement upon their liberties, feared French imprisonment and Catholic despotism. The object of the fears that motivated these rumors reoriented during the 1760s and 1770s. Other provincials adopted seamen's fears of how British tyranny threatened provincial liberties,

¹³⁵ Timothy Connor, "A Yankee Privateersman in Prison in England 1777-1779 [Pt. VIII]," *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 32, no. 3 (July 1878): 280 (October 27, 1778), January 2, 1779.

including the liberty to be excluded from impressment and the liberty to a trial by jury. During the War of Independence, thousands of American seamen died in British prisons, and the navy attacked British-American settlements, confirming these fears for many seamen and provincials. The motivation for these communications changed when British Americans came to see the British nation as threatening British liberties in the Americas.

Other features of maritime communication endured. Rumors and news continued to be unstable categories that were hard to distinguish and that expressed British-American hopes and fears. Period actors knew this well. Rumors were fast and useful. These communications arrived through a process of ongoing revision and even reversals staggered over days, weeks, and months that confused the distinction between rumoring and hawking news. Rumors arrived via ships before printers caught up, ballads memorialized the events, and some of these ballads were printed.

Fears about French captivity and British impressment and captivity drove seamen's rumoring and news-mongering. Impressment and captivity made the anti-authoritarianism in pamphlets all-too-familiar and all-too-concrete for them and many other provincials. Patriots including the Sons of Liberty and Isaiah Thomas publicized the threat of impressment in their broadsides and newspapers. Most influentially, Thomas Paine's argument in *Common Sense* made abstract ideas come alive when his attack on monarchy and hereditary succession connected the biblical warning in Samuel that unjust kings would send a nation's children to war. He compared this injustice to the navy's "present mode of impressing men."

4. “Echoes Through the Town”:

Seamen’s Songs, Americanization, and Women in Port

There is little direct evidence of what early American seamen and women said when speaking with each other. Nevertheless, seamen did communicate verbally with women, not to mention other people in port, since seamen had complex economic and affective relationships with landladies, tavernkeepers, market women, sex workers, sweethearts, and wives, mothers, and children. This chapter analyzes these ephemeral spoken and lettered communications between American seamen and women and others in port. Seamen’s songs and verses document—by the fact of their existence and in the words they contain—that British American seamen communicated with port dwellers who did not voyage as far or as frequently as seamen, including women in their many occupations. (See, Figure 4. Schematic Diagram of Communication to and from Eighteenth-Century British American Seamen Documented in Songs, Verses, and Letters, on page 217).

This sketches some features of a maritime public where seamen and others related to a corpus of songs that expressed values and informal rules about what mattered, how to talk about what mattered, and how to disagree over what mattered. Among the cumulative changes to this maritime public during and after the 1760s, tensions grew between Anglicization and Americanization in seamen’s songs and verses. The songs and verses from England that New England seamen copied out expressed different attitudes to courtship, marriage, and women than the songs and verses that the New England seamen wrote themselves. The England-authored lines tended to express patriarchalism by valuing men’s attempts to exert power over women and dependents. The American-authored lines tended to

express sentimentalism by valuing reciprocity and expressions of emotion or affect in courtship and marriage. When these patriarchal and sentimental tendencies of Anglicization and Americanization grew together and in tension with each other, seamen saw on their pages and heard in their songs how Britain and America were different.

About half of the surviving songs that American seamen wrote out originated in the prints of England. These songs from England described seafaring and seafarers using generic, lay terms. Many appear in collections of England's broadside ballads and folk ballads. Many insinuated or outright said that people who did not usually work on vessels were not trustworthy and advised that men attempt to control women. The lyrics put into words distrust of courtship, marriage, and sex work. And, according to these lines, while England's sailors were at sea, they sent letters back to their wives and sweethearts ashore, women who they feared were feckless.

Unlike England's songs, the American-authored verses read as if the writers actually knew local geography and actually knew how to sail. The lyrics to these American-authored songs included British American place names on British American sea routes and used technical terms to describe sailing. Indexes and catalogs of England's ballads and broadsides usually do not include these verses. Moreover, these lines expressed sentimentalism that valued friendship in courtship and marriage. Seamen and their partners put this sentimentalism into words in their letters and verses.

Before the 1760s, American-authored songs reflected the routes of shorter whaling voyages. The place names in the lyrics were mainly on the American coast. Of these songs and verses, comparatively few came from the British prints. According to these songs and verses,

masculinity went along with the dangers of seafaring. This association continued for the rest of the century. Also, these lines described how New England sailors courted with letters, which memoirs corroborate.

Changes to these songs and verses during and after the long 1760s reflected how more British American vessels voyaged on more distant routes, especially in whaling. In addition to the local place names that continued to appear, lyrics included place names from the far North Atlantic and the South Atlantic. Both the proportion and the absolute number of songs derived from the prints of England increased. Sentimentalism increased in how American-authored verses spoke about women. Letter-writing became more prominent in courtship and marriage, and seamen wrote more about writing letters. Talk about how seamen informed town dwellers about disasters shows some of their aural communication that usually went unrecorded.

After 1775, these trends became even more prominent. Seamen called continental North America their “native land” more and more often. Lyrics saying how seamen informed port-dwellers about untimely deaths became more frequent. References to letter writing became more prominent in diaries, logbooks, and journals—for whalers, merchant seamen, and imprisoned prisoners of war. The lyrics spread new ideas about separate spheres for men and women and defended old ways of courting.

Summarizing, from the 1760s onwards, these British American seamen adopted England’s Hanoverian ideas about courtship, marriage, and women more and more even as they also expressed divergent, made-in-America attitudes about companionship. The emerging ideology of separate spheres of masculine and feminine, as lived in maritime economies, had contradictions from its very origins. One of these contradictions was that women and other

port dwellers in the supposedly feminine sphere on land participated in ephemeral communications of the supposedly masculine, maritime sphere. Too often, the record of this was as fleeting as a song.

I. Ship and Shore

When songs and verses from England became more prominent in seamen's writings, it meant they were becoming more Anglicized. John Murrin's Anglicization thesis names the paradox that the American colonies were never more British than immediately before the War of Independence. This very Britishness became the common ground for disparate colonies to form a political union. New England converged with England during the eighteenth century when state institutions centralized, laws commercialized, markets liberalized, religion became more heterogeneous, wealth and economic inequality grew, and politics became more fractious.¹² Refining these arguments, Richard Bushman argues that New Englanders did not just imitate but transformed English political culture: printers rarely printed local, English-style satire before 1750 but often wrote and print satire after 1763.³ Anglicization is a contrarian

¹ Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 11; Ignacio Gallup-Diaz et al., eds., *Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic*, 1st ed, Early American Studies (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); T. H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (October 1986): 467-99.

² T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xv-xvi; Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts*, 4, 253; Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 417-19, 421; Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 7; Murrin, "England and Colonial America," 15, 16-18; Shankman, "A Synthesis Useful and Compelling"; Raven, "The Importation of Books in the Eighteenth Century."

³ Richard L Bushman, "Caricature and Satire in Old and New England before the American Revolution," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 88 (1976): 34; See also, Thomas A. Foster, "Antimasonic Satire,

interpretation of longstanding stories about the origins of the American Revolution.⁴ In contrast, Jon Butler argues that by the early 1700s, a politically sophisticated, modernized American society. Unlike Europe's old order, colonists obsessed over authority and power when they saw the diversity of plantation slavery, economic accumulation, international trade, and religious toleration.⁵ Yet, histories of Anglicization and Americanization write as if the indispensable seamen and ships that shipped people, letters, prints, goods, and commodities between the colonies and to and from Great Britain were a perfect medium that informed one place about another without bias. In addition to circulating songs from England's prints themselves, American seamen also created new, American songs of their own.

Anglicization theses raise questions about whether English-style patriarchalism diminished and the status of women improved during the century. Arguably, eighteenth-century patriarchalism increased when converging discourses of law, religion, medicine, and politics organized power by gender and increasingly constrained women, slaves, servants, and children in the name of governing them by free men, both in the household and in politics.⁶ Cornelia Hughes Dayton represents arguments that patriarchalism waxed and the status of

Sodomy, and Eighteenth Century Masculinity in the 'Boston Evening-Post,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (January 2003): 172–73; See also, Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts*, 6–7.

⁴ cf. Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

⁵ Jon Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1–3.

⁶ e.g. Kenneth A. Lockridge, *On the Sources of Patriarchal Rage: The Commonplace Books of William Byrd and Thomas Jefferson and the Gendering of Power in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 27, 44–45, 101; Lisa Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1999), 8–10; Isaac, *Landon Carter's Uneasy Kingdom*; Thomas A. Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 23–97.

women waned. Dayton argues that when Connecticut's legal fraternity transformed the courts into a public sphere for litigating commercial disputes among bourgeois men, this excluded women from the access to justice they had once enjoyed.⁷ Others argue that patriarchalism diminished during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, not the status of women. Mary Beth Norton argues that more affectionate, more reciprocal household relations accompanied the rise of a masculine public sphere. This displaced seventeenth-century Filmerian political theory both that the political authority of Kings and the household authority of men originated in hereditary succession and the fifth commandment to honor the father.⁸ Kathleen Brown's third position is that the century's "softer" paternalism was still patriarchalism: gender organized Virginia's power relations even more than race did.⁹

Related arguments debate the interiority of early modern subjects. Did families on the edge of survival avoid emotions for each other, as Lawrence Stone and others argue, or did affection hold families together, as Nicole Eustace and many early Americanists argue?¹⁰ Instead of the women's many economic and political activities inside and beyond colonial households, later Republican Motherhood ideals told women their political power came from

⁷ Dayton, *Women before the Bar*, 13.

⁸ Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 401–5; Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by Their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 3–4.

⁹ Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4–5. 366.

¹⁰ Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Nicole Eustace et al., "AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 5 (December 2012): 1487–1531.

raising children into citizens.¹¹ So, prescriptions about a masculine public sphere never accurately described how early American women's economic and political actions exceeded any feminine private sphere. This chapter supplements studies of patriarchalism in law, politics, the household, and print, by analyzing how patriarchal opinions that American seamen lifted from England's prints and songs diverged from homespun ideas about courtship, marriage, and women.

Port women worked outside of any private, domestic sphere. Market-oriented work was ubiquitous among the middling and lower sorts of many trades, textile workers in the putting-out system early mills, and higglers, hucksters, market women.¹² Laurel Thatcher Ulrich argues that the female economy of textile production aided industrial textile production. Others argue that there was no sphere-based organization of economic activity, such as masculine production and feminine consumption. Ellen Hartigan O'Connor, for instance, argues that the pervasive women's economy was simply the economy at large in Charleston and Newport.¹³

¹¹ Laurel Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 5–6, 9, 14, 240–41; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 11–12.

¹² Karin A. Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca, NY ; London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 130–31, 134–35; Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Crane, *A Dependent People: Newport, Rhode Island in the Revolutionary Era*; Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand & Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1–2; Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 125, 138, 144, 151; Norton, *Separated by Their Sex*; Thomas Dublin, "Women, Work, and the Family: Female Operatives in the Lowell Mills, 1830-1860," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): 30, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3518953>; Laurel Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf : Distributed by Random House, 2001), 5.

¹³ Ulrich, *The Age of Homespun*, 5–8; Hartigan-O'Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*, 1–12, 190–91.

While women held ports together by working as tavernkeepers and shopkeepers, patriarchal authority and the gendering of work marginalized other women, and the ideology of separate spheres devalued women's work outside the household. These histories raise questions about whether the economic condition of women improved.¹⁴ Separate sphere ideology never matched the extent of women's lives, least of all in ports.

This analysis of seamen's communications intervenes in the history of maritime communications in a similar way to how analyses of women's production intervenes in the history of maritime economies. In both fields gender analysis shows how the maritime world bridged ship and shore. Critical maritime historians argue that gendered divisions of labor organized maritime economies since time immemorial.¹⁵ Masculine men worked on ship-board tasks, such as rendering whale blubber into oil, while feminine women worked on shore tasks, such as trading and reproductive labor.¹⁶ Having families on shore motivated Black and white

¹⁴ Elaine Forman Crane, *Ebb Tide in New England: Women, Seaports, and Social Change 1630-1800* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 5, 8; Seth Rockman, "Women's Labor, Gender Ideology, and Working-Class Households in Early Republic Baltimore," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 66 (1999): 185; Catherine Hall, *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 68; Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), xix; Jeanne Boydston, "The Woman Who Wasn't There: Women's Market Labor and the Transition to Capitalism in the United States," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16, no. 2 (1996): 205–6, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3124245>; Serena R. Zabin, *Dangerous Economies: Status and Commerce in Imperial New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 59.

¹⁵ Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, Gender Relations in the American Experience (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), xii.

¹⁶ Margaret S. Creighton, "Davy Jones' Locker Room: Gender and the American Whaleman, 1830-1870," in *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*, ed. Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, Gender Relations in the American Experience (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 121; Willeen G. Keough, *The Slender Thread: Irish Women on the Southern Avalon, 1750-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 10.

American seamen alike to work at sea and return to port.¹⁷ Longer, more distant, more capital-intensive voyages during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries changed expressions of gender, family, and sexuality, not to mention labor.¹⁸ Lisa Norling argues paternalism endured changing norms of gender, courtship, and family in New England and supported the growth of long-distance whaling. Quaker values of feminine industry and independence supported mid-century whaling. Later, revolutionary-era romantic values of love in marriages supported when the separation of men at sea and women on land resembled an ideal of separate spheres. Eventually, nineteenth-century separate sphere ideals of domesticity and companionate love supported families and the whaling industry during Pacific voyages that lasted years.¹⁹ This chapter builds on Norling's timeline but introduces a new argument about national differences by relating how Americanization and Anglicization grew together, alongside each other, in

¹⁷ Margaret Creighton, *Rites and Passages: The Experience of American Whaling, 1830-1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 162; Vickers, "Nantucket Whalemens in the Deep-Sea Fishery," 292; Bolster, "To Feel Like a Man," 1173; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783," 613, 616.

¹⁸ i.e., an increasing number of whaling and merchant voyages spent more time away on longer voyages to the Pacific and Asia, shipboard and portside sexuality changed, steam changed the rhythm of longer voyages with shorter legs between coaling stations, disparities increased between the capital owners of vessels and the laborers who worked on these vessels, and crews unionized for a family wage. Creighton, *Rites and Passages: The Experience of American Whaling, 1830-1870*; Creighton, "Davy Jones' Locker Room: Gender and the American Whaleman, 1830-1870," 135-37; Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women & the Whalefishery, 1720-1870*, Gender & American Culture (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 212-13; B.R. Burg, "Officers, Gentlemen, 'Man-Talk,' and Group Sex in the 'Old Navy,' 1870-1873," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 11 (2002): 439-56; Isaac Land, "'Sinful Propensities': Piracy, Sodomy, and Empire in the Rhetoric of Naval Reform," in *Discipline and the Other Body: Humanitarianism, Violence, and the Colonial Exception*, ed. Anupama Rao and Steven Pierce, n.d., 98, 111; Valerie Burton, "The Myth of Bachelor Jack: Masculinity, Patriarchy and Seafaring Labour," in *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour*, ed. Colin Howell and Richard J. Twomey (Fredericton, N.B.: Acadiensis Press, 1991), 179-98; For a contrasting view, see, Stark, *Female Tars*.

¹⁹ Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife*, 16-17, 47-50; Lisa Norling, "The Sentimentalization of American Seafaring: The Case of the New England Whalefishery, 1790-1870," in *Jack Tar in History: Essays in the History of Maritime Life and Labour*, ed. Colin D. Howell and Richard J. Twomey (Fredericton, N.B.: Acadiensis Press, 1991), 164-78.

England's songs warning seamen not to trust wives alongside British-American songs about frolics in nearby towns.

II. Songs and Verses from England and British America

In more than seventy songs and verses from the writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island sailors from 1730 to 1801, the dominant themes were, in descending order, courtship, the dangers of seafaring, religious devotion, decadence, and then a small number of songs that did not cluster under those themes (See Appendix: Songs and Verses). Half these songs and verses likely originated in British America. The Anglicizing of the songs that originated in England diverged from the Americanizing of the songs that British Americans composed themselves.

The songs were agents of Anglicization when American seamen received these verses through the transatlantic distribution of England's prints and oral culture. Booksellers and printers in British America imported, retailed, and reprinted so many prints from England that 45% of British book exports were to the colonies and British West Indies. Growth in these exports exceeded growth in the colonial population.²⁰ These exports thrived during the 1760s and 1770s, continued to some extent during the War of Independence, and resumed post-war.²¹ About half these songs and verses first appeared in England's prints or folk songs. There was no firm line between the print ballads and the oral-musical ballads because printers transcribed what we now call folk songs while ballad singers sang lyrics from broadsides and song slips. Indeed, the primary documentation of oral ballads is the print broadsides of England

²⁰ Raven, "The Importation of Books in the Eighteenth Century," 183.

²¹ Raven, 195.

and America. (See, Appendix: Songs and Verse).²² Directly or indirectly, many of the songs and verses British American seamen wrote down came from England's prints.

At the same time, an Americanized culture grew alongside an Anglicized culture because the songs and verses of British American seamen included many songs originating in North America. Sometimes the American authors actually wrote that they authored the song themselves, as Peleg Folger did when he wrote on the verses titled "Dominum Collaudinum" that these lines were "composed by Peleg Folger 1775." In these verses, Folger praised God and reflected on two nearly-fatal accidents he survived when whales stove his whaleboats and cast him into the ocean. Anthologists establish the American origins of other songs, such as the verses titled "A Whaling Song," that John Osborn of Cape Cod composed sometime before his death in 1753, seaman Abner Butler recorded in 1755, and seaman Christopher Pinkham recorded in 1764.²³ In 1842, William McCarty wrote that "famous" song "was for more than half a century on the tongue of every Cape Cod sailor, and it is still frequently heard in the Pacific."²⁴ The work of these anthologists is staggering.

On top of this, seamen left linguistic "fingerprints" on the songs they authored themselves. American-authored songs often mentioned specific voyages, named vessels,

²² The most comprehensive index of English traditional songs is the Roud Index, created by Steve Roud. In addition, the English Broadside Ballads Archive and the Bodleian's Broadside Ballads Online have catalog many thousands of broadside ballads. I used the Roud Index together with these databases to match lyrics to titles and identify which of the songs that appeared in American seamen's writings appeared first in England's prints. (See, Appendix Songs and Verses)

²³ Christopher Pinkham, Logbooks of the *Dolphin* 1763-1768, MHS, 1764.

²⁴ John Osborn, "132. A Whaling Song," in *Songs, Odes, & Other Poems, on National Subjects: Compiled from Various Sources, Part Second - Naval*, ed. William McCarty (Philadelphia: Published by Wm. McCarty, No. 27 North Fifth Street, 1842), 260n.

numbered dates, and named people instead of the unnamed and generic voyages, vessels, times, and people in many print ballads. Indeed, the songs often told tedious stories about tedious voyages. These stories described specific American nautical geographies, such as the sand bar at the entry into Nantucket Harbor, or American shipping routes, such as voyage to the Cape Verde islands to go whaling. Songs authored by sailors tended to include nautical terminology about reefing, sheeting, bending, and unbending topsails, mainsails, and so on. The American-authored songs do not appear in databases of England's prints, and either do not appear in the Roud Folksong Index or the Index only refers to Gale Huntington and Stuart Frank's anthologies of New England songs.²⁵ Impressionistically, the meter is less consistent than the meter of verses in Britain's prints. Overall, these songs read as if authors actually cared about British America and actually cared about how to sail.

Surviving English-authored songs were more ribald than American-authored songs. Examples include "The Miller's Daughter" or "Bonny Kate of Windsor." In a 1747 broadside of this ballad printed in England, the daughter rejects her suitors one after another: a squire, a lawyer, a soldier, a courtier, a sailor, a shopkeeper, a physician ("He was so used to clystering she told him to his face / he was always poking the pipe in the wrong place,") a tailor, a parson,

²⁵ Gale Huntington, *Songs the Whalemens Sang* (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1964); Gale Huntington, ed., *The Gam: More Songs the Whalemens Sang* (n.p.: Loomis House Press and Camso Music, 2014); Stuart M. Frank, *Sea Chanteys and Sailors' Songs: An Introduction for Singers and Performers and a Guide for Teachers and Group Leaders*, Kendall Whaling Museum Monograph Series 11 (Sharon, Mass.: Kendall Whaling Museum, 2000); Stuart M. Frank, *Songs of the Polly, 1795: A Garland of Songs, Ballads, and Ditties from Stephen Cahoon's Journal Aboard the Whaleship Polly of Gloucester, Massachusetts* (Sharon, Mass.: The Kendall Whaling Museum, 2001); Stuart M. Frank, *Jolly Sailors Bold: Ballads and Songs of the American Sailor Excavated from Whalemens' Shipboard Manuscripts in the Kendall Collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum* (East Windsor, N.J.: Camso Music, 2010).

and a teacher. The only one who satisfied her was a farmer.²⁶ In the American version that Abner Butler wrote out in 1755, the sailor, not the farmer, wins Kate's favor: "I knew him for a workman in grinding had good skill / To open wide my water gate and well supply my mill."²⁷ Many ribald verses appear in the Commonplace Book of English sailor Henry Tiffin and the songbook of Timothy Connor, an American seaman imprisoned at England's Fortin Prison during the War of Independence. London's Billingsgate fish market lent its name to salty language, and one of Tiffin's bawdy verses began, "Did you never hear of Billingsgate's confusion toll lol."²⁸ Sailors rated sex workers like navy ships: sixth rate, frigate, fireship, and so on, and one of Connor's lewd verses, titled a "Tar's Song," began "As I was walking through France's streets / A lovely frigate I change for to meet."²⁹ Both of these songs' lyrics continued the way you would expect. (Surprisingly, these songs and other sources do not appear to include references to same-sex sexuality. For the better-documented nineteenth century, Margaret Creighton found only three references to same-sex sexuality among American whalers, even though eighteenth-century Courts Martial document same-sex sexuality in the British navy).³⁰ England's songs were lewder than surviving American-authored songs.

²⁶ "Pretty Kate of Windsor, Or, the Miller's Daughter. To an Excellent Tune." London : Printed and Sold by W. and C. Dicey, in St. Mary Aldermary Church-yard, Bow-Lane, in Cheapside. Sold also at their Warehouse in Northampton, [1747?]. See also, Roud no. V7558.

²⁷ "Bonny Cate of Windsor," in Journal kept on board the Sloop *Success*, kept by Abner Butler, master Joseph Jenkins 1755-1756, NBWMRL KWM0916/15v; See also, Roud no. V7558.

²⁸ "Did you Never hear of BillingsGates Confusion Toll Lol" [Untitled song] in Henry Tiffin, "Commonplace Book, 1748-1776" (1776 1748), n.p., MSS 322, Phillips Library, Peabody-Essex Museum, Rowley, Mass.

²⁹ "A Tar's Song no 46th" in Carey, *Sailor's Songbag*, 128.

³⁰ Seth Stein LeJacq, "Buggery's Travels: Royal Navy Sodomy on Ship and Shore in the Long Eighteenth Century," *Journal for Maritime Research* 17, no. 2 (2015): 103–16; B. R. Burg, *Boys at Sea: Sodomy, Indecency, and Courts Martial in Nelson's Navy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

Seamen used songs from England's prints to warn each other to beware of all sorts of women who would take their money, especially workers in the sex trade. On June 26, 1755, during a whaling voyage and in 40° 35' N, about the latitude of New York or the Azores, Abner Butler wrote that "As in Sweet Slumber I was Laid," or "O England," was set to the "Tune of Monstrous Women."³¹ Variations on this same song appear in English broadsides from the late seventeenth century titled "A Prospective Glass for Christians" and in English song slips from the late nineteenth century, titled "Proud England." The lyrics warned against trusting other people, especially women,

Some men will say the crow is not black they flatter before your face
They will cut your throat behind your back and that in a [*illeg.*] pace
Their smiles will quickly turn to a frown and do what they can to mow you down
They will ruin a neighbor for less than a crown
O England sorrowful England what will this world come to

The brunt of the song's critique fell on women, especially sex workers. In seventeenth-century English broadside's nine stanzas, two stanzas lamented the "folly" of sex work: one about the men who "oftentimes embrace a whore / and ruin an honest wife," the next writing that "Young harlots do like porters ply, / at every turning down, / And when a cully do's draw nigh, / their fare is but half a crown." A third stanza criticized women for alleged pridefulness and vanity: "Their necks are naked, their breasts open wide, / Black patches, now powdered and painted beside" American seamen took in these attitudes.

Seamen passed around "The Sailor's Resolution," a song from England that celebrated the sex trade. "The Sailor's Resolution" cheers on sailors who spend their prize money on

³¹ Butler, "Vill the merry weaver, & Charity the Chamber-maid [...]" [London]: Printed for P. Brooksby' at the Golden Ball, near the Hospital-Gate, in VWest-smithfield. [~1672-1696]. See also, Roud no. V9424.

women in port, “And Moll, and Kate, and Nancy / Shall roll in Louis d’Ors We’ll spend our wages freely, boys, And then to sea for more.” Both Timothy Connor, privateer imprisoned in England, and Henry Tiffin, the navy sailor from England, wrote out bawdier versions of the “Sailor’s Resolution” about sex and sex work.³² Peter Pease’s transcription of “Ships in the Ocean” that first appeared in British prints concluded with the same line,

We value not our riches
We value not our stores
We spend our money on the pretty girls
And go to sea for more

These songs from England warned readers and listeners that women lightened sailors' purses and that the sailors enjoyed it anyway. The songs British-Americans seamen wrote themselves were more sentimental than that when it came to women.

III. Midcentury before the 1760s

Certain American-authored songs from before the 1760s had lyrics about the dangers of voyaging in coastal North America – but usually not farther abroad than that. During a 1755 voyage, William Pease’s wrote out John Osborn’s “A Whaling Song,” the year was 1755, and Pease was in 37° 25' N, about the latitude of Williamsburg, Virginia. The verses described a voyage from “our dear native land” of Cape Cod to the Newfoundland’s Banks where seamen faced the dangers of whaling.³³ Butler’s 1755 “Come all you Noble Semen Bold,” narrated the voyage of a brig from South Carolina bound for Boston that was wrecked on the Isle of Norman’s Land (Noman’s Land) off Martha’s Vineyard on February 19-20, 1755. This ballad

³² “A New Song No 42,” in Carey, *Sailor’s Songbag*, 116; “A Burlesk on how Little [sic] Do you Know,” in Tiffin, “Commonplace Book, 1748-1776,” n.p.

³³ “When Spring Returns with Western Gails,” in Butler, 916/13.

appears to be a set to the English melody of “Admiral Benbow.” Butler’s version opens with the same line as Admiral Benbow, “Come all you noble seamen bold / and unto me give ear [unto me give ear]” then, similar to Admiral Benbow, locates a feat of sailor’s courage at a point in time. In the English ballad, Benbow engaged the French off Cape St. Marta northeast of Cartagena on the Spanish Main in 1702. In Butler’s version, a storm wrecked a vessel on “the 19 day of February last.” In both songs, the protagonists faced death. Benbow fought superior French forces in a gale. After chain shot took off both his legs, Benbow called for a cot “that the enemy I might face till I die, till I die.” In Butler’s version, seventeen men with “aching hearts” faced a storm on a brig and “expected there to die [there to die].”³⁴ Even when drawing melodies from England, American-authored songs had local details from American coastal voyages.

These American-authored songs describe how New England seamen courted women by visiting them on shore and sending letters to their families. These visits and letters connected maritime communication to women. When on voyages to other coastal towns, Benjamin Bangs noted going to frolics where men and women danced, drank, and made music.³⁵ During a 1745 voyage to Casco Bay, Bangs and the other crew “all went to Kennebunk to see the girls and

³⁴ “Come all you Nobel Semen Bold,” in Butler, 916/14r-v; Carleton Sprague Smith, “Broadships and their Music in Colonial America,” in *Music in Colonial Massachusetts 1630-1820 Volume I: Music in Public Places* (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1980), 366.

³⁵ On frolics (frolics) see, Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 43: “Sexually laced sociability, dubbed ‘frolics,’ tugged at even the straight laces of John Adams in 1760. ‘Every Room, kitchen. Chamber was crowed with People. Negroes with a fiddle. Young Fellows and Girls dancing in the Chamber as if they would kick the floor thro. . . . Fiddling and dancing, in a Chamber full of young fellows and Girls, a wild Rable of both sexes, and all Ages, in the lower Room singing dancing fiddling, drinking flip and Toddy, and drams.—This is the Riot and Revelling of Taverns And of Thayers [the name of the tavern owner] frolics.’”

stumbled back in the night like fools.”³⁶ At Nantucket in 1744, Bangs wrote out an original “Ditty ... On one of our Young Men’s Courtship with a Lass in this Place.” He said that a local Nantucket woman rebuffed a crewmember who propositioned spending the night with her. The young man parted with a heavy heart, and the next morning the woman sent for him to drink tea together before the man’s vessel left. Afterward, the two exchanged letters conveyed by a friend:

Then to each other they did send
Love letters by a faithful friend
It was not only thrice and four
But are preparing to send more

To pay this friend for all this trouble
They promise him for to pay double
And for these pains and carrying news
They do give him a pair of shoes.³⁷

These ballads document British American sailors courting partners with the help of friends and family who conveyed letters.

Young men often sent these letters to the families of women, not the women themselves. Nicole Eustace argues that this semi-public, semi-private approach to courtship avoided the embarrassment of elite young men negotiating directly with women.³⁸ Ashley Bowen sent letters while courting his first wife, Dorothy Chadwick, of Boxford. Before they even met, a vision of Chadwick came Bowen in a dream while he was at sea. This dream convinced

³⁶ Bangs, *Diary*, vol. 1, 11 (Jan. 18-19, 24, 1743/4); Bangs, *Diary*, vol. 1, 36 (Oct, 14 1745).

³⁷ “A Ditty made on board the sloop Rebekah at Nantucket May 24th 1744: on one of our young mens’ Courtship with a Lass in this place,” in Bangs, *Diary*, vol. 1, n.p. [111-112], (May 24, 1744).

³⁸ Nicole Eustace, “‘The Cornerstone of a Copious Work’: Love and Power in Eighteenth-Century Courtship,” *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 3 (Spring 2001): 517–18.

Bowen to marry Chadwick. As a consequence of this conviction, Bowen negotiated with his friend Benjamin Russell to bring a letter of introduction to the mother of Dorothy Chadwick, Mehitable Chadwick. After meeting Dorothy Chadwick, Bowen continued to live in Marblehead and was often at sea. Bowen sent letters by his family members to Chadwick in Boxford, once from Salem to Boxford, via Boxford resident Benjamin Porter and Porter's son.³⁹ When Bowen visited his sister in Andover, he conveyed courtship letters himself on behalf of Russel, who courted Dorothy Chadwick's sister. This private letter conveyance connected seamen to women and families.

IV. Crisis during the 1760s until 1775

Both Anglicization and Americanization intensified in the songs and verses Massachusetts and Rhode Island sailors recorded from 1760 to 1775. Compared to prior years, both a greater absolute number and a greater proportion of these songs were from England's oral-musical culture or broadside ballads from England. Considering eighteen songs and verses in Massachusetts and Rhode Island seamen's writings from before 1760, five or six were from England or about one third. Considering 29 songs and verses from 1760 to 1775, at least fifteen or sixteen were from England, so at least half and perhaps more (See Appendix, Songs and Verses, Table 2 and Table 3).

These seamen participated in a transatlantic oral-musical culture and transatlantic print culture because at least half of their extant forecastle songs appeared as songs and broadside ballads in England that warned them to distrust courtship (See Appendix B Songs and Verses,

³⁹ Bowen, *Journals*, 48–49.

Table 3). London's *Gentleman's Magazine* printed "Modesty, a Dissembler" in 1745.⁴⁰ Twenty-four years later, in 1769, Peter Pease copied out these verses. The song told listeners not to believe blushing maidens who said they wanted to wait until marriage before they "prove the unknown pleasures of a bride."⁴¹ Similarly, England's broadsides printed "the Turkey Factor in Foreign Parts," about thwarted love, long before Pease transcribed the piece.⁴² In 1774, while whaling on the brig *Polly* off the Guinea coast in latitude 7° 50' N, Samuel Atkins transcribed "The Seaman's Complaint for his Unkind Mistress of Wapping." The navy was the mistress of Wapping, London's sailor town, who impressed the said sailor and took him away from his sweetheart, who he had promised to marry, breaking her heart. In the song, the sailor sent his sweetheart letters whenever he could, yet never heard back from her.⁴³ Pease also copied "William Taylor," a broadside ballad about the navy impressing a sailor on his wedding day.⁴⁴ These songs from England tied these seamen to England's oral-musical culture and prints. These sailors were especially fond of songs about how impressment separated seamen from their wives and sweethearts, a complaint of English seamen the world over, and a concern that all New Englanders increasingly shared with seamen (see, Chapter 2).

⁴⁰ "Modesty a Dissembler," in Pease, Logbook, NBWMRL ODHS 0458A, 4.

⁴¹ Gunapistos, "Modesty A Dissembler," *The Gentleman's Magazine* 15 (March 1745): 155 Don C. Shelton suggests that Gunapistos may have been Tobias Smollett.

⁴² Pease, 132-136; EBBA 31369.

⁴³ "New Song," in Samuel Atkins, Journal on the brig *Polley* 17 Mar. 1- 16 Jan. 1775. Providence Public Library Nicholson Whaling Log Collection, no. 562, n.p.

⁴⁴ "William ware a faith Lover," in Pease, 140-141; Roud no. 158; Laws N11.

Conversely, the American-authored songs and verses expressed the Americanisation of seamen. Compared to the American-authored songs from before 1760, the American-authored songs of 1760 to 1775 contained geographic references from a greater area, which means the content of songs changed alongside growth in the range of American shipping and whaling.⁴⁵ American-authored verses before 1760 tended to refer to places in coastal North America and the West Indies. When more American vessels voyaged everywhere during the 1760s, American-authored verses referred more frequently to farther parts of the oceans, the Arctic, Africa, and South America. When Peter Pease wrote out "A new Song in the year 1770," he was in longitude 57° N, in the Labrador Sea, on a brig bound from Dartmouth, Mass., to the Davis Strait.⁴⁶ Rueben Pinkham's verses titled "January 23rd 1775" narrated the whaling voyage of a sloop and a schooner that "lay at the Bar" of Nantucket harbor.⁴⁷ In October of that same year, Rueben Pinkham's "Come All Good People Young and Old I will Unto You Tell" narrated a similar "melancholy" whaling voyage from Nantucket to the Guinea whaling grounds. During these years, New England whaling turned to the South Atlantic.⁴⁸ Christopher Pinkham's 1764 "New Whale Song," set to the tune of "The Parliament Woe," narrated Pinkham's whaling voyage of "6000 miles or so" that crossed Nantucket Bar on the way to the Southwest gales, squalls, hail,

⁴⁵ See, "The Evolution of the American Whale Fishery, 1650-1900," in Creighton, *Rites and Passages: The Experience of American Whaling, 1830-1870*.

⁴⁶ Peter Pease, "Brig Mairmaid Logbook" (1770), 144, ODHS 0458C, New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, Mass.

⁴⁷ "Jenewary 2th3d 1775," in Rueben Pinkham, "Ruben Pinkham His Book 1773, 1783" (1783 1773), n.p., Log 3, Schooner Eagle, Phillips Library, Peabody-Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

⁴⁸ "Com all good people young and olde I will unto you tell," in Pinkham, n.p. (October 16, 1774).

and cold of the “coast of Chile,” where their troubles only got worse.⁴⁹ When the range of American voyages grew, their songs named places farther away. These songs became more Americanised by describing changes in the American experience during the 1760s and 1770s.

Seamen increased their emphasis on the pains of separation in their American-authored lines from the 1760s and 1770s, focusing their attention on sentimentality in courtship, marriage, and gender relations. During these years, women used the increased frequency of American voyages on established routes to send letters to their absent husbands, as the wife of Christopher Pinkham did in 1764 when she sent him a letter by the master of a brig. Pinkham was whaling when the brig’s shipmaster, named Jenkins, found him near Fayal, in the Azores, and gave him the letter. The wife’s letter, dated three weeks prior, said that all were well back on Martha’s Vineyard, which the shipmaster affirmed.⁵⁰

Sentimentality stirred during the harder absences of longer voyages. On a 1767 voyage of the schooner *Leopard*, master Bartholomew Putnam, John Hodges, Jr., recounted a dream about missing his beloved. His verses about this dream started with the line, “one night I dream I lay most easy down by murmuring river /when lovely banks they were spread with daisies.” In 1765, Thomas Lee kept a souvenir of Fenning’s *Ready Reckoner* that Jenney Arechabala of Bilbao gave to him.⁵¹ In 1769, Peter Pease wrote out lines about longing for absent love that included the following:

⁴⁹ “The New Whale Song,” in Christopher Pinkham, *Log of Various Voyages, 1754-1764*, n.p., Pre-Revolutionary Diaries Microfilm, MHS.

⁵⁰ Christopher Pinkham, *Log of the Dolphin, 1763-1768*, MHS, Jul. 11, 1764.

⁵¹ Log 880, Schooner Essex, Kept by Thomas Lee. Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass., July 18, 1765.

It never was in my nature
A woman to disdain the [torn]
I cannot blame these w[oman]
Although they prove so [torn]
A man is made to crave [torn]
A woman to deny [torn].⁵²

Similarly, Rueben Pinkham's January 1775 verses, "The Farewell to Rachael Wilson," memorialized the death of Wilson, "Absence cannot erase thee from my heart / For years to come if years to come be mine."⁵³ In these verses and others, more British American seamen, especially whalers, mourned their missing sweethearts. Their expressions of sentimentality increased.

Of course, it was not all love-struck newlyweds and letters from home, for seamen and their wives used voyages to separate bed and board before or instead of divorce.⁵⁴ In December 1760, Stoddard Lawton, a mariner of Tiverton, Rhode Island, married to Deborah Lawton, sailed from Newport as a hand on a sloop for Maryland. The sloop stayed in Maryland until May 1761 then returned to Newport. Lawton, however, remained in Maryland. Later that year, in November, Lawton's erstwhile crewmate Borden Willcox arrived in Maryland and spent eight months there along with Lawton. When Willcox returned to Rhode Island, he left Stoddard in Maryland. In November of 1762, Deborah Lawton gave birth to a child who could

⁵² "A Love Song in the 1769 &c" Peter Pease, "Sloop Nelle Logbook" (1769), 149, ODHS 0458A, New Bedford Whaling Museum Research Library, Mass.; For the torn words, see, Huntington, *Songs the Whalemen Sang*, 293.

⁵³ "The Farewell to Rachael Wilson" in Pinkham, "Ruben Pinkham His Book 1773, 1783," n.p.

⁵⁴ Nancy F. Cott, "Divorce and the Changing Status of Women in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, 33, no. 4 (October 1976): 588–89.

not have been Stoddard Lawton's issue, given his two-year absence.⁵⁵ In January 1763, Lawton finally returned to Rhode Island after more than two years of absence.⁵⁶ They divorced a few months later.⁵⁷ Similar, lengthy absences followed by unexplained children preceded numerous other Rhode Island divorces.⁵⁸

Alarms about disaster spread virally. Rueben Pinkham sang about rescuers who brought survivors of a wrecked schooner into port: after they "did relate the dismal scenes" "amongst their friends," "a general cry was heart all o'er." When the wives, parents, sisters, "and friends that did the story hear," the friends launched a vessel to rescue any remaining survivors.⁵⁹ In another song (perhaps about the same wreck), Pinkham tells of a town that mustering a rescue mission after a vessel brought word of a wreck. "But they did soon return again with heavy news to tell," and wives and parents grieved their drowned family.⁶⁰ These songs record how ephemeral alarms about wrecks flew from seamen through ports.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Lillis Briggs Evidence, *Lawton v. Lawton*, Newport Superior Court, March Term 1763, Judicial Archives, RISCJRC.

⁵⁶ Borden Willcox evidence, *Lawton v. Lawton*, Newport Superior Court, March Term 1763, Judicial Archives, RISCJRC.

⁵⁷ Petition of Stoddard Lawton and Citation for Deborah Lawton, *Lawton v. Lawton*, Newport Superior Court, March Term 1763, Judicial Archives, RISCJRC.

⁵⁸ Sheldon Cohen, "The Broken Bond: Divorce in Providence County, 1749-1809," *Rhode Island History* 44, no. 3 (August 1985): 72. E.g. Petition of Elizabeth Maccollock, *Maccollock v. Maccollock*, Newport Superior Court, March 1774 in Jane Fletcher Fiske, *Gleanings from Newport Court Files 1659-1783* (Boxford, Mass.: Jane Fletcher Fiske, 1998), no. 1157. *Brown v. Brown*, Newport Superior Court, March 1765, Judicial Files, RISCJRC; Fry v. Fry, Newport Superior Court, 1762 in Fiske, no. 953.

⁵⁹ "Jenewary 2th3d 1775," in Pinkham, "Ruben Pinkham His Book 1773, 1783," n.p.

⁶⁰ "Com all good people young and olde I will unto you tell," in Pinkham, October 16, 1774.

⁶¹ On alarms, see Lubken, "Early Tower Bells."

V. Nation Formation after 1775

Political geography changed after 1775, and American-authored lyrics referred more often to mariners' "native land," even as seamen continued to borrowing other, Anglicized verses from England and the prints. Around 1781, Eunice Swaine of Nantucket copied a typical American-authored song into her journal – or perhaps her suitor or husband did it. The song narrated a voyage that "left our native land," memorialized the dangers of sailing in storms and outrunning enemies, and deployed a technical vocabulary of sheeting, reefing, and shortening sails.⁶² Swain copied another song from the journal of a 1781 voyage of the brig *Lark* shared these same signs of a song written by someone from coastal America who knew the dangers of seafaring and knew how to sail. In that song, a French vessel captured "Boston bound" seamen on their way to their "native land," but privateers took the French vessel prize and sent the prize to Salem with the seamen on board.⁶³ "Native land" lyrics became more frequent.

"Native land" lyrics were a staple of seamen's postwar songs. "A New Song Made" by Stephen Cahoon on the Ship *Polly* of 1795 had all the signs of a locally-authored song. It referred to "our native shore" and used plenty of sailing terminology: "We got up a foretopmast and topgallant mast likewise / Set a single reefed topsail unto all our great joys." It referred directly to a specific voyage of a named vessel on a particular date that touched in named ports: the ship *Olive Branch* sailed on August 30, made Cape Cod, anchored "under the Cape Shore," later "anchored in Cape Ann Harbor," the next day anchored "all under the high Land," before unbending (unfastening) the sails and being delayed for at least five weeks until

⁶² Eunice Swaine, "When wee Set sail and left our Native Land" in Journal, n.p.

⁶³ Eunice Swaine, "Come all you Noble Semon bold" in journal of the Brig *Lark*, 1781, n.p.

October 6 when “we left our native shore,” and sailed from Cape Ann.⁶⁴ The “New Song Made” exemplifies how seamen sang about their voyages in an Americanized Atlantic geography.

These American-authored lyrics give otherwise-rare evidence of how seamen communicated news with family in their towns, apparently aurally. Stephen Cahoon’s “A Stove Boat” tells how a whaling vessel informed parents that their whaling son had died, “ But have got this news to carry / Unto aged parents fear / Methinks I see them full a crying / While this dreadful news they hear.” The “The Drowned Miner,” from the *Dolphin*, 1790, tells of a town learning that a seaman had died, “‘Tis dismal news we have of late / That echoes through the town / Of this young man’s unhappy fate / It soared all around.”⁶⁵ This echoes soared all around by face-to-face word of mouth, by a town crier, by drums and bells, or in print.⁶⁶

This news echoed through the town because the seamen were working men who got wet. They worked and lived in these settlements much as their neighbors did. Stephen Cahoon’s “Song of Whaling” ended when the vessel of the voyage made the wharf at Nantucket and the crew went back to work on the land, “When she is well moored, we will jump on shore / And there we will work a while.”⁶⁷ When these songs memorialized mourning widows, children, mothers, fathers, and friends of deceased mariners, it testified to the affection that

⁶⁴ Cahoon, “A New Song Maide,” n.p.

⁶⁵ “The Drowned Miner”, in Huntington, *The Gam*, 128–30.

⁶⁶ Barbara Lambert and M. Sue Ladr, “Appendix B: Civic Announcements: The Role of Drums, Criers and Bells in the Colonies,” in *Music in Colonial Massachusetts, 1630-1820: A Conference Held by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, May 17 and 18, 1973*, ed. Colonial Society of Massachusetts, vol. II: Music in Homes and Churches, 2 vols., Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, v. 54 (Boston : [Charlottesville]: The Society ; Distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 1985), 871–933; Lubken, “Early Tower Bells.”

⁶⁷ Cahoon, “Song of Whaling,” n.p. Cahoon’s description resembles that of Richard Henry Dana, in the nineteenth century.

tied town-dwellers to seamen. In another late-century song about a Martha's Vineyard shipwreck,

Six men belonged to Edgartown
They left four widows in distress
And parents did of their sons mourn
And twenty-six little children fatherless⁶⁸

Songs record the largely-overlooked sentimental or affective ties of seamen to the people and places of the northeast.

In twenty-five songs during and after the War of Independence, at least thirteen appeared in England's prints, at least two first appeared in American prints, and seven seem to be original compositions. Continuing the pre-war tendency, these British-American seamen copied a subset of England's verses about a few themes: courtship, marriage, and women, the dangers of seafaring, decadence, and devotion (See Appendix B: Songs and Verses) and they swapped sailors into lyrics about England's farmers and soldiers. The saucy edition of "The Nightingale" or "The Soldier and his Lady" that W. E. Tillinghast of Rhode Island wrote during a Pacific voyage from Providence to Canton substituted "sailor, for "soldier." The sailor took a maid by her waist, drew a "fiddle" out of his trousers played her such a tune my boys made the valley to sing."⁶⁹ Early national seamen continued singing Anglicized verses about courtship, marriage, and women.

⁶⁸ "Shipwreck near Gay Head, January 14, 1782," in Huntington, *The Gam*, 87–91.

⁶⁹ I thank Kim Nusco for this reference and her encouragement. See, A. Brown Tillinghast, "A Song," in W.E. Tillinghast, "Account Book, 1795-1796," n.p., Tillinghast papers, JCB L W.E.T. Tillinghast. Leslie Tobias Olsen, "Racy Songs Found by Kim Nusco in the JCB Business Papers," *I Found It at the JCB* (blog), November 2010, http://www.brown.edu/Facilities/John_Carter_Brown_Library/1%20found%20it%20JCB/nov10.html.

Separate spheres ideology gained influence as Anglicization grew and old ways of courting fell out of favor. The first use of “separate sphere” language in British American prints came from Wiltshire poet Ester Clark (née Lewis). Clark printed “Advice to a Young Lady Lately Married” in the *Bath Journal* using the pseudonym Sylvia. A Charleston printer published the “Advice” by 1752. Eunice Swaine of Nantucket transcribed it after 1776 with a note saying to follow the instructions “to married bliss.” Someone from the *Dolphin* of Nantucket copied the verses in 1790. American printers, women, and seamen read this advice.

The “Advice to a Young Lady” and other verses like it stated the new gender ideology of separate spheres. Lisa Norling, Timothy Breen, and Mary Beth Norton each identify this Clark’s verses as a milestone in American ideas, for it includes one of the earliest references to “spheres” in connection to women alongside talk about the “province” of the “fair” sex. These ideas about a feminine private sphere caught on during the eighteenth-century reconfiguration of gender in England.⁷⁰ In Clark’s lines,

Small is the province of a wife,
And narrow is her sphere in life;
Within that sphere to move aright
Should be her principal delight;

In the new ideal, the home was supposed to be a residence of true happiness for the husband, where the wife, “With cheerful chat his cares beguile.” The stated objective was to achieve a love of friendship: Swaine’s version adds, “To charm his reason dress your mind / Till love shall be with friendship joined.” Other mariners also expressed this ideology of a marriage of partnership and friendship. While Thomas Nicholson was at sea in 1790, he wrote an acrostic

⁷⁰ Norton, *Separated by Their Sex*, 6–7.

poem in honor of his wife, Hannah Otis Nicholson. He thanked God for “Hannah thou gavest me for a partner and wife,” and praised Otis Nicholson as a “Cheerful and happy friend in mutual love.”⁷¹ Unlike earlier verses about deception and distrust, a new sentimentality was afoot in what seamen said about women and marriage.

The work and politics of women never fit into this imaginary, small world. Nowhere was this truer than ports where seafaring took men away, often permanently. Newport, Charleston, Philadelphia, and Boston had higher proportions of female-headed households than rural areas.⁷² After the Seven Years War, 20% of Philadelphia households were female-headed, and 25% of Boston households.⁷³ Port women undertook vast responsibilities as deputy husbands, *femes soles*, and so much more, especially widows and mariners’ wives.⁷⁴ Karin Wulf that found Philadelphia women in 1775 worked in all sorts of occupations: retailers, booksellers, dram shop and tavern operators, hucksters, shopkeepers, bakers, distillers, glovers, mantuamakers, sieve-makers, soap boilers, spinners, tailors, tinkers, upholsterers, boarding-house keepers, innkeepers, laborers, midwives, schoolmistresses, and washerwomen.⁷⁵ A separate sphere did not describe their lives, not at all.

Seamen and printers alike participated in made-in-America controversies about old ways of courtship by bundling. Suitors and women who bundled spent the night together in

⁷¹ “An Acrostick wrote at Sea June 17’ 1790,” in Thomas Nicholson, *Thomas Nicolson navigation and logbooks, 1766-1813*, Ms. N-590.

⁷² See, Hartigan-O’Connor, *The Ties That Buy: Women and Commerce in Revolutionary America*.

⁷³ Wulf, *Not All Wives*, 15, 97–98.

⁷⁴ Wulf, 97–98.

⁷⁵ Wulf, 130–35.

bed, where they kept each other warm while getting to know each other. They were supposed to remain clothed to encourage chastity, and sometimes parents divided them with a “bundling board.” Bundling boards notwithstanding, some women gave birth nine months later. Many New Englanders tolerated pre-marital sexuality during the permissive 1700s when 30-40% of brides were pregnant at marriage.⁷⁶ Others, including New Lights preacher Jonathan Edwards, opposed bundling, and popular toleration of bundling declined over the century. Anti-bundling broadsides printed in Massachusetts included “A New Bundling Song: Or a Reproof to those Young Country Women, Who Follow that Reproachful Practice, and to their Mothers for Upholding them therein.”⁷⁷ On the other side, Boston printer Nathaniel Coverly, Jr. published a pro-bundling broadside ballad titled “A New song in Favour of Courting.” In 1786, Connecticut schoolteacher Israel Perkins recorded a now-missing edition of Coverly’s ballad, and whaler Stephen Cahoon copied the song in 1795: Perkins and Cahoon knew Coverly’s pro-bundling song.⁷⁸ Coverly argued that the bible did not say anything against bundling and, besides, it

⁷⁶ e.g., Bangs, Diary, vol. 1, 79; Bangs, Diary, vol. 2, 40-41; Adams, Diary vol. 2, 30, Feb 2 1759; Adams, Diary vol. 3, Spring and Summer 1759, 49; Adams diary vol. 17, 12, 25 April - 14 1771; Abner Sanger, *Very Poor and of a Lo Make: The Journal of Abner Sanger*, ed. Lois K. Stabler (Portsmouth, N.H.: Peter E. Randall, 1986), 275, 285, 318, 356; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich and Lois K. Stabler, “‘Girling of It’ in Eighteenth-Century New Hampshire,” in *Families and Children: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife: Annual Proceedings 1985*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1987), 24–36; David T. Courtwright, “New England Families in Historical Perspective,” in *Families and Children: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife: Annual Proceedings 1985*, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1987), 11–23.

⁷⁷ “A New Bundling Song: Or A Reproof to Those Young Country Women, Who Follow That Reproachful Practice, and to Their Mothers for Upholding Them Therein” (Boston, circa 1810), <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/thomasballads/items/show/170>.

⁷⁸ Cahoon, Henry Reid Stiles, “The Whore on the Snow Crust,” in *Bundling: Its Origin, Progress, and Decline in America* (Albany: Knickerbocker Publishing Company, 1871); “A New Song in Favour of Courting,” *Isaiah Thomas Broadside Ballads Project* (blog), accessed February 20, 2020, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/thomasballads/items/show/173>; “A New Song in Favour of Courting,” in *Isaiah Thomas Broadside Ballads Project* (Boston: Printed and Sold by Nathaniel Coverly, Jun., n.d.), <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/thomasballads/items/show/173>.

made no difference whether suitors visited by the fire or in the bed so long as they stayed dressed. Seamen embedded in this local print controversy sang about being embedded with their sweethearts.

Both Anglicizing patriarchalism and Americanizing sentimentalism grew in mariner's songs about courtship, marriage, and women. Letters also became more sentimental. Mid-century letters appended cursory greetings for wives. Late-century letters were effusive and emotional. When Joseph Wyer wrote to his wife in Massachusetts from Lisbon in 1797, he greeted his girls and sons-in-law and declared his love to his wife. His extensive update told her about his business, health, family happenings, and intention to send a letter sooner via his brother.⁷⁹ He put into words this new type of marriage grounded in household economics and friendship alike.

VI. Diverging American and British Songs

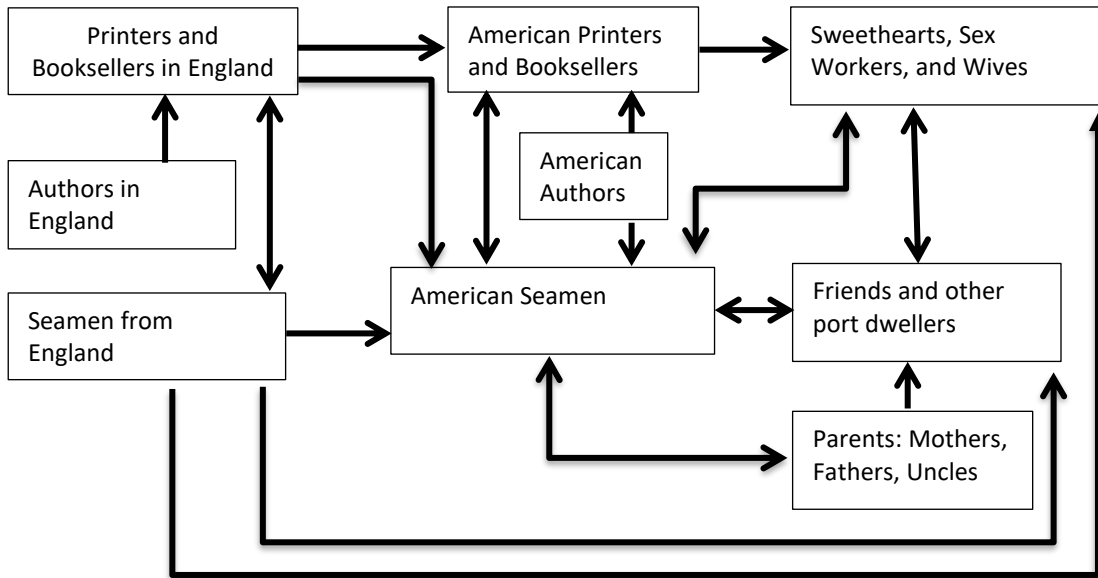
Mariners' songs and verses document how women and others in port participated in ephemeral maritime communication and changes that accumulated in how seamen talked about women, courtship, and marriage. British American seamen expressed homespun, sentimental attitudes in American-authored songs that grew alongside longer and longer voyages. These attitudes diverged from the patriarchal attitudes in songs and verses from England that grew in absolute number and as a proportion of all songs seamen copied out. These expressions of Anglicized and Americanized attitudes both grew without one advancing at the other's expense. These songs and verses document how ephemeral communication

⁷⁹ Joseph Wyer to wife [Margaret (Peggy) Pinkham Tupper Coffin Wyer], August 18, 1797, Wyer, Joseph, Box 1, Folder 7, Item 8, Nantucket Atheneum.

“echoed through the town.” Seamen and others read, heard, transformed, and passed on songs about what their “native land” meant.

VII. Figures and Tables

Figure 4. Schematic Diagram of Communication to and from Eighteenth-Century British American Seamen Documented in Songs, Verses, and Letters



Note: This diagram illustrates only the primary source evidence this chapter documents

Table 7. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1740-1801

Theme	1740-1759		1760-1775		1776-1801		All	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage*	Number	Percentage*	Number	Percentage*
Courtship/Marriage	6	33%	15	52%	15	56%	34*	47%
Danger	2	11%	8	28%	6	26%	16	22%
Devotional	4	22%	2	7%	3	11%	9	13%
Decadence	3	17%	1	3%	1	4%	5	7%
Other	3	17%	4	14%	4	11%	11	15%
Total Number	18		29*		27*		72*	

* Does not sum to 100% because two songs appeared in sources from two periods and three songs had two themes.

5. Politics by Other Means: Maritime Communication in Massachusetts and Labrador during the Imperial Crisis

When Ezra Stiles visited Cape Cod in 1760, this Congregationalist minister and future president of Yale College found Captain Henry Atkins of Truro regaling youngsters there with tall tales about the sea. In one yarn, Atkins claimed that one time there were so many whales in Provincetown harbor that someone could walk across their backs all the way to Truro, a span of seven miles.¹ Atkins was both entertaining and informing; he edged listeners into reverie when he told them about the world of the sea. For a time, Atkins figured as a conduit between Massachusetts and the North. As early as 1733, he brought a polar bear from Davis Strait to exhibit in Boston.² By 1758, he had the ears of both the Governor of Massachusetts and the Governor of Newfoundland when the two officials raced to regulate Labrador after Louisburg surrendered in 1758, Quebec surrendered in 1759-60, and Britain began to claim what had once been Île-Royale and New France. During these years, more New England vessels voyaged faster to the fisheries via the Gulf of St. Lawrence, increasing New England's knowledge of the North and the capacity of the Massachusetts government to regulate provincials who went there. These changes to how governors used maritime communication to regulate British subjects in the Massachusetts fisheries and Inuit trade in Labrador were among a number of cumulative changes in the significance of maritime communications during the long 1760s. The

¹ Ezra Stiles, *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Miscellanies of Ezra Stiles, D.D., LL.D., 1755-1794, with a Selection from His Correspondence*, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1916), 168-69. Stiles, 168-69.

² *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Mar. 8, 1733).

agents of these maritime communications who represented and misrepresented Labrador in Massachusetts included Capt. Henry Atkins and ship officers like him as well as common sailors, privateers, fishermen, and whalers.

This chapter asks how maritime communication by seamen such as Atkins mediated attempts by the governors of Massachusetts and Newfoundland to regulate Massachusetts provincials in Labrador. Labrador was the northernmost part of Newfoundland's government. There, imperial, provincial, and Indigenous interests contended when British visitors explored, traded, fished, occupied, and attempted to govern that region.³ Even as governors used the maritime communications of seamen in letters, word-of-mouth, and print to attempt to regulate Labrador's fisheries and Inuit trade, Massachusetts provincials also used maritime communications to resist those attempts at regulation. These uses of maritime communication are significant because certain imperial historians argue that communications determined the effectiveness of British, French, and Spanish imperial administrations. For their part, certain early Americanists believe that seamen brokered communication at the intersection of imperial, settler, and Indigenous interests. They argue that this brokerage was a source of power for seamen.

However, historians have only just begun to marshal evidence of how early maritime communications worked. In assembling this evidence, this chapter reframes communication's relationship to imperial administration and seamen's power. Importantly, communication was not an "independent variable" that factored into a dependent variable of administrative

³ On the seventeenth-century maritime frontier of New England and New Netherlands, see Lipman, *The Saltwater Frontier*, 1–18. On the seventeenth-century maritime frontier of New England and New Netherlands, see Lipman, 1–18.

effectiveness. Maritime communication was a political arena where governors and provincials informed, proposed, contested, resisted, and revised regulations governing who accessed which resources on what terms. This chapter argues that maritime communication was a continuation of politics by other means.

The first section of this chapter argues that maritime communication had an informing function in politics when governors attempted to govern the Labrador fisheries during the earliest British use of Labrador. Newfoundland's governors admitted that they only guessed at the numbers of voyages to Labrador, using shipmasters' reports to inform those guesses. The governors' guesses and improvements in shipmasters' reporting show that when British-American voyages to Labrador's Inuit territories increased after 1758, maritime communications to and from Labrador also increased.

The second section illustrates how provincials used maritime communication to reimagine access to resources. Communication should not be thought about teleologically, for informing was often misinforming when British-American seamen propagated the misunderstandings about Labrador that prevailed in early British America. The DeFonte hoax of a Northwest Passage through the Labrador mainland exemplified these misunderstandings when Massachusetts seamen and Philadelphia merchants unwittingly promoted this hoax when challenging the Hudson Bay Company charter. As this reimagining of access to Hudson Bay indicates, these understandings and misunderstandings were useful with or without being correct. Other significant New England misunderstandings about Labrador from around the same time included certain questionable beliefs about Inuit trade that the Governor of Massachusetts adopted from Capt. Henry Atkins' reports about Labrador. These beliefs

misrepresented Inuit, portraying them as naïve suggesting that they were disadvantaged during trade with New Englanders. Informing and misinforming tangled with how merchants and governors dreamt about access to trade.

The third section shows how governors and provincials used maritime communication to propose and contest regulations for British subjects in Labrador. When the number of voyages to Inuit territories in Labrador increased after 1758, British and British-American seamen engaged in what amounted to an Indian war against Labrador Inuit. According to the Governor of Newfoundland, a sailor described the worst of this violence to him. After this, governors of Newfoundland and Massachusetts⁴ used maritime communication to regulate voyages and reduce violence in Labrador. Massachusetts provincials resisted this regulation and

⁴ This chapter examines only the dyad of the Newfoundland and Massachusetts governments, not the Quebec government after 1775. The Quebec Act of 1774 annexed Labrador to Quebec, making the Governor of Quebec responsible for landward Labrador effective 1775. However, the distance from Quebec to Labrador and a lack of ships for the purpose prevented Quebec from regulating and protecting the Labrador fishery by entering the small harbors that New England crews frequented in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and Labrador. Three years after annexation, in 1778, the Lieutenant Governor and Superintendent of Gaspée who was appointed for the Labrador coast wrote, "That since that coast has been annexed to the Government of Quebec, there has not been the least encouragement given or regulation made for the protection of the fisheries." The Lieutenant Governor and Inspector for Gaspée and Labrador lobbied the Secretary of State for North America for a schooner with a shallow draught of water to enter small harbors where crews fished that the larger naval vessels on the Newfoundland station avoided for safety. (Nicholas Cox [Lt. Gov. and Superintendent at Gaspée] [to George Germaine, Secretary of State for the Colonies], Apr. 15, 1778, LAC MG11 CO42 Q15 13-14). Ten years after annexation, in 1785, Labrador merchants petitioned the Governor of Quebec to appoint a civil government there, especially to reign in disorderly United States crews who disrupted the fisheries (Henry Hamilton [Lt. Gov. of Quebec] to Sydney [Secretary of State] Sept. 26, 1785, LAC MG11 CO42 Q25 169-172). That same year, the Lieutenant Governor again requested a schooner, this time from the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec. (Nicholas Cox to Henry Hamilton [Lt. Gov. of Province of Quebec], Sept. 26, 1785 LAC MG11 CO42 Q25 178-179.) At least as late as sixteen years after annexation, in 1791, Quebec merchant Adam Lymburner still blamed the Quebec government's ineffective regulation of the fisheries in the Gulf and Labrador on a lack of vessels, writing that, "several hundred American fishing vessels resort to the Gulf annually – they have often been very injurious to the fisheries carried on from Quebec and are at all times extremely insolent." Lymburner continued that, even though there had been a Superintendent for Labrador since 1778, "neither the Governor of the Province nor the Superintendent have had it in their power to make or enforce a single regulation or rule for that coast as they had no vessel under their direction to carry the persons necessary to see their orders properly put into execution." (Adam Lymburner to Henry Dundas, Jul. 1, 1791, LAC MG11 CO42 Q57-1 63). According to period actors, this absence of maritime connection prevented Quebec from regulating Labrador effectively.

protested in the legislature of the General Court that the Governor's regulations defamed them. The Governor of Newfoundland and others used ship letters to attempt to reassure these dismayed provincials. This violence against Indigenous peoples and provincial-imperial conflict happened concurrently to better-known provincial-imperial conflicts, not to mention settler-Indigenous conflicts over the Proclamation Line of the West. The American frontier had many fronts, including one in Labrador.

I. Informing Power

This argument that maritime communication was a continuation of politics by other means is an alternative to arguments by certain imperial historians. Those imperial historians write as if communication and information were independent historical forces that drove changes in eighteenth-century empires.⁵ This alternative argument elaborates on the place of seamen in these politics, unlike imperial histories that only touch on the very seamen whose labor sustained saltwater empires. Even Ian Steele's argument that England's transatlantic communications before 1740 were *not* actually "dangerous, slow, infrequent, and unchanging" only briefly discusses the seamen who mastered and crewed the very vessels that made a transatlantic community possible.⁶ Among imperial historians who see communication as an

⁵ Related, see, Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 2008); Alida C Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), <http://site.ebrary.com/id/10217912>; Kapil Raj, "Mapping Knowledge Go-Betweens in Calcutta, 1770-1820," in *The Brokered World: Go-Betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770-1820*, ed. Simon Schaffer et al., Uppsala Studies in History of Science 35 (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications, 2009), 105-50; Sebastian Jobs and Gesa Mackenthun, eds., *Agents of Transculturation: Border-Crossers, Mediators, Go-Betweens* (New York: Waxman, 2013). Related, see, Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*; Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*; Raj, "Mapping Knowledge Go-Betweens in Calcutta, 1770-1820"; Jobs and Mackenthun, *Agents of Transculturation*.

⁶ Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 273-74, 13. Steele, 273-74, 13.

independent variable and empire as a dependent variable is C. A. Bayley, who argues that the “information order” of political, military, and social intelligence that the East India Company gathered was a “critical determinant” of profitable company rule.⁷ In contrast, Kenneth Banks argues that the French Atlantic colonies of New France, the Windward Islands, and Louisiana never actually cohered as an empire due to failures in communications. Banks defines these communications as “gathering, analyzing, displaying, storing, and disseminating information and representations of authority.”⁸ Trans-imperial Indigenous histories are especially forceful when arguing that Indigenous Americans informed the British, French, and Spanish. Indigenous knowledge “explained,” “shaped,” and “contributed to” diplomacy during the Seven Years War. Indigenous communication networks were “historical forces” in the early Southeast. Backcountry information was an “essential precursor” that “fundamentally drove” French plans for expansion in Hudson Bay that were “dependent” on Indigenous peoples.⁹ Moreover, historians of encounter argue that people who brokered communication brokered power.¹⁰ Historians avoid saying outright that we think of “communication” as a sort of variable in

⁷ Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 1–4; See also, Schaffer, “Newton on the Beach,” 245. Bayly, *Empire and Information*, 1–4; See also, Schaffer, “Newton on the Beach,” 245.

⁸ Kenneth J. Banks, *Chasing Empire across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763* (Montreal ; Ithaca: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 5. Banks, 5.

⁹ Paul W. Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia, by the University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 2013), 25; Dubcovsky, *Informed Power*, 215; Scott Berthelette, “New France and the Hudson Bay Watershed: Transatlantic Networks, Backcountry Specialists, and French Imperial Projects in Post-Utrecht North America, 1713–29,” *Canadian Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (February 2020): 4–6, <https://doi.org/10.3138/chr.2018-0094>. Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763*, 25; Dubcovsky, *Informed Power*, 215; Berthelette, “New France and the Hudson Bay Watershed,” 4–6.

¹⁰ Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*; Raj, “Mapping Knowledge Go-Betweens in Calcutta, 1770-1820”; Jobs and Mackenthun, *Agents of Transculturation*. Metcalf, *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*; Raj, “Mapping Knowledge Go-Betweens in Calcutta, 1770-1820”; Jobs and Mackenthun, *Agents of Transculturation*.

models of empire, but this belief still leaks through the language historians use. In response, this chapter reframes arguments about early communication and power by clarifying how maritime communication to and from Labrador was a political activity. Differing interests competed for power and resources by describing the world as they thought it was and imagining the world as they thought it could be. Communication was more than a determinant of expansion and rule; communication was the very contest of imperial politics itself.

Early American historians argue that communication was a source of power on a micro-level. The members of certain professions and trades that had privileged access to communication wielded the information they gained as a sort of power. These professions and trades included clergy, lawyers, printers, and seamen. While imperial historians' work has tended to characterize communication as a sort of independent force, these colonial historians characterize communication as one more area where people expressed and experienced the complex dynamics of power in its many forms.¹¹ In addition, early American historians rightfully note that seamen informed early American printers, but they have not analyzed that role – yet.¹² Radical historians have high hopes for the implications of communications by seamen on the formation of transnational resistance movements.¹³ However, work identifying how these

¹¹ Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*; Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power*; Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*, 8. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*; Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power*; Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America*, 8.

¹² Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*, 325, 326n3; Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, 10–11; cf. Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World*, 72–73; cf. Wim Klooster, "Slave Revolts, Royal Justice, and a Ubiquitous Rumor in the Age of Revolutions," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (2014): 414–15, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.71.3.0401>. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power*, 325, 326n3; Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, 10–11; cf. Bassi, *An Aqueous Territory: Sailor Geographies and New Granada's Transimperial Greater Caribbean World*, 72–73; cf. Klooster, "Slave Revolts," 414–15.

¹³ Scott, *The Common Wind*, 2018; American Historical Review Forum, "Julius S. Scott's The Common Wind: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution"; Rediker and Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed*

communications worked at a microscopic scale has only begun. For instance, when analyzing the letters of the eminent Sewell family, Katherine Grandjean argued that colonization advanced in New England through English attempts to “control” communication through “flows” of people and news.¹⁴ Since seventeenth-century ship letters were infrequent, settlers relied on Indigenous American couriers for conveying letters over land.¹⁵ Labrador’s northern setting shows at a microscopic level how governors and provincials used shipmasters’ reports, travelogues, ship letters, sailor’s gossip, proclamations, and more to fight for their diverse interests. In short, maritime communications were more than a source of power, for maritime communication was a continuation of other political practices. Maritime communication was the very practice of politics, the very struggle of reimagining how to distribute power and resources.

II. Changes in Numbers of Voyages

Labrador, to the north of Newfoundland, is an underappreciated stage for the drama of Massachusetts’ Imperial Crisis. There, scenes of settler violence, Indigenous survival, imperial regulation, and provincial resentment converged. Most of the cast were minor historical actors, little-known elsewhere, but these scenes were theirs and significant to them. In Labrador, seamen and shipmasters shared maritime communication with figures who included Benjamin Franklin as a natural philosopher and printer, James Cook as a naval officer and hydrographer,

Hydra. Scott, *The Common Wind*, 2018; American Historical Review Forum, “Julius S. Scott’s *The Common Wind*: Afro-American Currents in the Age of the Haitian Revolution”; Rediker and Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra*.

¹⁴ Grandjean, *American Passage*, 5–7, 215, 28–29, 48. Grandjean, 5–7, 215, 28–29, 48.

¹⁵ Grandjean, *American Passage*, 28–29, 48. Grandjean, 28–29, 48.

Francis Bernard as Governor of Massachusetts, and the Earl of Dartmouth, William Legge, as Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Informing was one part of the politics of maritime communication. When voyages increased from Massachusetts to Newfoundland's fisheries and eventually Labrador, maritime communication also increased, informing imperial administrators about the region. Governors used that maritime communication to regulate British subjects in the fisheries and later in Labrador, too. The 1758 surrender of the French naval fortress at Louisburg opened the Gulf of St. Lawrence to British-American shipping and weakened the French capacity to defend New France. After the subsequent fall of New France in 1759-1760, Britain administered much of New France as part of the Newfoundland fisheries.¹⁶ Writing in 1761, Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard explained that access to the St. Lawrence improved New England access to Labrador, since "The river St. Lawrence being now opened to us, a passage from Boston may be made early to the Eskimeaux coast [Labrador's Atlantic coast], through the Straits of Belle Isle."¹⁷ After France formally ceded Labrador to Britain in the Peace of 1763, the Board of Trade wrote of the region that, "The general fishery of Newfoundland and the Gulf and the coasts with it is become a matter of infinite extent, and of the utmost importance."¹⁸ This region that

¹⁶ W. H. Whiteley, "Newfoundland, Quebec, and the Administration of the Coast of Labrador, 1774-1783," *Acadiensis* VI, no. 1 (Autumn/Automne 1976): 112. Whiteley, 112. Whiteley, 112. Whiteley, 112.

¹⁷ Francis Bernard, "28. Account of the Coast of Labrador [Feb. 16, 1761]," in *The Papers of Francis Bernard: Governor of Colonial Massachusetts, 1760-1769*, ed. Colin Nicolson, vol. 1: 1759-1763, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, volume LXXIII (Boston : [Charlottesville]: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts ; Distributed by the University of Virginia Press, 2007), 81. Bernard, 81.

¹⁸ Board of Trade, "Representation of the Lords Comm.rs for Trade & Plantations upon the Alterations and Additions expedient to be made in the Gov:r of Newfoundland's Instructions Consequence of the Treaty of Peace" March 15, 1763, CNS CO 194 vol. 26: 69v-70. Centre for Newfoundland Studies (CNS), Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), St. John's, NL.

seems so marginalized today was once an important concern for the Board of Trade. Access to the fisheries mattered.

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 formalized Newfoundland's government of continental Labrador. Labrador extended east from the St. John River at Mingan (Rivière St-Jean) to the Strait of Belle Isle and then north to Hudson Strait at the entrance to Hudson Bay. The Proclamation defined Labrador to include Anticosti Island, Île Madeleine, and the many other islands near this coastline of about 1700 km (1050 miles).¹⁹ In addition to Labrador, the newly-enlarged government of Newfoundland's fishery encompassed the Gulf of St. Lawrence including the Gaspésie of the Lower St. Lawrence, the former Île Royale colony of Cape Breton and Île St-Jean (Prince Edward Island), and the Gulf of St. Lawrence coastline of Acadia (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) including the Baie des Chaleurs. This vast claim to fisheries for cod, salmon, whales, seals, and walrus occupied unceded territories of Mi'kmaq, Beothuk, Innu, and Inuit peoples.

The number of British-American voyages to the fisheries and Labrador increased through the century, especially in the decade or so after 1758. Each year the navy collected reports on the number of vessels in each Newfoundland harbor from the masters of vessels.²⁰ (See, Figure 5. British Vessels from American Colonies in Newfoundland Governors' Annual Returns for the Fisheries, 1734-1795, on page 258) The number of British-American voyages to

¹⁹ George R., "Proclamation," in *R.S.C., 1985*, 1763, preamble The Royal Proclamation defined the government of Quebec as encompassing the territory west of Rivière St-Jean. George R., preamble The Royal Proclamation defined the government of Quebec as encompassing the territory west of Rivière St-Jean.

²⁰ On the Fishing Admiral system, see, Jerry Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals: Law, Custom, and Naval Government in Newfoundland, 1699-1832* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003). On the Fishing Admiral system, see, Bannister.

Newfoundland harbors for provisioning and fishing gradually increased during the first half of the century. After a decrease in voyages during the early part of the Seven Years War, the number of voyages increased during the British conquest of New France after the 1758 Siege of Louisburg, the 1759-1760 Siege of Quebec, and the 1760 Siege of Montreal.²¹ During the 1760s, voyages plateaued at the highest level of the century. By extension, British-American maritime communication there also plateaued.

Other sources corroborate that British-American voyages to the fisheries plateaued during the 1760s. The number of voyages to Newfoundland in the extant Naval Office Shipping Lists of entrances from and clearances to Newfoundland at the Salem Customs House and Boston Customs House between 1752 and 1765 are strongly correlated with the numbers the Newfoundland Governor reported, with a correlation coefficient of 0.64. The Naval Office Shipping Lists data contain the same pattern as the General Schemes of the Fisheries: a trough

²¹ Between 1733 and 1753 there was an annual low of 33 voyages and an annual high of 112 voyages. At no time before 1746 was the five-year moving average greater than 50 voyages per year. From 1746 to 1753 the five-year moving average grew towards 100 voyages per year, and there were more than 100 voyages per year during the final three years before the Seven Years War of 1750, 1751, and 1752.²¹ The five-year moving average of voyages decreased during the Seven Years War (1754 to 1763) until 1761, when French forces all but withdrew from the continental North American theatre.²¹ After the surrender of Louisburg in 1758, the fall of Quebec in 1759, the fall of Montreal in 1760, and the end of the short-lived French occupations of St. John's and the Strait of Belle Isle in 1762, the number of voyages sprang to 142 voyages in 1762 and then increased even more to an eighteenth-century high of 205 voyages in 1763. The number of voyages remained high during the interwar period of 1763 to 1774, with a five-year moving average of greater than 100 voyages in all years. In yearly counts, the number of voyages dropped below 100 voyages per year in only 1765 and 1774. Following the Intolerable Acts of 1774 and during the War of Independence of 1775-1783, the colonial cod fleet was unable to leave New England harbors or was repurposed as navy vessels and privateers. So, the five-year moving average for the number of British-American voyages the governors reported was lower during 1775 to 1783. The records are missing for 1777, 1780, and 1783, but it is safe to assume that there were few United States voyages during those wartime years because in 1778 the governor reported no United States voyages in fishing, whaling, and trade, although United States privateers did cruise the fisheries that year. The governor did not report any British-American voyages in 1781, either. The number of voyages reported began to increase again after peace in 1783. In 1789, the five-year moving average of voyages breached 50, grew through the rest of the century, and in 1795 the Jay Treaty normalized United States trade to British America.

in voyages during the early Seven Years War followed by a plateau in the 1760s. (See, Figure 6. Boston and Salem Total Entrances from and Clearances to Newfoundland, 1752-1765, Naval Office Shipping Lists, on page 259) Massachusetts shipmasters reported their entrances and clearances to these Customs Houses, and the customs officers sent quarterly lists of these reports to London. Most of the eighteenth-century Customs House records for Boston and Salem are missing, but records do survive from Salem for the years 1750 to 1768 and for Boston for most quarters from the years 1752 to 1765. These years cover just before, during, and just after the Seven Years War.²² The total number of clearances to and entrances from Newfoundland at Salem and Boston dropped when the war began and began to recover starting in 1758. These patterns seen from Massachusetts corroborate the patterns seen from Newfoundland.

For the governors in Newfoundland, their reporting on Labrador events was still weak; in many years, they simply guessed at the number of voyages there. In most years, the governors' annual reports to the Board of Trade included only rough estimates of the number of fishing voyages from British-American colonies that cruised the Banks, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and Labrador and did not enter harbors in the island of Newfoundland. After 1758, when voyages increased, and before 1775 when the Quebec Act of 1774 transferred the region

²² Harriet Sylvester Tapley published data from the Salem Customs House in the 1934 reference work *Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750-1769* and Murray G. Lawson published tables of information from the Boston Customs House in the 1948 reference work, "The Routes of Boston Trade." This work has scraped, cleaned, and collated these sources into a relational database of Massachusetts voyages that includes estimates for missing data in the Boston records Harriet Sylvester Tapley, ed., *Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750-1769* (Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1934); Murray Lawson, G., "The Routes of Boston's Trade, 1752-1765," *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 38 (February 1948): 80-120. Tapley, *Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750-1769*; Lawson, "The Routes of Boston's Trade, 1752-1765."

to Quebec, these annual reports included Labrador in detailed harbor-by-harbor reporting for some years.²³ The reports for some years during the 1760s and 1770s described increases in British-American voyages to the Coast of Labrador within the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Governor Hugh Palliser oversaw expanding Newfoundland's government to Labrador after 1763. For 1763 and 1764, the Governor estimated that the number of whalers cruising the Labrador coastline was only three and four whaling vessels per year, respectively.²⁴ That changed in 1765 when the Governor reported that 108 whalers from New England voyaged to the Gulph and Labrador.²⁵ The Governor estimated that 300 British-American whale voyages visited the Gulf and Labrador per year in each of the subsequent years of 1766, 1767, and 1768. Likewise, he estimated that 300 cod-fishing voyages per year arrived for each of those years.²⁶ In 1769, John Byron replaced Palliser as the Governor, and the subsequent governors rarely reported on the numbers of voyages to Labrador, especially after the Province of Quebec began to administer Labrador under the 1774 Quebec Act (effective 1775).²⁷

²³ See, Table 8. List of General Schemes of the Fisheries, 1734-1795, on page 274, and

Table 9. List of General Sketches of the Fishery on the Labrador Coast, 1764-1792, on page 278

²⁴ "General Sketch of the Winter Fishery Upon the Labrador Coast," CNS CO 194 vol. 16: 264; Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1764," CNS CO 194 vol. 16: 109.

²⁵ Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1765" CNS CO 194 vol. 16: 188; "State of the Fishery on the Labrador Coast for 1765," CNS CO 194 vol. 16: 365.

²⁶ Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1766," CNS CO 194 vol. 27: 252; Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1767," CNS CO 194 vol. 21: 14; Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1768," Dec. 24, 1768, CNS CO 194 vol. 21: 41.

²⁷ John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1769" CNS CO 194 vol. 28: 121; John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1770" CNS CO 194 vol. 30: 7; John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1771," CNS CO 194 vol. 30: 84; Molyneux Shuldham, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of

The Newfoundland governors admitted how uncertain they were about the extent of the New England presence in Labrador during these years. Palliser wrote about the estimate that there were 300 New England whaling voyages in the fisheries during 1768, that,

From the best information I have been able to get, full this number of vessels have been employed about the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Labrador and Newfoundland on the whale fishery, this fishery failed this year, for in the Gulf where they killed about 100 whales the last years, they killed only three this year, their success without the Gulf is not known [i.e., on Labrador's Atlantic coast].²⁸

Palliser made similar comments about the years 1766 and 1767.²⁹ During these years, the Governor reported that 300 whaling vessels and 300 fishing vessels went to Labrador annually. However, the total size of the Massachusetts whaling fleet was far less than what Palliser imagined. A 1764 Massachusetts calculation estimated that the Province's 1763 fleet included just 180 whale ships in total.³⁰ So, even supposing that the rest of the whaling industry based in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Long Island in New York also sent vessels to Labrador, Palliser likely was mistaken his particulars. The truth in the reports was his impression that the number

Newfoundland for the Year [1772]" CNS CO 194 vol. 30: 140; Molyneux Shuldham, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1773," CNS CO 194/31: 92; Henry Nichols, "Account of the Seal Fishery in the Fall of 1784 and the Salmon Fishery of 1785 upon the Coast of Labrador," CNS CO 194 vol. 36: 78; John Campbell, "General Return of the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1785," Oct 28, 1785, CNS CO 194 vol. 36: 57; "Report of the Whale Fishery in the Streights of Belle Isle and Gulph of St Lawrence and of the Seal Salmon and Cod Fisheries, upon the Coast of Labrador, in the Year 1792," CNS CO 194 vol. 21: 389.

²⁸ Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1768," Dec. 24, 1768, CNS CO 194 vol. 21: 41.

²⁹ Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1766," CNS CO 194 vol. 27: 252; Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1767," CNS CO 194 vol. 21: 14.

³⁰ James Freeman, ed., "A Calculation of the State of the Cod and Whale Fisheries, Belonging to Massachusetts in 1763 : Copied from a Paper Published in 1764.," *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, First series, 8 (1802): 203. Freeman, 203.

of British-American voyages to the coast of Labrador increased in the 1760s. Imperfect though this information was, maritime communication did inform Governors.

III. Knowledge Received from Seamen

Maritime communication certainly informed people, but it also misinformed people: information was not just a sort of power or a type of resource, but an activity where people imagined different access to resources in the North. Before the 1760s, certain witting or unwitting Massachusetts seamen spread correct and incorrect knowledge of Labrador geography and Inuit people, influencing merchants and governors through the venue of maritime communication. During these years, the DeFonte hoax of a Northwest Passage through Labrador shaped British-American beliefs about the Labrador Sea “without the Strait” of Belle Isle. Seamen transmitted this hoax to Britain and British America, where the hoax launched voyages of exploration to Labrador in the name of challenging the Hudson Bay Company trade monopoly. With respect to maritime communication, the hoax shows how reports by mariners about Labrador gained an audience and an influence in the British North American colonies via the patronage by merchants and printers. Believers in the hoax who included seaman Theodorus Swaine Drage and printer Benjamin Franklin propagated these incorrect beliefs more effectively than the original hoaxsters themselves did. What mattered, in the end, was not the teleological question of whether the information was correct, but the pragmatic question of how provincials used this information, *viz.*, to imagine new access to resources in the North.

The DeFonte Hoax allegedly originated among mariners during the supposed seventeenth-century encounter of the Spanish Admiral Bartholomew DeFonte, or Bartolomé de

Fuentes, with Captain Nicholas Shapely of Charleston, Massachusetts. Shapely supposedly cruised the Labrador coast in the 1640s, seeking a Northwest Passage and trade with Inuit people. According to the London-published account of this voyage, “Indian” informants (likely Inuit, due to the location) told the Spanish Admiral, who was on the coast at the same time, that a New England vessel was nearby.³¹ According to the account, the Spanish Admiral sought out and found the New England vessel and told the shipmaster, Shapely, that the Spanish had successfully found a Northwest Passage through what is now Quebec and Labrador. According to DeFonte, the Spanish Admiral purchased the New Englander’s charts for one thousand Spanish dollars. He supplemented this purchase with a series of gifts, including a diamond ring for the shipmaster, valued at twelve hundred Spanish dollars, a quarter cask of Peruvian wine for the vessel’s owner, and twenty Spanish dollars for each of the vessel’s ten seamen. Major General Edward Gibbon of Massachusetts, who owned the vessel, contested these details. According to Gibbon, the gifts were worth much less than DeFonte claimed, and the Spanish Admiral had seized the New England shipmaster’s journal and charts by force.³² After their encounter, Shapely attempted and failed to find DeFonte’s passage through the Labrador mainland to Hudson Bay.³³ Returning to New England, Shapely settled in New London. His reputation as a navigator grew, aided by a manuscript purporting to document this encounter with DeFonte, and perhaps the hint of untapped riches.

³¹ Theodorus Swaine Drage, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson’s Streights* (London: Printed and Sold by Mr. Jolliffe in St. James’s Street; Mr. Corbett in Fleet Street; and Mr. Clarke under the Royal Exchange, 1748), vol 2: 321, 323. Swaine Drage, vol 2: 321, 323.

³² Theodorus Swaine Drage, *The Great Probability of a North West Passage* (London: Printed for Thomas Jefferys, at Charing Cross, 1768), 64, 68. Swaine Drage, 64, 68.

³³ Swaine Drage, *Account*, vol. 2: 321. Swaine Drage, vol. 2: 321.

Voyagers and travelogue writers who sought to challenge the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly latched on to the DeFonte story. At first, printers propagated the story during the early- to mid-eighteenth century. In 1708, London printer James Petivar published a letter describing the voyage, purportedly written by the Spanish Admiral. The true origins of Petivar's letter are unclear: some antiquarians believed that the printer Petivar himself authored it, and some others credit Daniel Defoe.³⁴ Then, the hoax lay dormant for almost forty years when British-Irish politician and pamphleteer Arthur Dobbs promoted it as part of his campaign against the Hudson Bay Company monopoly in Rupert's Land during the 1740s. That campaign culminated in a 1749 parliamentary inquiry into the HBC charter. Dobbs cited the Petivar printing of the DeFonte letter when arguing for an expedition to search for a Northwest Passage.

The hoax motivated real voyages, and more, earnest travelogues. Two vessels carried out Dobb's proposed expedition in 1746 and 1747: the *Dobbs Galley*, master William Moor, and the *California*, master Francis Smith. The vessels departed England and sailed via the Orkneys to Labrador. After arriving north of Cape Charles, near Labrador's Strait of Belle Isle, the shipmaster fired guns and hoisted an ensign to signify that they were open for trade. At first, these signals drew no Inuit traders. Later that day, the vessels fired the guns again, and twenty Inuit kayakers approached the vessels bearing whalebone (baleen). The traders exchanged metal wares for the baleen, and individual sailors traded their own knives and metal items for

³⁴ Lemay, *Franklin*, Volume 3: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748–1757:152–60. Lemay, Volume 3: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748–1757:152–60. Lemay, Volume 3: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748–1757:152–60. Lemay, Volume 3: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748–1757:152–60.

leather clothing and fox furs.³⁵ After this, the two ships voyaged north, entered Hudson Bay, and overwintered at the Hudson's Bay Company post of York Factory, but failed to find a Northwest Passage. A series of travelogues later described this voyage. Henry Ellis (future Governor of Georgia and future Governor of Nova Scotia) published an account titled *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay by the Dobbs Galley and California*.³⁶ The expedition's draftsman published an account, and so did the clerk, Theodore Swaine Drage, who titled his 1749 travelogue, *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage by Hudson's Streights*. Ellis and the draftsman argued the Northwest Passage did not exist. Drage dissented by arguing that a Northwest Passage did exist.

Drage used maritime communication to support his argument when drawing evidence from his own voyage, travelogues by other mariners, and word of mouth from people on shore. The works he cited included his own manuscript journal, the DeFonte letter, the *Dobbs Galley* logbook of Captain Moor taken from the papers of Capt. Smith of the *California*, and a manuscript chart by the voyage's draftsman.³⁷ When searching for word of mouth evidence, Drage questioned Shapely's brother's family in Kittery, Maine. Fearing a family feud and lawsuit, the Kittery family denied Drage access to the records by Nicholas Shapely.³⁸ So, Drage

³⁵ Swaine Drage, *Account*, vol. 1: 29. Swaine Drage, vol. 1: 29. Swaine Drage, vol. 1: 29. Swaine Drage, vol. 1: 29.

³⁶ John Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson's-Bay, by the Dobbs Galley and California, in the Years 1746 and 1747 [...]* (London: Printed for H. Whitridge, at the Royal Exchange, 1748). Ellis. Ellis. Ellis.

³⁷ Swaine Drage, *Account*, vol. 1: v-vii. Swaine Drage, vol. 1: v-vii. Swaine Drage, vol. 1: v-vii. Swaine Drage, vol. 1: v-vii.

³⁸ Theodorus Swaine Drage, "Appendix: A Account of Part of the Coast and Inland Part of the Labrador: Being An Extract from a Journal of a Voyage Made from Philadelphia in 1753," in *The Great Probability of a North West Passage* (London: Printed for Thomas Jefferys, at Charing Cross, 1768), 64–68. Swaine Drage, 64–68.

turned to Shapely's New London family, where Shapely's son lived as of 1752. The son was an illiterate or minimally-literate fisherman who had already emptied his late father's sea chest and reused all of Shapely's manuscripts as waste-paper. However, the son recalled his mother talking about Shapely's voyage to Labrador.³⁹ Chasing the Northwest Passage, Drage consulted seamen, print, and the family of seamen.

The influence of the hoax grew with the patronage of Benjamin Franklin when Franklin used his many communication enterprises to promote voyages from Philadelphia to Labrador via Massachusetts. Franklin read Drage's account and compared it with comparable accounts of the North by Increase Mather, John Ellis, and others.⁴⁰ Franklin exchanged his opinions about these readings and some of his books on the topic with his correspondents on both sides of the Atlantic, including John Pringle of the Royal Society and Peter Collinson. For instance, Peter Collinson sent Franklin a letter about the topic in 1753 via one Captain Mesnard. The letter informed Franklin of a speculative French map that portrayed no Northwest Passage through Labrador.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Franklin imagined new access to trade in the North when he enquired

³⁹ Swaine Drage, *The Great Probability of a North West Passage*, 66. Swaine Drage, 66.

⁴⁰ Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to John Pringle, 27 May 1762," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 10 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1959), 85–100. Franklin found that DeFonte reportedly described the North as similar to how other accounts described the area where DeFonte would have entered the Arctic and dissimilar to other accounts of other regions in the same latitudes. Franklin found that DeFonte reportedly described the North as similar to how other accounts described the area where DeFonte would have entered the Arctic and dissimilar to other accounts of other regions in the same latitudes.

⁴¹ Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 29 November 1748," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 3 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1961), 329; James Logan, "To Benjamin Franklin from James Logan, 9 November 1748," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 3 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1961), 325–26; Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 7 November 1748," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 3 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1961), 325; Benjamin Franklin, "From Benjamin Franklin to Sir John Pringle, [1767?]," in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 14 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1970), 352; Peter Collinson, "To Benjamin Franklin from

in England about the “force” of the Hudson Bay Company Charter and monopoly. He publicized accounts of the Hudson Bay in *Poor Richard’s Almanack*, and advertised these accounts in his newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.⁴² This publicity amplified how access to the North was reimagined.

Franklin was just one of the people who imagined what this access to the North would mean. From British America, a committee of Philadelphia merchants comprising Benjamin Franklin, William Allen, John Stamper, Charles Stedman, John Mifflin, and William Coleman promoted trade in the North. They lobbied the Crown to end the monopoly on trade in Labrador that London merchants held.⁴³ The merchants funded Drage’s 1753 voyage from Philadelphia via Boston to find a passage through Labrador’s peninsula.⁴⁴ The voyage did not discover a navigable passage, but Drage held fast to his beliefs that such a passage likely

Peter Collinson, 27 January 1753,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 4 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1961), 412–15; Benjamin Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, 6 December 1753,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 5 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1962), 148. Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 29 November 1748”; Logan, “To Benjamin Franklin from James Logan, 9 November 1748”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 7 November 1748”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to Sir John Pringle, [1767?]”; Collinson, “To Benjamin Franklin from Peter Collinson, 27 January 1753”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, 6 December 1753.” Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 29 November 1748”; Logan, “To Benjamin Franklin from James Logan, 9 November 1748”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 7 November 1748”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to Sir John Pringle, [1767?]”; Collinson, “To Benjamin Franklin from Peter Collinson, 27 January 1753”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, 6 December 1753.” Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 29 November 1748”; Logan, “To Benjamin Franklin from James Logan, 9 November 1748”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to James Logan, 7 November 1748”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to Sir John Pringle, [1767?]”; Collinson, “To Benjamin Franklin from Peter Collinson, 27 January 1753”; Franklin, “From Benjamin Franklin to Richard Jackson, 6 December 1753.”

⁴² Richard Saunders [Benjamin Franklin], *Poor Richard Improved* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by B. Franklin, 1748); Extracts from the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 17, 1747

⁴³ Merchants of Philadelphia, “Petition of the Merchants of Philadelphia to the King, [18 November 1752?],” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, vol. 4 (New Haven ; London, England: Yale University Press, 1961), 380–84. Merchants of Philadelphia.

⁴⁴ Swaine Drage, “Appendix: A Account of Part of the Coast and Inland Part of the Labrador: Being An Extract from a Journal of a Voyage Made from Philadelphia in 1753,” 131-. Swaine Drage, 131-.

existed. Drage subsequently published a second account in 1768, titled *The Great Probability of a Northwest Passage*, in which he reprinted the Petivar text of the DeFonte letter.⁴⁵ For these people, the Defonte letter substantiated their hopes for a Northwest Passage.

New Englanders' communication about Inuit in Labrador, likewise, made it sound as if Inuit were new to trading with Europeans, imagining how New Englander traders were at an

⁴⁵ When British-American voyages to Labrador increased during the 1760s, the DeFonte hoax became less prominent. The DeFonte hoax had a second life in the late 1780s when adherents who believed in aspects of the hoax continued to search for DeFonte's passage, this time in the Pacific Northwest. In 1787-1789, the first New England fur traders believed to have journeyed to the Pacific Northwest voyaged on the sloop *Columbia-Redviva*, captain Robert Gray. The voyage identified what they claimed was the western entrance to the DeFonte Strait north of Vancouver Island at what seems to be Clarence Strait or the Dixon Entrance in Haida and Tlingit territory at the present-day boundary of British Columbia and Alaska.⁴⁵ (Robert Haswell, "Robert Haswell's Log of the First Voyage of the Columbia," in *Voyages of the "Columbia" to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 and 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic Howay, North Pacific Studies Series, no. 13 (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 91. Haswell, 91.) On May 12, 1789, Captain John Kendrick, then-master of the sloop *Washington* that accompanied the *Columbia-Redviva*,⁴⁵ was in Nootka Sound in Nuuchah-nulth territory on the west side of Vancouver Island. (The officers of the ship *Columbia* and the sloop *Washington* exchanged vessels several times during the 1787-1789 voyage, sometimes due to conflicts between them and at other times, such as a change of officers while at Nootka Sound, for reasons that are not clear in extant documentary sources. "Introduction," in Robert Haswell et al., *Voyages of the "Columbia" to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 and 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic Howay, North Pacific Studies Series, no. 13 (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), xvii. "Introduction," in Haswell et al., xvii.) Kendrick wrote to Don Estevan José Martinez, commander of the Spanish ship *Princesa*, that he was voyaging "on discovery to the Northward of this port particularly to explore the Straights of Admiral DeFonte."⁴⁵ (Captain John Kendrick to Don Estevan José Martinez, May 12, 1789 in John Hoskins, "John Hoskins' Narrative of the Second Voyage of the Columbia," in *Voyages of the "Columbia" to the Northwest Coast, 1787-1790 and 1790-1793*, ed. Frederic Howay, North Pacific Studies Series, no. 13 (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press in cooperation with the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1990), 119. Captain John Kendrick to Don Estevan José Martinez, May 12, 1789 in Hoskins, 119.) The first mate of the ship *Columbia-Redviva*, Robert Haswell, wrote that, "a few leagues from Derby Sound we discovered a large inlet trending to the Westward this we entered and is I suppose the entrance of Admiral DeFonte's Straits."⁴⁵ (Haswell, "Robert Haswell's Log of the First Voyage of the Columbia," 91. Haswell, 91.) During the next voyage of the *Columbia-Redviva* to the northwest, in 1791-1792, the 22-year-old clerk on the voyage, John Hoskins, wrote from Haida Gwaii as if he believed the DeFonte passage existed, charting the entrance to the passage at 54° 45' N, near the future 54-40 boundary of British Columbia and Alaska.⁴⁵ (Hoskins, "John Hoskins' Narrative of the Second Voyage of the Columbia," 233. Hoskins, 233.) In Hoskins' opinion, the navigator James Cook who charted both the East Coast and West Coast was mistaken to believe there was no such thing as the DeFonte passage. Hoskins wrote, "the straits of Admiral de Fonte can be at no great distance and must be acknowledged to exist though Captain Cook gave no credit to such vague and improbable stories this was a judgment too hastily formed."⁴⁵ (Hoskins, 233. Hoskins, 233.) The increase in voyages that revealed no DeFonte passage in the Atlantic Northeast did not end the belief among certain settler navigators that a DeFonte passage in the Pacific Northwest might still exist.

advantage in Labrador. After the 1758 surrender of Louisburg, Governor of Massachusetts Francis Bernard turned to mariner Capt. Henry Atkins to find out about the North. Atkins had voyaged to Labrador in 1729, 1733, 1753, and 1758 — and perhaps on other occasions. Alexander Starbuck's history of American whaling credited Atkins as the master of what Starbuck believed was the first New England whaling voyage to Davis Strait. Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard collected Atkins' oral accounts of the coast, wrote these down, and kept these in his papers.

When Bernard related Atkins' account, he made it sound like Inuit were new to trading with Europeans and American settlers, who could reap handsome profits there. In Bernard's vision, Labrador, "if settled and improved by civilizing the natives, would afford a great fund for trade, especially that part of it called the Eskimeaux shore, between Cape Charles in the straits of Belle Isle, in latitude 51 and Cape Chidley, in latitude 60 North, bounding East on the Atlantic ocean."⁴⁶ When proposing an increase in Inuit trade, Bernard drew from an account of Atkins' voyage of 1729 on the ship *Whale*. Atkins reported several landings south of Davis Strait, including an encounter with twelve Inuit men in kayaks who fled from him at latitude 53° N. According to Atkins, he caught up with the fleeing Inuit and attempted to start trading by showing them small metal wares. The trade did not begin until he showed them baleen — communicating with gestures and objects. After this, the two parties communicated with hand signals to exchange trade goods worth about ten shillings for baleen worth 120 pounds sterling

⁴⁶ Bernard, "Account of Coast of Labrador." Bernard.

at Boston prices.⁴⁷ This reported selling price was 240 times the purported purchase price, and so it dangled a tempting rate of return for future adventurers.

Bernard adopted Atkins' incorrect beliefs that Inuit had not traded with Europeans before, and, like Atkins' believed this meant New Englanders had the upper hand there. According to Atkins, firing a gun into the ground terrified the Inuit traders. The Massachusetts Governor (incorrectly) interpreted this to mean that these Inuit were inexperienced traders, writing, "I think it plainly indicates that the Indians on this coast and islands had never any trade or commerce with any civilized people from Europe or America of course not with the French from Canada, or the Hudson's Bay factories." In addition, Atkins "observed their beaver coats were made of many pieces sewed together, being the best patches in the skin." Bernard thought this meant they were not used to trading valuable beaver. Bernard, write that this clothing "shows plainly they set light by their beaver skins, and this undoubtedly for want of trade." During the 1753 voyage, Atkins sent Jedidiah Prebble and a French interpreter on shore, where Prebble met families of about 70 Inuit and traded goods of "trifling value" for about 3,000 pounds of baleen. These traders did not seem to speak French, which Bernard again interpreted as "plain proof these people [Inuit] had never left their own country to trade with the French."⁴⁸ Atkins' accounts made it sound as if Labrador Inuit were new to trading with

⁴⁷ Francis Bernard, "Account of the Coast of Labrador," Feb. 16, 1761, in Francis Bernard, *The Papers of Francis Bernard: Governor of Colonial Massachusetts, 1760-1769*, ed. Colin Nicolson, vol. 1: 1759-1763, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, volume LXXIII (Boston : [Charlottesville]: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts ; Distributed by the University of Virginia Press, 2007), 77. The original document of this text has never been found. Francis Bernard, "Account of the Coast of Labrador," Feb. 16, 1761, in Bernard, 1: 1759-1763:77. The original document of this text has never been found.

⁴⁸ Compare with Marianne P. Stopp, "The Complete Inuttitut Vocabulary Collected by William Richardson ca. 1765-1771," *Regional Language Studies ... Newfoundland* 25 (2014): Table 1 During the voyage in 1758, Atkins chased down "two Indian men, one woman, and three children," brought them on board his vessel, gave them gifts, and found that Inuit called "whalebone shou-coe, a woman aboc-chu, oil, outchot" and their boats "ouch-ma-

Europeans and Euro-Americans, since they seemed to lack a trade language, reportedly traded commodities for next to nothing, and were scared by firearms. From this, Bernard imagined that Europeans were strange to Inuit. He was wrong.

Bernard's premise that Labrador Inuit lacked a trade language was mistaken, and so was his conclusion that Labrador Inuit had not encountered Europeans before. Bernard's unspoken premise was that trading nations used trade languages. Southern Inuit had centuries of encounters with Basque, Portuguese, and French in the Strait of Belle Isle. Before the first of Atkins' several voyages to Labrador in 1729, Inuit in Southern Labrador had already adopted trading with Europeans as a staple of their economic activity with a "middleman" economic adaptation where "big man" traders led communal houses of several cohabiting families.⁴⁹ English language sources from the mid-eighteenth century onwards document a Labrador Inuit trading language drawn in part from Romance languages. Inuit traders greeted Europeans by shouting greetings from a safe distance including, "*Tudo camarado!*" meaning "all good friends" in Portuguese, and "*Tous cammerades!*" in French. Other phrases Labrador Inuit used included "*troquero balena*," "to trade whale," and resembling *troquer baleine* in French, "*capitaine*" resembling *le capitaine* in French and *capitão* in Portuguese, and "*kutta*," meaning "knife," and resembling *le couteau* in French⁵⁰ These words and others that Inuit used show that Labrador Inuit had histories of trade with Europeans, unlike what Atkins and Bernard imagined.

noc." Compare with Stopp, Table 1 During the voyage in 1758, Atkins chased down "two Indian men, one woman, and three children," brought them on board his vessel, gave them gifts, and found that Inuit called "whalebone shou-coe, a woman aboc-chu, oil, outchot" and their boats "ouch-ma-noc."

⁴⁹ Amelia Fay, "Missionaries, Merchants, and Inuit Entrepreneurs: An Examination of Trade Relations along the Labrador Coast," *Études/Inuit/Studies* 39, no. 1 (January 2015): 158. Fay, 158.

⁵⁰ "An Account of the Voyage of the Four Missionaries Sent By the Unitas Fratrum to the Esquimaux on the Coast of Labrador, & Under the Protection of this Britannic Majesty. From the Month of May to Novem^R.

Based on what Atkins said, Governor Bernard of Massachusetts made ill-informed conclusions that he used to justify how he governed Massachusetts shipping. After collecting Atkins' reports, Bernard licensed a Massachusetts vessel to trade on the Labrador coast. How this vessel traded with Indigenous Innu on Labrador's St. Lawrence Coast "within the Strait" dismayed Joseph Isbister and Adam Lymburner, who were Quebec- and Mingan-based British merchants. They were especially upset at how the Massachusetts-licensed vessel traded in liquor. Isbister and Lymburner wrote letters to the Newfoundland governor complaining that the vessel had "stripped and plundered all the Indians they met with of their furs." Their letters also relayed reports of other British-American atrocities and outrages.⁵¹ First, Bernard learned about Labrador, then he licensed British subjects voyaging there from Massachusetts, and later, he received complaints about these subjects' actions. Thus, using maritime communication to reimagine access to resources led to proposing and contesting regulations.

IV. Imperial Regulations and Provincial Resistance

New Englanders used maritime communication to envision and advocate who would access trade, so maritime communication was a way for New Englanders to propose and contest regulations. When the number of voyages from British America to Labrador increased after 1758, the amount of British violence against Inuit increased, amounting to an Indian War

1767," in A. M. Lysacht, ed., *Joseph Banks in Newfoundland and Labrador, 1766: His Diary, Manuscripts and Collections* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), 197. e.g. Louis-Jacques Dorais, "The Inuit Language in Southern Labrador from 1694 – 1785," *Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 66* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1980), 7; Stopp, "Inuttitut Vocabulary." "An Account of the Voyage of the Four Missionaries Sent By the Unitas Fratrum to the Esquimaux on the Coast of Labrador, & Under the Protection of this Britannic Majesty. From the Month of May to Novem^r. 1767," in Lysacht, *Banks in Newfoundland and Labrador*, 197. e.g. Dorais, "Inuit Language in Southern Labrador," 7; Stopp, "Inuttitut Vocabulary."

⁵¹ Joseph Isbister to Hugh Palliser, Aug. 14, 1765, CO 194 vol. 16: 266-267v, CNS; Hugh Palliser to Earl of Egmont (Secretary of State for the Southern Department), March 31, 1764, CO 194 vol. 16: 178-179v, CNS.

in the North. Simultaneously, more voyages increased governors' capacity to regulate the fisheries and reduce this violence. Historian Greg Mitchell counts that between 1763 and 1767, British assailants killed at least 51 of the approximately 500 Inuit people who inhabited Southern Labrador, or approximately 10% of the population there.⁵² During these years, public records also record sexualized violence against Inuit women that, in several cases, ended with British assailants killing Inuit women.⁵³ Newfoundland Governor Hugh Palliser called this a state of war by writing that, "by these violencies, barbarities, and other notorious crimes and enormities and that coast is in the utmost confusion and with respect to the Indians [Inuit] is kept in a state of war."⁵⁴

Labrador's British subjects included American colonists from the Northeast, settlers from Newfoundland, and seasonal crews from England and Ireland. Each of these groups committed a share of the attacks on Labrador Inuit. The New Englanders believed that British governors maligned them by blaming them for the attacks, and period sources record that Newfoundlanders and crews from Britain also assaulted and murdered Inuit. Notwithstanding that, the increased number of voyages also increased maritime communication to Labrador.

⁵² Greg Mitchell, "The Inuit of Southern Labrador and Their Conflicts with Europeans, to 1767," in *Exploring Atlantic Transitions: Archaeologies of Transience and Permanence in New Found Land*, ed. Peter Pope and Shannon Lewis-Simpson (London: Boydell Press, 2013), 326. Mitchell, 326.

⁵³ The most detailed record of this is in Hugh Palliser to Earl of Egmont (Secretary of State for the Southern Department), March 31, 1764, CO 194 vol. 16: 178-179v, CNS.

⁵⁴ Hugh Palliser, "Copy of order of Gov.r Palliser respecting Depredations committed on the Coast of Labradore and in Newfoundland dated August 1, 1766," Aug 1, 1766, CNS CO 194 vol. 27: 283-285. See also, Hugh Palliser, "Rules, Orders & Regulations to be Observ'd on the Coast of Labradore, and on the Island of Anticosta & the Madelaines," Apr. 8, 1765, RPAD GN 2/1/A vol. 3 Colonial Secretary's Office Outgoing Correspondence 1759-1765: 281-282. Similar statements appear in several letters by Palliser in 1765.

The Governor of Newfoundland used maritime communication to reduce attacks by publicizing a series of rules and regulations that targeted British-American voyages to Labrador.

Sailors' communication transmitted reports to the Governor of Newfoundland and from the Governor of Newfoundland to Massachusetts: the increased number of voyages spread news about the violence. The bulk of the problem crews, according to the Governor, came from Massachusetts. Nevertheless, the incident the Governor described in the most detail when justifying his new regulations was a massacre by the crew of the brig *Decoy*, owned by New York merchants Thomas Miller and Jacobus van Zandt. This small vessel of 40 tons mounted six guns and shipped forty crew. It had so much firepower and crew for its size because it was a privateer with a commission to harass French shipping and French territories.⁵⁵ In 1763, after three days of peaceful trade with Inuit in Labrador, the crew of the *Decoy* ambushed Inuit traders who were on the deck of the vessel. The *Decoy's* crew killed eleven Inuit traders immediately and took seven more Inuit as captives. The crew eventually drowned all seven of these captives, allegedly to hide the first eleven murders. So began the story of this attempted coverup.

Crucially, the word got out when a sailor who witnessed the attack told the Governor and the Governor then cited this sailor to justify regulating the fishery. No one was supposed to know about the *Decoy* massacre. However, according to Governor Hugh Palliser, sometime

⁵⁵ At one time the *Decoy's* masters were William Knight and future member of the Sons of Liberty, Isaac Sears, of Cape Cod and New York. "Memorandum of Commission for Knight, Van Zandt, and Miller, for *Decoy*," July 12, 1757. New York Court of Vice Admiralty records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library; "Commission of the *Anne*," Dec. 8, 1756. New York Court of Vice Admiralty records, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library. At various times, the *Decoy* was rigged as a dogger, a brig, and a forty-ton bark with six guns and a crew of forty.

between the massacre and the years 1763 and 1766, one of the erstwhile *Decoy* crewmembers sailed on the his navy vessel and related these events to him.⁵⁶ The Governor relayed this to the Board of Trade, along with the letters by merchants Adam Lymburner and Joseph Isbister complaining of the atrocities and outrages of British-American crews, and the Board of Trade reported on these complaints to the Privy Council in England.⁵⁷ Unlike the merchant's hearsay, Palliser the sailor's account was first-hand. Palliser cited the story when he justified his new regulations to the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for the Colonies.⁵⁸ In doing so, the Governor invoked a type of authority that came from the sailor's experience.⁵⁹

By comparison, the Newfoundland Governor de-emphasized reports that did not come from eyewitnesses. Palliser wrote about a 1764 voyage of a vessel from Boston or Marblehead, name unknown, master unknown, that "after robbing, plundering and always ill treating the Indians on the Coast of Labrador, took away five of them, who they either murdered or carried home to make slaves of." The mate, named "Coffen," later became master of a Nantucket

⁵⁶ Hugh Palliser to Earl of Egmont (Secretary of State for the Southern Department), March 31, 1764. CO 194 vol. 16: 178v. N.B. Palliser's clerk appears to have mistakenly written that the owners of the *Decoy* were named "Farmer and Phinzance," not the correct names of New York merchants Thomas Miller and Jacobus van Zandt. "Farmer" is similar enough to "Miller" and "Phinzance" is similar enough to "van Zandt" that I believe this refers to the same *Decoy* that also frequented Quebec and the Strait of Belle Isle.

⁵⁷ Great Britain, *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Colonial Series*, ed. James Munro and Almeric W. Fitzroy, vol. VI (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1912), 430–31. Great Britain, VI:430–31.

⁵⁸ Copy of Isbister to Hamilton, August 14, 1765. CO 194 vol 16: 266–267; Hugh Palliser to Board of Trade and Plantations, December 18, 1765, CO 194 vol. 16: 218; "State of the Fishery on the Labrador Coast for 1765," CO 194 vol. 16: 365.

⁵⁹ See, Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage*, 219–25; Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic*, 11–12. See, Edwards, *The Story of the Voyage*, 219–25; Rediker, *Outlaws of the Atlantic*, 11–12.

vessel.⁶⁰ Unlike the *Decoy*, Palliser did not dwell on this story and other stories like it that lacked the authority of an eyewitness.

The Newfoundland governor then used maritime communications to reduce violence in Labrador. The Inuit and Palliser negotiated a Peace and Friendship treaty in 1765 using Moravian missionaries as interpreters. The next year, the Board of Trade reported to the Privy Council in England that, in Palliser's reports, "the abuses reported on last year have increased, and a revision of the regulations is necessary."⁶¹ Palliser feared the destruction of the English fishery and deterioration of relations with the Inuit. To remediate this, Palliser sent a letter from St. John's in Newfoundland via Capt. Henry Atkins to Boston for Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard. In this letter, Palliser asked Bernard to publicize new regulations for New England whalers in Labrador by writing that "the complaints I have of the mischiefs committed by them are many, great and barbarous."⁶² Palliser's new regulations included articles restricting New England whalers to distances greater than three leagues from the coast. Also, Palliser ordered that officers apprehend perpetrators accused of murdering British subjects and "Indians" and send the accused to St John's for trial at the Court of Assizes. These regulations that expressly targeted British American violence on the Labrador coast. Palliser ordered that notices proclaiming these regulations "For preventing these Piracies in future" be posted in all

⁶⁰ Hugh Palliser to Earl of Egmont (Secretary of State for the Southern Department), March 31, 1764. CO 194 vol. 16: 178-179.

⁶¹ Great Britain, *Acts of the Privy Council of England, Colonial Series*, VI:426. Great Britain, VI:426.

⁶² Hugh Palliser to Francis Bernard Aug. 1, 1766, in Francis Bernard, *The Papers of Francis Bernard: Governor of Colonial Massachusetts, 1760-1769.*, ed. Colin Nicolson, vol. II: 1764-1765, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, LXXXI (Boston : [Charlottesville]: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts ; Distributed by the University of Virginia Press, 2007), 197–98. Hugh Palliser to Francis Bernard Aug. 1, 1766, in Bernard, II: 1764-1765:197–98.

harbors in Labrador. He also ordered building a blockhouse at Cape Charles with a garrison of twenty marines for Labrador's "better government" and defending the British fisheries from French, Inuit, and British Americans.⁶³ Palliser used ship letters and proclamations to propagate the regulations. The Governor of Newfoundland patronized the sailor's story, used it to justify regulating the fisheries, and used maritime communications to propagate these regulations throughout Labrador and Massachusetts.

Resisting these regulations got a head start when whalers conveyed the regulations to Massachusetts faster than the Governor's official letter from St. John's. HMS *Merlin*, a sloop, was on the Labrador station that year and gave a copy of these regulations to Captain Charles Penn, a passenger on a brig mastered by a Captain Coles. Penn brought the regulations to Boston, where the *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser* printed the regulations in late August of 1766, along with Penn's other news from that year's whaling in Labrador. More than four months later, the Governor of Massachusetts published the official proclamation.⁶⁴ This chain of word-of-mouth, manuscript letters, print, and, by inference, more word-of-mouth

⁶³ Hugh Palliser, "Copy of order" Aug. 1, 1766, 284r-284v, 285r; Byron to Lt. Davys. "Instructions for York Fort, Labrador," Sept. 9, 1769. RPAD GN 2/1/A vol. 4 Colonial Secretary's Office Outgoing Correspondence 1766-1771 182-185. John C. Kennedy, *Encounters: An Anthropological History of Southeastern Labrador* (Montreal, Que. and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 47-48; Marianne P. Stopp, "Chateau Bay, Labrador, and William Richardson's 1769 Sketch of York Fort," *Newfoundland & Labrador Studies* 29, no. 2 (2014): 249. Hugh Palliser, "Copy of order" Aug. 1, 1766, 284r-284v, 285r; Byron to Lt. Davys. "Instructions for York Fort, Labrador," Sept. 9, 1769. RPAD GN 2/1/A vol. 4 Colonial Secretary's Office Outgoing Correspondence 1766-1771 182-185. Kennedy, *Encounters*, 47-48; Stopp, "York Fort," 249.

⁶⁴ "Since Our Last Several Vessels Are Returned Now from the Whaling Business...", *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser*, no. 471 (August 25, 1766): 2; Hugh Palliser, "(Copy) Rules, Orders and Regulations to Be Observed on the Coast of Labradore...", *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser*, no. 471 (August 25, 1766): 2. "Since Our Last Several Vessels Are Returned Now from the Whaling Business..."; Palliser, "(Copy) Rules, Orders and Regulations to Be Observed on the Coast of Labradore...."

communicated this event and its effects from Labrador to Massachusetts' whalers and from them to the prints and readerships of Massachusetts.

The Governor's ship letter traveled slower than whalers' unofficial reports. The Governor's letter that Atkins carried conveying these new regulations was dated August 1, 1766. Atkins did not leave Newfoundland until November 1766, and only in January of 1767 did Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard finally print these new regulations in the *Massachusetts Gazette*.⁶⁵ These notices instructed Massachusetts readers who knew whalers to tell those whalers about the new regulations. The regulations were to be posted in Massachusetts ports "where the whalers mostly belong, for their information before the next fishing season."⁶⁶ Official communication of these regulations used Massachusetts maritime communication via letter conveyance, official publication, printing, and word-of-mouth lagged the regulations' unofficial communication. Consequently, resistance against the regulations began even before the regulations arrived officially.

⁶⁵ The dates comes from a memorandum on a copy of this letter, Hugh Palliser, "489. Hugh Palliser to Francis Bernard 1 Aug 1766," in *The Papers of Francis Bernard Governor of Colonial Massachusetts, 1760-69*, ed. Colin Nicolson, vol. 3: 1766-1767 (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2013), 198: note. The dates comes from a memorandum on a copy of this letter, Palliser, 198: note.

⁶⁶ Hugh Palliser to Secretary of the Admiralty Aug. 25, 1766, in Bernard, *Papers of Francis Bernard Vol. II*, II: 1764-1765:263. Hugh Palliser to Francis Bernard 1 Aug 1766. In Bernard, II: 1764-1765:197-98. Hugh Palliser, "Rules, Orders and Regulations"; *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser* (25 Aug. 1766), 2; Hugh Palliser, "By His Excellency Hugh Palliser 8th April, 1765" *Boston News-Letter* (Jan. 8, 1767), 2; Hugh Palliser, "By His Excellency Hugh Palliser First Day of August, 1766" *Boston News-Letter* (Jan. 8, 1767), 2. See also, Hugh Palliser, "Regulations," 308-310. Hugh Palliser to Francis Bernard Aug. 1, 1766 in Bernard, II: 1764-1765:197-98. Hugh Palliser to Secretary of the Admiralty Aug. 25, 1766, in Bernard, II: 1764-1765:263. Hugh Palliser to Francis Bernard 1 Aug 1766. In Bernard, II: 1764-1765:197-98. Hugh Palliser, "Rules, Orders and Regulations"; *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser* (25 Aug. 1766), 2; Hugh Palliser, "By His Excellency Hugh Palliser 8th April, 1765" *Boston News-Letter* (Jan. 8, 1767), 2; Hugh Palliser, "By His Excellency Hugh Palliser First Day of August, 1766" *Boston News-Letter* (Jan. 8, 1767), 2. See also, Hugh Palliser, "Regulations," 308-310. Hugh Palliser to Francis Bernard Aug. 1, 1766 in Bernard, II: 1764-1765:197-98.

Maritime communication also sped resistance, for by the time the Palliser's ship letter arrived in Massachusetts, Massachusetts whalers and the Massachusetts General Court were already complaining about the new regulations. In late August 1766, still four months before Capt. Atkins brought Governor Palliser's letter to Governor Bernard, the *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser* reported via several whaling vessels that the New England fleet was "ill treated by some of the cruisers [navy vessels] on the Labrador Coast."⁶⁷ Whaling merchants from Boston sent a letter to Palliser in Newfoundland complaining about the restrictions on their activities. Among their complaints, they objected to being restricted to whaling grounds at least three leagues from shore. Those restriction made whaling impossible in parts of the Strait of Belle Isle, where all whale migration between the Labrador Sea and the Gulf of St. Lawrence funneled through a passage just six leagues wide. At that width, the three league exclusion zone from each shoreline completely excluded British Americans from the best parts of the Strait.⁶⁸ After these complaints, Palliser modified the regulations, and violence on the coast subsided.

Publication of Palliser's proclamation only stiffened this resistance, and did so when conflict with Governors and parliament was already growing. The *Massachusetts Gazette* officially published these regulations in January 1767 and for six months after members of the Court protested what they called Palliser's "misrepresentations" of the whalers.⁶⁹ The Court complained that Palliser's proclamations damaged the Province's reputation and asked to see

⁶⁷ "Since Our Last Several Vessels Are Returned Now from the Whaling Business..." "Since Our Last Several Vessels Are Returned Now from the Whaling Business..."

⁶⁸ "Extract of a Letter dated August 30th 1766 from Boston," CNS CO 194 vol. 27: 281-282v.

⁶⁹ Malcolm Freiburg, ed., *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts 1767*, vol. 2, Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, XLIII (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1974), 361. Freiburg, 2:361.

Bernard's evidence for Palliser's allegations.⁷⁰ Bernard gave the Court a copy of Palliser's letter and notification, which he reported was "all the informations of the transactions at Newfoundland received by him."⁷¹ These documents did not salve the Court's claim that the proclamation injured the Province's good name. As the General Court saw it, the "heinous charges of Palliser against the people of this province, of robbery, piracy, murder, and in effect of treason and rebellion" conveyed to the Crown, parliament, and the ministry, "less favorable sentiments in regard to the firm and unshaken loyalty and affect of the people of this Province." As the Court put it, it would have been bad enough if Governor Bernard had only publicized the Proclamation in port towns, but printing it in the *Gazette* guaranteed a wider readership for these allegations. Even worse, the Court claimed they were "also well informed that many copies [of the proclamation] have been struck off [printed] by themselves and dispersed."⁷² The dispute over the proclamation continued through June, July, and August of 1767, concurrent to the Townshend Acts of June and July 1767. These new regulations rankled the provincials when they were already angry about provincial-imperial conflict.

The General Court and Bernard were speaking different languages. Bernard thought the Court misunderstood the powers of the Governor and the purpose of the *Gazette* as an official record. Rather officiously, Bernard wrote that he published in the *Gazette* because all colonial

⁷⁰ "Consideration of His Excellency's Message," January 30, 1767, in Freiburg, *JHRM XLIII*, 2:231. "Consideration of His Excellency's Message," January 30, 1767, in Freiburg, 2:231.

⁷¹ See also, "Letter from the Agent," June 9, 1767 in, Malcolm Freiburg, ed., *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts 1767-1768*, Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, XLIV (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1975), 33-34. See also, "Letter from the Agent," June 9, 1767 in, Freiburg, 33-34.

⁷² "Report on His Excellency's Message," Feb. 6, 1767, in Freiburg, *JHRM XLIII*, 2:256-58. "Report on His Excellency's Message," Feb. 6, 1767, in Freiburg, 2:256-58.

governors were required to republish the proclamations of other governors of “general service” or affecting their jurisdictions, the governor of Massachusetts did not have the power to investigate the truth of reports from Newfoundland and Labrador, and whalers needed to know the regulations that applied to them.⁷³ This talk about process did not mollify the Court, who complained again to Governor Bernard. They felt that he could at least cast doubt on the allegations. They argued that this would express “tenderness” for the province Bernard governed. The Court subsequently sent a letter to its agent in London, Dennys de Berdt, who lobbied Lord Shelburne, the Southern Secretary, responsible for the colonies. The Southern Secretary promised to inspect Palliser’s orders, then ordered Palliser to speak with de Berdt. De Berdt reported back to Boston that, influenced by Shelburne, Palliser promised “the greatest lenity, which is evident he did not do the last year” in the regulations, and “assures me, he has the prosperity of the fishery at heart, and will do every thing in his power to promote it.”⁷⁴ After this, Palliser revised the regulations. He also added a series of rules for adjudicating who owned a whale when multiple whaleboats claimed one carcass.⁷⁵ Massachusetts had fought the Governors and, in some part, had won. Their resistance was effective.

Ultimately, Palliser also got what he wanted, for violence in Labrador reportedly decreased. The Governor of Newfoundland issued the new regulations in August 1766. The first

⁷³ “Message from his Excellency,” Feb. 27, 1767, in Freiburg, *JHRM XLIII*, 2:340–41. “Message from his Excellency,” Feb. 27, 1767, in Freiburg, 2:340–41.

⁷⁴ DeBerdt to Committee of Boston Merchants, Mar. 14. 1767, in Albert Matthews, ed., *Letters of Dennys de Berdt 1757-1770*, vol. XIII, Reprinted from The Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Cambridge, Mass.: John Wilson and son, 1911), 452. DeBerdt to Committee of Boston Merchants, Mar. 14. 1767, in Matthews, XIII:452.

⁷⁵ Hugh Palliser, “Regulations for the Whale Fishery,” Oct. 20, 1767, CNS CO 194 vol 18: 9-10v

word of these regulations arrived in Massachusetts later that same month of Ayu, and the official publication of the regulations happened in Massachusetts in January 1767; Once more, the official proclamation lagged unofficial maritime communication. By October of 1767, the Governor of Newfoundland reported that the disorder in Labrador had abated. Writing to the Board of Trade, Palliser claimed that “that the mixed multitudes of disorderly crews from the different colonies” were more orderly, except for “a few offenders excepted amongst the New England men, who are the most difficult to manage.”⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the difficult-to-manage New Englanders, the Governor’s use of maritime communication when regulating the fisheries and restricting violence met with some success by 1767.

The threads of geographic knowledge, regulating British crews, and peace with Inuit came together in improvements to British hydrographic knowledge of Labrador in the 1760s and early 1770s. The navy’s James Cook and Michael Lane created the first high-quality charts of the Gulf of St. Lawrence coast “within the strait” of Belle Isle in 1766 and 1769.⁷⁷ In 1771, an Inuk named Sirlek piloted then-Lieutenant Roger Curtis, of the sloop *Otter*, as the sloop charted the Labrador Sea coast “without the strait” of Belle Isle.⁷⁸ Curtis claimed his exploration gave

⁷⁶ Hugh Palliser, “Report of Occurrences &c:a respecting the State of the British Fishery. 1767” n.d., CNS CO 194 vol. 17: 3-4.

⁷⁷ *The North American Pilot [...] Taken by James Cook and Michael Lane, Surveyors, Joseph Gilbert, and Other Officers in the King’s Service, Published by Permission of the Right Hon. The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty: Chiefly Engraved by the Late Thomas Jefferys, Geographer to the King [...]* (London: Printed according to Act of Parliament, and Sold by R. Sayer and J. Bennett, No. 53, in Fleet-Street, 1779). *The North American Pilot [...] Taken by James Cook and Michael Lane, Surveyors, Joseph Gilbert, and Other Officers in the King’s Service, Published by Permission of the Right Hon. The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty: Chiefly Engraved by the Late Thomas Jefferys, Geographer to the King [...]*.

⁷⁸ William H. Whiteley, “Curtis, Sir Roger,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5 (Toronto and Quebec: University of Toronto/Université Laval, 1983) Eventually Curtis was appointed Admiral of the Red. Whiteley Eventually Curtis was appointed Admiral of the Red.

unprecedented accuracy to the navy's knowledge of northern Labrador and that he demonstrated there was no DeFonte passage through the mainland of Labrador to Hudson Bay. Curtis wrote a short report about this expedition that he sent via then-governor of Newfoundland Commodore Molyneux Shuldham to the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies. Curtis then published his description and a chart of this navigation in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*.⁷⁹ The report gained some notoriety in Labrador since Curtis's claim that the land was "nothing more than a prodigious heap of barren rocks," betrayed how Curtis never voyaged past the rocky headlands into the shelter of Labrador's vast wooded bays.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Curtis understood the politics of how seamen's communication created and recreated access to Labrador's whaling, fishing, and trade. Curtis claimed that, in years gone by, robberies and murders by New England whalers provoked Inuit violence against British crews, and that in their own "uncandid representations," England's crews and Newfoundland's crews were not forthcoming about their own "inhuman conduct" against Inuit. Curtis continued by writing that "as we become somewhat better known to each other, the mutual dread seems gradually to abate" between British and Inuit.⁸¹ He issued a blood-chilling warning for the British in Labrador that Inuit "must either be civilized or extirpated In short they must

⁷⁹ Curtis to Dartmouth, "A Short Account of the Territory of Labrador." MUN CNS CO 194 vol. 30: 156-191. Roger Curtis and Daines Barrington, "Particulars of the Country of Labradore, Extracted from the Papers of Lieutenant Roger Curtis, of His Majesty's Sloop the Otter, with a Plane-Chart of the Coast. Communicated by the Honourable Daines Barrington," *Philosophical Transactions* 64 (January 1, 1774): 372-88. passim. Curtis to Dartmouth, "A Short Account of the Territory of Labrador." MUN CNS CO 194 vol. 30: 156-191. Curtis and Barrington. passim.

⁸⁰ Curtis to Dartmouth, "A Short Account," 158.

⁸¹ Curtis to Dartmouth, "A Short Account," 175.

either not *be* or be friends with us.”⁸² Addressing the conflict of fishers with Inuit, in 1765, Palliser had attempted to restrict Inuit travelling from their southern territories without a pass. In 1772, then-Governor Molyneux Shulham required the Moravian Mission settlement at Nain to discourage Inuit from frequenting the south. Neither attempt was entirely effective.⁸³

V. A Continuation of Politics by Other Means

Maritime communication was a continuation of politics by other means. At stake when regulating Labrador via maritime communication was the growth of the greatest fishery in the world, the discovery of a Northwest Passage, and, as Curtis warned, the extirpation of Inuit, meaning genocide.⁸⁴ Maritime communication informed imperial administrators, and it was also a venue where governors and provincials reimagined access to resources, proposed regulations, and resisted regulations. British-American voyages to Labrador increased during the century, at least in the aggregates of reports from shipmasters that governors used to educate their guesses about the region. British-American seamen transmitted stories about Labrador and Labrador Inuit to families, printers, merchants, navy officers, and governors. The number of British-American voyages to Labrador peaked during the 1760s. During this peak, intensified maritime communication coincided with the Imperial crisis. Governors communicated via mariners between Massachusetts, Newfoundland, and Labrador when

⁸² Curtis to Dartmouth, “A Short Account,” 175v. Emphasis in original.

⁸³ Hans J. Rollmann, “Hopedale: Inuit Gateway to the South and Moravian Settlement,” *Newfoundland & Labrador Studies* 28, no. 2 (Fall 2013): paras. 18–19. Rollmann, paras. 18–19.

⁸⁴ Jeffrey Ostler, “‘To Extirpate the Indians’: An Indigenous Consciousness of Genocide in the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes, 1750s–1810,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (2015): 587–622, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.72.4.0587>. Jeffrey Ostler.

attempting to govern the exploration and the development of the fisheries, whaling, provisioning trades, and Inuit trade. Massachusetts provincials resented and resisted the governors' efforts.

Maritime communication misinformed Governors just as it informed them, and provincials used maritime communication to reimagine access to resources in the North. Before the 1760s, some mariners' reports knowingly or unknowingly spread erroneous representations of Inuit as well as Labrador's geography. Challengers to the Hudson Bay Company monopoly referred to seamen's accounts of DeFonte's supposed Northwest Passage. Mariners' questionable reports about trading with Inuit on the coast of the Atlantic-facing Labrador Sea made it sound like New England traders had substantial advantages when trading with Labrador Inuit.

Governors used the informing and reimagining functions of maritime communication when proposing regulations for Labrador. Likewise, Massachusetts provincials used the informing and reimagining of maritime communication when resisting these regulations. During the 1760s, British Americans' violence against Labrador Inuit increased to what the Newfoundland Governor called a "state of war." Maritime communication transmitted news of this violence, and the governors of Newfoundland and Massachusetts used maritime communication to regulate and reduce this violence. Provincials resisted this regulation and resented what it insinuated about the Governors' attitudes to Massachusetts. After all, Bernard published these regulations during the passing of the Townshend Acts. Meanwhile, the British and Inuit had more contact, hydrographic knowledge of the region improved in the 1770s, and the "uncandid representations" of how the British and Inuit saw each other gradually abated.

These maritime communications were more than an independent force in the conflict of imperial, provincial, and Indigenous interests. Maritime communications were also more than an expression of power. Maritime communication did inform Governors, but Governors and provincials also used maritime communication to imagine and reimagine access to northern resources. Governors used maritime regulation to propose regulations, and provincials used maritime communication to stymie these regulations. During the Imperial Crisis, provincials and British governors contended over this north-facing, British-American maritime world where seamen's maritime communication connected Labrador to continental Massachusetts. In these maritime communications, provincials continued politics by other means.

VI. Figures and Tables

Figure 5. British Vessels from American Colonies in Newfoundland Governors' Annual Returns for the Fisheries, 1734-1795

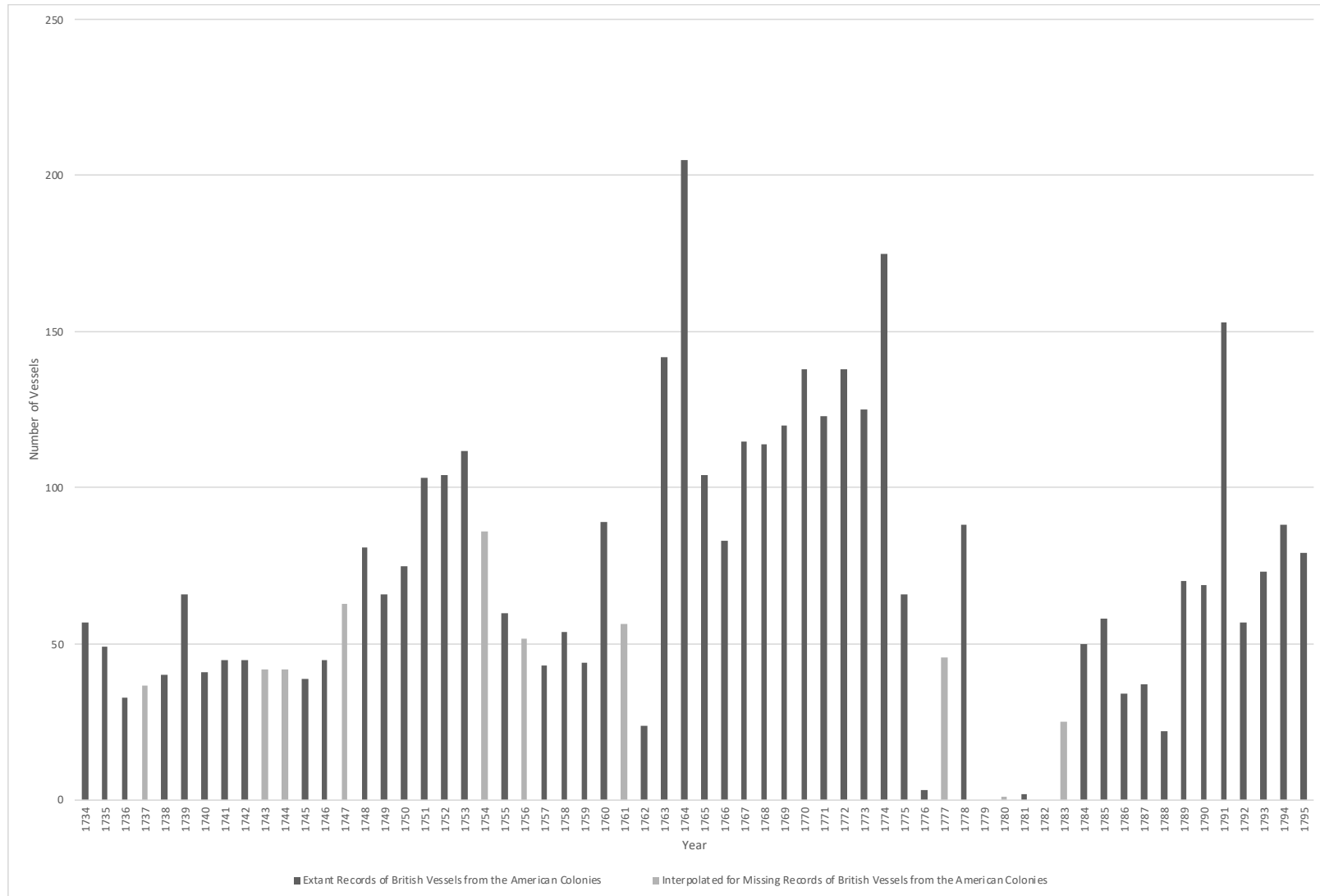


Figure 6. Boston and Salem Total Entrances from and Clearances to Newfoundland, 1752-1765, Naval Office Shipping Lists

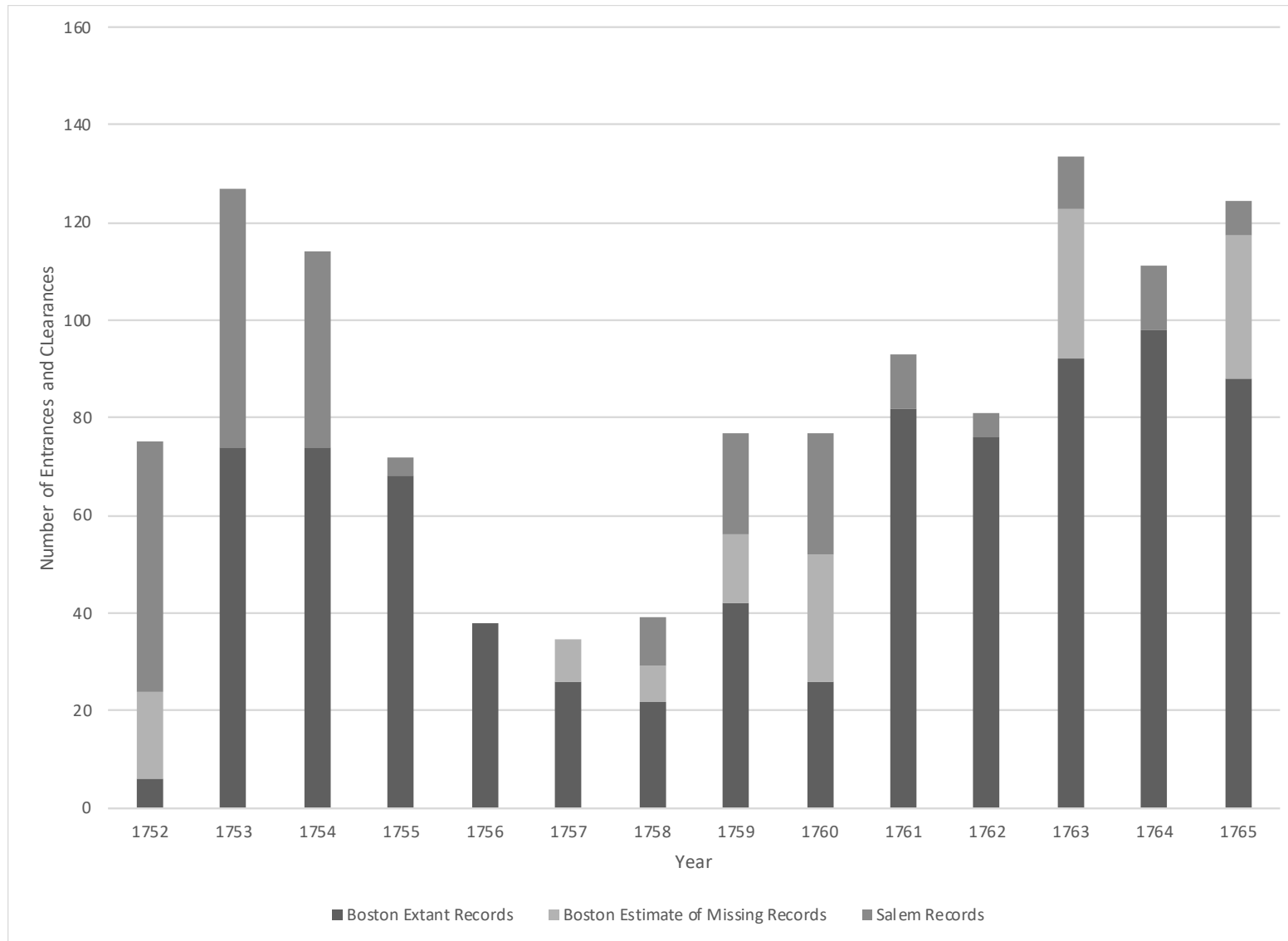


Table 8. List of General Schemes of the Fisheries, 1734-1795

Year	Record
1734	"Newfoundland Scheme of the Fishery for Year 1734," CO 194 vol. 9: 262. CNS.
1735	Fitzroy Henry Lee, "State of the Fishery at Newfoundland for the year 1735," CO 194 vol. 10: 16. CNS.
1736	Fitzroy Henry Lee, "State of the Fishery at Newfoundland for the year 1736," CO 194 vol. 10: 30. CNS.
1737	Missing record for 1737.
1738	Philip Vanburgh, "State of the Fishery for the year 1737," CO 194 vol. 10: 100. CNS.
1739	Will Sanderson, "Newfoundland Scheme of the Fishery for the Year 1739," CO 194 vol. 10: 149. CNS.
1740	Henry Medley, "Newfoundland Scheme of the Fishery for the Year 1740", CO 194 vol. 11: 24. CNS.
1741	"A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1741," CO 194 vol 11: 87. CNS.
1742	John Byng, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1742," CO 194 vol. 11: 115. CNS.
1743	Missing record for 1743.
1744	Missing record for 1744.
1745	Richard Edwards, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1745," CO 194 vol 12: 32. CNS.
1746	"A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1746," CO 194 vol 12: 50. CNS.
1747	Missing record for 1747.
1748	"A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1748," CO 194 vol. 25: 27. CNS.
1749	George Brydges Rodney, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1749," CO 194 vol. 12:124. CNS.
1750	Francis William Drake, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1750," Dec. 26, 1750,CO 194 vol 12: 195. CNS.
1751	"A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1751," CO 194 vol. 13: 23. CNS.
1752	Francis William Drake, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1752," CO 194 vol. 13:47. CNS.
1753	"A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1753," CO 194 vol. 13: 114. CNS.

Table 8. Continued

Year	Record
1754	Missing record for 1754.
1755	"A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1755," CO 194 vol. 13: 197. CNS.
1756	Missing record for 1756.
1757	Richard Edwards, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1757," Oct. 10, 1757, CO 194 vol. 13: 239. CNS.
1758	Richard Edwards, "A Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for 1758," CO 194 vol. 14: 8. CNS.
1759	Richard Edwards, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1759," CO 194 vol. 14: 41. CNS.
1760	James A. Webb, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1760," CO 194 vol. 15, pt. 2: 1. CNS.
1761	Missing record for 1761.
1762	Thomas Graves, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1763," CO 194 vol. 15, pt. 2: 3. CNS.
1763	Thomas Graves, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1763," CO 194 vol. 15, pt. 2: 5. CNS.
1764	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1764," CO 194 vol. 16: 109. CNS.
1765	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1765" CO 194 vol. 16: 188; cf. George Chalmers, "A State of the Newfoundland Fishery, in the following Years; taken from the Returns of the Admirals who commanded on that Station." CO 194 vol. 21: 24. CNS.
1766	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1766," CO 194 vol. 27: 252. CNS.
1767	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1767," CO 194 vol. 21: 14. CNS.
1768	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1768," Dec. 24, 1768, CO 194 vol. 21: 41. CNS.
1769	John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1770," CO 194 vol. 28: 121. CNS.
1770	John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1771," CO 194 vol. 30: 7. CNS.
1771	John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1771," CO 194 vol. 30: 84. CNS.
1772	Molyneux Shuldham, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year [1772]" CO 194 vol. 30: 140. CNS.

Table 8. Continued

Year	Record
1773	Molyneux Shuldham, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1773," CO 194 vol. 31: 92. CNS.
1774	Molyneux Shulham, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1774," CO 194 vol. 32: 54; See also, George Chalmers, "A State of the Newfoundland Fishery, in the following Years; taken from the Returns of the Admirals who commanded on that Station," CO 194 vol. 21: 24. CNS.
1775	Robert Duff, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1774," CO 194 vol. 32: 98. CNS.
1776	John Montagu, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1776," CO 194 vol. 33: 38. CNS.
1777	Missing record. No return for 1777. See instead, George Germaine to Montagu, Nov. 27, 1777, CO 194 vol. 34: 138-139. CNS.
1778	John Montagu, "A General Scheme of the English Fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1778," CO 194 vol. 34: 54. CNS.
1779	Richard Edwards, "General Scheme of the Fishery of Newfoundland for the Year 1779," CO 194 vol. 34: 89. CNS.
1780	Missing record for 1780.
1781	Richard Edwards, "General Scheme of the Fishery... 1781," Nov. 1, 1781, CO 194 vol. 35: 130. CNS.
1782	John Campbell, "General Scheme of the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1782," Oct. 28, 1782, CO 194 vol. 35: 152. CNS.
1783	Missing record for 1783.
1784	George Chalmers, "A State of the Newfoundland Fishery, in the following Years; taken from the Returns of the Admirals who commanded on that Station," CO 194 vol. 21: 24. CNS.
1785	John Campbell, "General Return of the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1785," Oct 28, 1785, CO 194 vol. 36: 57. CNS.
1786	John Elliot, "A General Return for the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1786," Oct. 25, 1786, CO 194 vol. 21: 48. CNS.
1787	John Elliot, "A General Return for the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1787," Oct. 31, 1787, CO 194 vol. 21: 83. CNS.
1788	John Elliot, "A General Return for the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1788," Oct. 25, 1788, CO 194 vol. 21: 177. CNS.
1789	Mark Milbanke, "General Return of the Newfoundland Fishery for 1789," CO 194 vol. 21: 264. CNS.
1790	Mark Milbanke, "A General Return for the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1790," CO 194 vol. 21: 363. CNS.

Table 8. Continued

Year	Record
1791	Mark Milbanke, "A General Return for the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1791," CO 194 vol. 21: 383. CNS.
1792	George Chalmers, "A State of the Newfoundland Fishery, in the following Years; taken from the Returns of the Admirals who commanded on that Station," CO 194 vol. 21: 24. CNS.
1793	Richard King, "A Return of the Fishery and Inhabitants at the undermentioned Ports in the Island of Newfoundland in the Year 1793," CO 194 vol. 21: 425. CNS.
1794	James Wallace, "General Return of the Newfoundland Fishery for the year 1794," CO 194 vol. 23: 496. CNS.
1795	James Wallace, "General Return of the Fishery for 1795, as well as claims of Bounty Certificates for fishing ships at Newfoundland for 1795," CO 194 vol. 39: 3. CNS.

Table 9. List of General Sketches of the Fishery on the Labrador Coast, 1764-1792

Year	Record
1763-1764	General Sketch of the Winter Fishery Upon the Labrador Coast, CO 194 vol. 16: 264. CNS.
1764	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1764," CO 194 vol. 16: 109. CNS.
1765	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1765" CO 194 vol. 16: 188. CNS.
1765	"State of the Fishery on the Labrador Coast for 1765," CO 194 vol. 16: 365. CNS.
1766	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1766," CO 194 vol. 27: 252. CNS.
1767	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1767," CO 194 vol. 21: 14. CNS.
1768	Hugh Palliser, "A General Scheme of the fishery and Inhabitants at Newfoundland for the Year 1768," Dec. 24, 1768, CO 194 vol. 21: 41. CNS.
1769	John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1769," CO 194 vol. 28: 121. CNS.
1770	John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the year 1770" CO 194 vol. 30: 7. CNS.
1771	John Byron, "A General Scheme of Fishery and Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1771," CO 194 vol. 30: 84. CNS.
1772	Molyneux Shuldham, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year [1772]" CO 194 vol.30: 140. CNS.
1773	Molyneux Shuldham, "A General Scheme of the Fishery & Inhabitants of Newfoundland for the Year 1773," CO 194 vol. 31: 92. CNS.
1784-1785	Henry Nicols, "Copy of Henry Nichols Account of the Seal Fishery in the Fall of 1784 and the Salmon Fishery of 1785 upon the Coast of Labrador. CO 194 vol 36: 78. CNS.
1785	John Campbell, "General Return of the Newfoundland Fishery for the Year 1785," Oct 28, 1785, CO 194 vol. 36: 57. CNS.
1792	"Report of the Whale Fishery in the Streights of Belle Isle and Gulph of St Lawrence and of the Seal Salmon and Cod Fisheries, upon the Coast of Labrador, in the Year 1792" CO 194 vol. 21: 389. CNS.

6. Common Winds and Uncommon Records: Maritime Communication and the Slave Trades to the Upper Guinea Coast and West Indies

New England's maritime communication extended south to the Upper Guinea Coast¹ and the West Indies. These communications saw cumulative changes during and after the 1760s. One of these cumulative changes that indicated other changes was communicating slave uprisings that hastened how accounts of the slave trade racialized white American impressions of Africans. Communicating slave uprisings can variously mean connecting people adjacent to the uprisings, informing people about the uprisings, or activating people to engage in uprisings themselves; here, it means informing people about such uprisings. Notwithstanding historians' beliefs about seamen's communication, there are few known records from before the Haitian Revolution of New England seamen before the mast communicating about slave uprisings. This absence of records raises questions about Julius Scott's widely-accepted *Common Wind* thesis that mobile, masterless African-Americans, especially seamen, spread political mobilization and political action during the Haitian Revolution.² Can the *Common Wind* thesis be applied to earlier periods? Are there British American records related to New England slavery that show

¹ Upper Guinea was not an actor's term. As a geographic term it groups together the linguistic, ethnic, and political diversity of what is now Ghana, Côte D'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, and Gambia. European and American navigators once called these regions the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Senegambia, or the Windward Coast. Sean M. Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare: A Journey into Captivity from Sierra Leone to South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 93–94, 166, 197–98.

² Scott, *The Common Wind*, 2018; Scott, "The Common Wind," 1986, 5, 60–61, 113, 115; Julius S. Scott, "Afro-American Sailors and the International Communication Network the Case of Newport Bowers," in *African Americans and the Haitian Revolution: Selected Essays and Historical Documents*, ed. Maurice Jacson and Jacqueline Bacon (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 27; Julius S. Scott, "Negroes in Foreign Bottoms: Sailors, Slaves, and Communication," in *Origins of the Black Atlantic*, ed. Laurent Dubois and Julius Sherrard Scott, *Rewriting Histories* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 69–98; Dubois, "Going to the Territory."

how seamen communicated about slave uprisings? Are there British American records related to New England supporting and extending this thesis back in time before the 1790s? At every turn, historians must shoulder the burden of proof to deliver positive evidence for their claims. We cannot argue from an absence of evidence, but the evidence to answer these questions usually seems absent.³

This chapter addresses a small piece of these thorny problems: how seamen communicated about slave uprisings on slave ships. Given that there are so few records from before the 1790s of common seamen spreading news of slave uprisings, this chapter assesses the many actors in the Rhode Island and Massachusetts slave trades of the mid-eighteenth century who communicated about violent collective actions⁴ on slave trade voyages. In addition to the many reasons why slave trade uprisings are politically and historiographically important in their own right, studying communication about violent collective actions in the slave trade is a practical way to analyze maritime communications because mentions of these discrete events can be identified and tracked through records.

This chapter argues that records of violent collective actions in the slave trade indicate that New England had redundant, robust maritime communication with the Upper Guinea Coast and the West Indies by the mid-1760s. Redundancy means that multiple actors transmitted identical or similar editions of the same communication. That redundancy made

³ For an example of how to write around this type of problem see the discussion of how enslaved people in Louisiana knew about coartación, paying for their own manumission, in Jennifer M. Spear, *Race, Sex, and Social Order in Early New Orleans* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 116, 270n68.

⁴ Merchants called these violent collective actions “misfortunes.” These so-called misfortunes included slave uprisings, resistance, rebellion, crew mutinies, and shore parties that “cut off” voyages by attacking vessels.

these communications robust. Being robust means communication worked even after many transmission links were broken or disrupted. The actors whose records document participating in maritime communication about these violent collective actions included common seamen before the mast, ship officers of the quarterdeck, merchants, printers, and families ashore (See, Figure 7. Schematic Diagram of Records of Maritime Communications in the Slave Trades, on page 309). This is significant because it shows how maritime communications connected New England, the Upper Guinea Coast, and the West Indies prior to the 1790s, without needing to use the post office and the packet service, and without needing to use newsprints and yet informing newsprints.⁵ The informal institutions of maritime communications were independent of those formal institutions of communication. This speaks to problems of ethnogenesis in the Black Atlantic and African-American culture, the effects of rumor in colonists' fears of slave conspiracy, and maritime histories of the intersections of class formation with race formation.

The first section of this chapter outlines how people communicated about violent collective actions in the slave trade. It sets the scene in Rhode Island, the heart of the American trade with the Upper Guinea Coast, when that trade grew from the 1730s onwards. Merchants and shipmasters communicated about violent collective actions via letters and by "speaking" from vessel to vessel. Crew members also communicated about the slave trade. Their words were poorly documented but do appear in the narratives of Rhode Island ship carpenter John Hoxse, abolitionist John Woolman, and Venture Smith, an enslaved African man that a Rhode

⁵ Scott, "The Common Wind," 1986.

Island vessel transported to Rhode Island. These slave trade communications persisted even after New England states officially prohibited the transatlantic slave trade during the 1780s.

The second section shows early communication between coastal Africa and New England from before the 1760s. It uses case studies of violent collective actions on two voyages, chosen for being relatively well documented, originating from Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and occurring during the early years of New England's African trade. A single, detailed letter that exists in multiple versions and editions documents the slave uprising on the voyage of the sloop *Little George*, master George Scott (1730). The letter describes the fearful story of how a shipmaster, crew, and enslaved captives were at odds with each other, even on a vessel in distress. Also from these early years, the just-as-fearful story of the voyage of the snow *Jolly Batchelor*, master John Cutler (1743), which a shore party cut off, shows how communication about the voyage traveled within the slave trade.

The third section shows the redundant, robust communication between the Upper Guinea Coast, the West Indies, and New England during the 1760s. It does so with two of the best-documented voyages from the first plateau of New England's African trade, after the Seven Years War. In 1765, captive slaves rose up during a voyage of the brigantine *Sally*, master Esek Hopkins (1764-66). Maritime communications about that voyage traveled through many routes to and from West Africa, the West Indies, and New England. Contemporaneous to the *Sally*, news of the brigantine *Othello*, master Thomas Rogers (1764-65), shared some of the very same maritime communication routes as the *Sally*, so the *Sally* was not unique. The epilogue touches on how these communications continued even after the official abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, and the implications of these communications for arguments that

seamen and enslaved people constituted a motley crew who led the age of revolutions, meaning a crowd of many sorts of oppressed and marginalized peoples.

I. Uprisings and Communications

Transatlantic slave trade voyages are at the crux of debates over ethnogenesis in the Black Atlantic. Historians have interpreted these voyages as crucibles of Black Atlantic and African-American identity, ordeals that African cultures survived, and traumas that preceded African creolization in the Americas or, as once argued but now widely dismissed, acculturation to Euro-American cultures.⁶ Historians now appreciate how resistance was ubiquitous on slave trade voyages where uprisings were frequent, just as we now appreciate how enslaved people never stopped resisting the institutions of plantation slavery. Up to 10% of transatlantic slave trade voyages had a collective and violent rebellion of Africans against crews, including attacks from the shore. David Richardson and David Eltis argue these uprisings increased the costs of the trade enough to reduce enslavement by one million people over time.⁷ Richardson urges

⁶⁶ e.g., Melville J. Herskovits, *The American Negro: A Study in Racial Crossing* (Bloomington, Ind.: Journal of American Statistical Association, 1928); Stanley Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 31, 81; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); James H. Sweet, *Recreating Africa: Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Rediker, *The Slave Ship*; James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Mapping Ethnogenesis in the Early Modern Atlantic," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011): 181, 184, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.68.2.0181>; For a different approach, based on commotization, see, Stephanie E. Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

⁷ Herbert Aptheker, "American Negro Slave Revolts," *Science & Society* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1937): 512; Lorenzo J. Greene, "Mutiny on the Slave Ships," *Phylon* 5, no. 4 (1944): 347, 353; Jay Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade, 1700-1807* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 90–102; Antonio Bly, "Crossing the Lake of Fire: Slave Resistance during the Middle Passage, 1720-1842," *The Journal of Negro History* 83, no. 3 (Summer 1998): 181; Eric Robert Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 4; David Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2674419>.

historians to look for African-centered explanations for these uprisings because explanations based on European slavers' failures do not explain spatial and temporal variations in the frequency of uprisings that corresponded with African political breakdowns and the erosion of norms against trading captive soldiers and domestic slaves into the transatlantic slave trade.⁸ Scholars who work on African-centred histories of the slave trade emphasize the importance of mutually-intelligible languages, including Arabic, in uprisings and the prominence of African soldiers in uprisings and revolts that were, as Vincent Brown argues, actually warfare.⁹

Whites frequently rumored about slave conspiracies and uprisings with or without evidence of actual conspiracy, resistance, rebellion, refusal, or war.¹⁰ Some historians argue that the rumors associated with alleged conspiracies were a field for political discourse where free colonists blamed discord on rumors instead of recognizing their own complicity in slavery. Others argue that rumors associated with uprisings originated locally and spontaneously among enslaved people.¹¹ Some histories argues that many alleged slave conspiracies were never more than "loose talk" by people who did not intend to act violently; others histories point out that,

⁸ Richardson, "Shipboard Revolts, African Authority, and the Atlantic Slave Trade," 72; A. Marcum and D. Skarbek, "Why Didn't Slaves Revolt More Often during the Middle Passage?," *Rationality and Society* 26, no. 2 (May 1, 2014): 236, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043463113513001>; Vincent Brown, *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020).

⁹ Marcum and Skarbek, "Why Didn't Slaves Revolt More Often during the Middle Passage?," 236; Brown, *Tacky's Revolt*, see also,.

¹⁰ Gordon S. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (July 1982): 407, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1919580>; Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery, and Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century Manhattan*, 1st ed (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 55–56; Trevor G. Burnard, *Jamaica in the Age of Revolution*, 1st edition (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), In studies of early American slavery.

¹¹ Steven Hahn, "'Extravagant Expectations' of Freedom: Rumour, Political Struggle, and The Christmas Insurrection Scare of 1865 in the American South," *Past & Present* 157, no. 1 (November 1, 1997): 125, <https://doi.org/10.1093/past/157.1.122>; Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies*, Cornell paperbacks (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 2009); Klooster, "Slave Revolts," 414–15.

as far as British law was concerned, conspiracy required no intent to act since the talk itself was a crime.¹² Another body of work redoubles claims that these alleged conspiracies were real expressions of enslaved peoples' intent to use violence. The archival turn in recent works on uprisings, conspiracy, and rumor interrogates how judicial records and print misrepresented and concealed slave conspiracies, representing these conspiracies and uprisings in terms that made sense to Euro-Americans, hiding Black political thought, dismissing the efficacy of Black women, scapegoating Indigenous people, imagining that enslaved people mirrored settler's military hierarchies, and blaming uprisings on foreign interference in domestic affairs. Official records always concealed the efficacy of enslaved people.¹³ Rumors did not just facilitate uprisings; Anne Eller argues that emancipated people used rumors to defend themselves against re-enslavement. These rumors by emancipated people amount to archives of the epistemologies and non-state communications of people who written records usually exclude.¹⁴

¹² Michael P. Johnson, "Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (October 2001): 272, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2674506>; Thomas J. Davis, "Conspiracy and Credibility: Look Who's Talking, about What: Law Talk and Loose Talk," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 169, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3491646>; Robert A. Gross, "Forum: The Making of a Slave Conspiracy, Part 2," *William and Mary Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January 2002): 135–36.

¹³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 27, 73; James Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule: Power and Subversion in the British Atlantic during the Age of Revolution*, Critical Perspectives on Empire (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Jason T. Sharples, "Discovering Slave Conspiracies: New Fears of Rebellion and Old Paradigms of Plotting in Seventeenth-Century Barbados," *The American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (June 1, 2015): 811, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/120.3.811>; Greg L. Childs, "Secret and Spectral: Torture and Secrecy in the Archives of Slave Conspiracies," *Social Text* 33, no. 4 (December 2015): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-3315886>; Aisha K. Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba* (Chapel Hill, N.C: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 3–4, 228–29; Justin Pope, "Inventing an Indian Slave Conspiracy on Nantucket, 1738," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 15, no. 3 (2017): 537–38, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.2017.0019>.

¹⁴ Anne Eller, "Rumors of Slavery: Defending Emancipation in a Hostile Caribbean," *The American Historical Review* 122, no. 3 (June 1, 2017): 656–57, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/122.3.653>.

Enslavers' records make insurgency seem like a contagion instead of a collective enterprise "from below."¹⁵ This problem of working with biased records affects all work on insurgency.

Ironically, the Motley Crew thesis that seamen and slaves led revolutionary crowds may reflect the view "from above" as seen by those who lumped seamen and slaves into one crowd of opposition. After all, as Emma Christopher argues, seamen on slave ships discovered how whiteness was the source of freedom that divided them from slaves.¹⁶ There were Black and enslaved merchants and Black and enslaved seamen, especially in Bermuda. When Clarence Maxwell assesses the Motley Crew thesis as it applies to the Bermuda Conspiracy of 1761, he finds that the uprising originated in threats to the livelihoods of black and enslaved merchants and seamen but points out that this was the final uprising on that island, not a prelude to later revolution.¹⁷ When assessing the recurrent rumor that precipitated so many slave uprisings, viz. that local officials suppressed a monarch's emancipation proclamation, Wim Klooster synthesizes histories covering two hundred years of the French, British, and Spanish West Indies and finds only two probable cases when enslaved people said this rumor came from seafaring laborers.¹⁸ Despite rulers' fears that a motley crew of seamen and slaves led

¹⁵ See, Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, 220.

¹⁶ Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807* (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 229; Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 261.

¹⁷ Maxwell, "Enslaved Merchants, Enslaved Merchant-Mariners, and the Bermuda Conspiracy of 1761," 178; Jarvis, "Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783."

¹⁸ Klooster, "Slave Revolts," 414–15 The cases are thin reeds for hanging general claims that sailors spread rumors for slaves: a white sailor "may have set off the rumor" in Virginia in 1730, and a ship's carpenter was credited with bringing the rumor from Cádiz to Puerto Rico in 1812.

insurgencies, the documentary evidence that seamen communicated uprisings and revolution is thin and contested.

A conceptual error is at the root of this problem: “slaves” were not separate from “seamen” because “servant for life” was a legal condition while “seaman” was an occupation. This occupation was just one of the types of work for a servant for life (slave), an indentured servant, or a free worker for wages. Many seamen were free and enslaved Blacks, including on slave ship crews. On these ships, some enslaved African guardians and translators mediated between captives and crews.¹⁹ Many “seamen of color,” in the language of the time, were enslaved, had once been enslaved, or were Portuguese African, African-American, or Indigenous American free people of color who risked enslavement if captured.²⁰ To be precise, Jay Coughtry calculates that twenty-one percent of the crew members on Rhode Island slavers were Black.²¹ Because of the prevalence of enslaved mariners, this chapter distinguishes between “crew before the mast,” which included enslaved mariners, and “enslaved captives,” who were the people that slave ships transported as cargo from the Upper Guinea Coast to labor in the Americas.

Rhode Island’s slave trades are the best setting for analyzing this problem because Rhode Island dominated the mainland British-American slave trades and the African trades in

¹⁹ Stephanie E. Smallwood, “African Guardians, European Slave Ships, and the Changing Dynamics of Power in the Early Modern Atlantic,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 64, no. 4 (October 2007): 679, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25096747>.

²⁰ James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, “Mapping Ethnogenesis in the Early Modern Atlantic”; Jarvis, “Maritime Masters and Seafaring Slaves in Bermuda, 1680-1783,” 594–98; Cecelski, *The Waterman’s Song*; Bolster, *Black Jacks*; Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807*, 51–54; Shoemaker, *Native American Whalemen and the World*.

²¹ Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 60. 7% of the population of the port of Newport was Black.

slaves and rum dominated Rhode Island's overseas trade.²² The British-American transatlantic slave trade was, in the words of Rhode Island slave trade historian Jay Coughtry, "all-but-coterminous" with Rhode Island's trade to Upper Guinea, and that Upper Guinea trade grew out of Rhode Island's West Indies trade.²³ Fifty-six percent of North American slaving voyages departed from Rhode Island, another 12% of North American voyages departed from Massachusetts, 14% departed South Carolina, and 11% departed New York.²⁴ (See, Table 10. Number of Transatlantic Slave Trade Voyages Departing from North America by Region (TSTD 2.0 data), on page 310) According to these measures and others, the Rhode Island trade was the core of the American slave trade.

This chapter also analyzes voyages from Massachusetts on the grounds that the Massachusetts trade overlapped with the Rhode Island trade. Sometimes residents of both colonies owned shares in the same voyages. Some voyages departed from or entered ports in one colony and then the other colony, say, being owned in Boston but crewed and provisioned in Newport, Providence, or Bristol. Also, the print cultures of Massachusetts and Rhode Island overlapped because Rhode Islanders read the Boston prints, and the Boston prints reported on Rhode Island happenings. Rhode Island's own newsprints only began to print in 1758 with the

²² Christy Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 2; Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 8, 25.

²³ Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 6, 21.

²⁴ The data of clearance by region are imperfect representations of the American slave trade: It was possible for a voyage to be multi-legged, stopping at multiple ports in the Americas, or registered in part to owners in multiple regions. Other measures show similar patterns of Rhode Island dominating the British American slave trade, such as numbers of enslaved Africans disembarked by region, or ownership of voyages by region, and as the slave trade became officially prohibited, traders used these methods to conceal their slaving voyages.

Newport Mercury, followed by the *Providence Gazette* in 1762. So, Massachusetts and Rhode Island shared their slave trades and print culture.

This chapter focuses on the mid-century years from the 1730s to the 1790s because those years show the New England slave trade's growth to its fullest volume. (See Figure 8. Number of Transatlantic Slave Trade Voyages Departed: Massachusetts and Rhode Island, 1645-1866 (TSTD 2.0 data), on page 311). It is unclear how Rhode Island's slave trade began because Rhode Island's merchants were so secretive.²⁵ At any rate, only 26 transatlantic slaving voyages from Rhode Island and Massachusetts are known to have occurred before 1726. The bulk of Rhode Island voyages took place between the 1730s and 1807. The number of voyages dipped in the 1740s when French-English hostilities reduced clearances during King George's War, then grew from the late 1740s until 1774. Effective December 1, 1774, the Continental Congress boycotted slave trading under non-importation. During this boycott, the New England transatlantic slave trade stopped entirely until 1783. By comparison, Massachusetts' slave trades that began during the seventeenth century originated earlier than the Rhode Island slave trades. The Massachusetts slave trades took off between the 1720s and 1774, with the bulk of Massachusetts slave trade voyages occurring between 1740 and 1769, and with another, smaller peak after 1783.²⁶ For both jurisdictions, the slave trades grew during the midcentury.

Postwar, the slave trade grew to new heights until federal abolition pushed voyages underground. The Massachusetts and Rhode Island slave trades resumed after the war when

²⁵ Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 21, 231–38.

²⁶ James A. Rawley and Stephen D. Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History*, Revised edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 277–304.

traders ignored state case law and legislation that officially prohibited involvement in the trade. These laws took effect in 1784 for Massachusetts and in 1787 for Rhode Island. Domestically, a series of Massachusetts cases during the 1780s, included *Brom and Bett v. John Ashley* and trials involving Quock Walker ruled that slavery was unconstitutional under the Massachusetts state constitution. Britain's Slave Trade Act (1807) abolished the transatlantic slave trade effective 1807, and the United States Slave Trade Statute (1807) did the same for United States vessels effective January 1, 1808. These prohibitions substantially decreased the number of declared slaving voyages but did not end the trade.²⁷ After the Revolution, the DeWolf (D'Wolf) family of Bristol became the largest slave traders in Rhode Island by finding ever-more creative ways to cheat these laws, such as registering their vessels outside of Rhode Island or claiming to land slaves in Georgia before proceeding to trade these slaves in Cuba.²⁸ The intercolonial slave trades were integral to this economy. Even as the once-mercantilist regulations that governed trade liberalized, traders continued to ship enslaved people between regions of the Americas.²⁹

II. Maritime Communication in the Slave Trades

The best-documented communications of the slave trades are the letters shipmasters and merchants sent to each other. Some of these letters directed greetings to shipmasters' families. Shipmasters and merchants sent these letters by private conveyance on vessels to and from continental North America, the Upper Guinea Coast, and the West Indies. These letters

²⁷ See, "The Rhode Island Slave Trade: An Accounting" in Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 25-42.

²⁸ Clark-Pujara, *Dark Work*, 82–83, 183 n9; Rawley and Behrendt, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 325, 327–29.

²⁹ O'Malley, *Final Passages*, 7–8.

typically included instructions for the shipmaster, updates on market conditions, and reports about other shipmasters and vessels. John Duncan, master of the brigantine *Othello*, wrote two mostly-typical letters in 1770 and sent these letters to the vessels' owners, merchants Samuel Vernon and William Vernon of Newport. Duncan dated the first letter August 21 in Anomabu and sent it by Duncan via the master of another vessel, Peleg Clarke. Duncan wrote there was so much Rhode Island rum traded in Anomabu that the price of rum was little more than water. Even as he wrote the letter, yet another Rhode Island rum trader arrived, Capt. Thomas Rogers. Duncan noted in this first letter that he had not written to his family.³⁰ In a second letter that Duncan dated October 12 at Anomabu and via Peleg Clark and Capt. Woozle, Duncan again related trading conditions and listed eight rum vessels at that place and the price of rum. He closed the second letter by writing, "Please remember me to our family as I do not write them."³¹ These communications between shipmaster and merchant preceded newspapers, transmitted commercial information, and directed shipmasters' correspondents to greet their families on their behalf. These postscripts connected families to maritime communications.

Shipmasters and mates communicated orally with each other at sea. "Speaking a vessel" at sea passed information from vessel to vessel, usually navigation information, but also other key news including reports about vessels with uprisings. On April 17, 1757, just after departing the trading factory on Bunce Island in the Sierra Leone River, the sloop *Good Hope*, master Alexander Urquhart, spoke the schooner *Gambia*, master Rod McCloud. The *Gambia* reported

³⁰ John Duncan to Samuel Vernon and William Vernon, August 21, 1770, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 21676, N-YHS.

³¹ John Duncan to Samuel Vernon and William Vernon, "To Messrs. Saml. & Wm. Vernon," October 12, 1770, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 21641, N-YHS.

that a third vessel, master Dundass, bound from the Gambia to West Indies “with 150 prime slaves on board, was cut off, and all the ship’s crew put to death save the carpenter and boy and run the vessel ashore.”³² The vessel in question was the snow *Mary*, master Alexander Dundass, from London. After this, the *Good Hope* voyaged from Sierra Leone to St. Kitt’s while the *Gambia* traced a similar route, first to Bunce Island in the Sierra Leone River and then to St. Kitt’s and Rhode Island. In this way, news spread from one vessel to another while under sail.³³

As the Massachusetts and Rhode Island slave trades grew, news of violent collective actions originated on local vessels more often. In the early days of the colonial press, the printed stories of slave uprisings, crew mutinies, and attacks from shore usually came from England and were usually stories about vessels from England. In one case, the *Boston News-Letter* of 1731 reprinted reports from Bristol that there had been recent slave uprisings on several vessels on the Gold Coast, “to quell whom the sailors were obliged to kill several and some of them lost their lives.” These vessels included a Glasgow sloop that letters from Anomabu wrote was carried off on December 7, 1730, when “140 slaves rose,” killing the mate and most of the crew.³⁴ The *BNL* of 1737 printed a letter extract directly from the snow *Prince of Orange*, Capt. Japhet Bird, telling of a voyage in which over 100 enslaved male captives jumped overboard on March 14, with 33 of them dying. The letter writer alleged that, “The

³² Sam Gould, “Journal of the Sloop Good Hope, Master Alexander Urquhart, Kept by Sam Gould” (1757), Apr. 17, 1757, IMA 4Q 806B-145, NBWMRL, New Bedford, Mass.

³³ Voyages Database, “Voyage 25034, Good Hope (1756),” Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, 2016, <http://slavevoyages.org/voyage/25034/variables>; Voyages Database, “Voyage 36219, Gambia (1757),” Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, 2016, <http://slavevoyages.org/voyage/36219/variables>; Voyages Database, “Voyage 77246, Mary (1756),” Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, 2016, <http://slavevoyages.org/voyage/77246/variables>.

³⁴ *Boston News-Letter* (Sept. 9, 1731) in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. II The Eighteenth Century (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931), 431n.

reason I have learned since of this misfortune was owing to one of their countrymen, who came on board and in a joking manner told the slaves that they were first to have their eyes put out, and then to be eaten, with a great many other nonsensical falsities”³⁵ These slavers claimed that what enslaved captives heard about their captivity was nonsense. Yet, slavers are unreliable witnesses to the subjectivity of enslaved people.

By midcentury, local printers published news of uprisings on local slave ships more often than before. The *BNL* of 1747 reported that according to a letter from the Coast of Guinea via Barbados dated January 13 a ship of enslaved captives off Cape Coast Castle rose up against one Captain Beer of Rhode Island “and killed the said master and all the crew, except the two masters” who escaped by jumping overboard and swimming ashore.³⁶ The *BNL* of 1765 reported that William Preest, chief mate of the brigantine *Hope* of New London, master Thomas Goold, participated in a crew mutiny in which the crew murdered the ship’s captain in Senegal. Preest later protested that he had not actually participated in the killing and only helped to throw the body of the already-dead captain overboard after two of the other ship officers had already struck the mortal blows that killed Goold. During the subsequent voyage to St. Thomas, the captive slaves rose up and killed one or two of the crew members. The surviving crew then killed seven or eight of the slaves before the Spanish captured the vessel.³⁷ Readers of New

³⁵ Elizabeth Donnan, ed., “No. 200. Extract of a Letter from on Board the Prince of Orange of Bristol, Capt. Japhet Bird.” Boston Weekly News-Letter, Sept. 15, 1737,” in *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. II The Eighteenth Century (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931), 460–61; Voyages Database 2.0, “Voyage 16873, Prince of Orange (1737),” Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database 2.0, 2019, <http://slavevoyages.org/voyage/16873/variables>.

³⁶ *BNL* (May 7, 1747) in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932), 51n.

³⁷ *BNL* (Mar. 7, 1765) in Donnan, III: New England and the Middle Colonies:71.

England's midcentury prints digested occasional stories in their weekly diet of the freshest advices, foreign and domestic.

Seamen on slave ships feared slave uprisings and said as much. One-time ship's carpenter and Rhode Island slaver John Hoxse wrote four pages about a 1795 Rhode Island slave trade voyage and uprising. Hoxse wrote that the "horrors" of a slaving voyage were "almost impossible to picture."³⁸ The vessel was purportedly the snow *Fair Eliza*, master Charles Slocum, owned by the DeWolf family of Bristol.³⁹ The voyage ran from Bristol, Rhode Island to the trading fort at Gorée, off Senegal, then followed the current down the coast, trading at Isle de Los, Cape Mount, Elmina, Anomabu, and Whydah before sailing for Havana. The vessel was short-handed with a crew of just ten and 200 captives. One day the *Fair Eliza's* watch discovered that about twenty of the captive people had cut off their irons with a knife.⁴⁰ The

³⁸ John Hoxse, *The Yankee Tar : An Authentic Narrative of the Voyages and Hardships of John Hoxse* (Northampton [Mass.]: Printed by J. Metcalf for the author, 1840), 14 italics in original.

³⁹ The narrative of Hoxse's voyage has the ring of truth but the tarnish of embellishment. On the side that Hoxse's voyage has the ring of truth, many of Hoxse's details are consistent with the vessel called snow *Fair Eliza*, and roughly overlap with a voyage of that vessel from December 1795. That snow *Fair Eliza* principally embarked captives at Anomabu and principally disembarked them at Savannah, not Hoxse's Havana. The error is similar enough to be an honest mistake in the records, but the DeWolf family was also known for claiming to disembark slaves in British America while actually disembarking slaves in Cuba. Hoxse writes that he voyaged from Bristol, traded on the Upper Guinea coast from Gorée to Whydah but principally at Anomabu, took on 216 slaves, of whom 191 survived to disembark at Havana. The Transatlantic Slave Trade database includes six other voyages of vessels named *Fair Eliza* with various masters departing from Rhode Island including Newport and Bristol between 1792 and 1800 owned by Charles DeWolf and Jeremiah Ingraham, 115 tons, taking on between 44 and 136 slaves principally at Anomabu, the Gold Coast, and other unspecified African locations, and disembarking slaves principally at Havana, Savannah, and other unspecified American Ports. On the side of embellishment, there is no entry in the (incomplete) Transatlantic Slave Trade Database for a 1795 voyage of the brig, snow, or ship *Fair Eliza*, there is no entry for a master Slocum, and the *Fair Eliza* vessel that sailed in the 1790s was a (two-masted, square-rigged) snow, which a late-century ship's carpenter would be unlikely to misname as a (two-masted, square-rigged) brig, and Hoxse claimed it took on 216 captives of whom 191 survived to disembark at Havana, while the snow *Fair Eliza* took on between 44 and 136 captives. See, Hoxse, 11–14; Voyages Database 2.0, "Voyage 36619, Snau Fair Eliza (1796)," Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database 2.0, 2019, <http://slavevoyages.org/voyage/36619/variables>.

⁴⁰ Hoxse, *Yankee Tar*, 12–13.

crew thwarted what Hoxse called the captives' "diabolical designs."⁴¹ Hoxse wrote of the enslaved people, "Their yelling, gnashing their teeth, and their glaring eyeballs" would terrorize anyone.⁴² After that incident, the crew kept a "most vigilant watch" over the enslaved people, "hardly closing our eyes, night or day."⁴³ Hoxse warned other seamen to keep constant vigilance against enslaved captives "massacring the whole ship's company."⁴⁴ Hoxse concluded that the slave trade was "a most wicked and cruel business" where "no *honest* man" shipped twice.⁴⁵ This tradesman who worked on a slave ship warned others to beware of captive slaves, spread fear of uprisings, and advised against signing on to an African voyage at all.

Seamen from slave ship crews told other seamen about violence on slave trade voyages. In 1772, Quaker abolitionist John Woolman took passage from Pennsylvania to England on the ship *Mary and Elizabeth*, master James Spark. He refused to sleep in the passengers' cabin due to certain eccentric beliefs that he held. Instead, Woolman lodged with the crew in the forecastle and listened in on their talk. The things he overheard appalled him. He wrote that he had "frequent" opportunities to hear "conversation amongst the sailors, in respect to the voyages to Africa" and about "the manner of bringing the deeply oppressed slaves into our islands."⁴⁶ He judged that the "grievous oppression" and "depravity" of the slave trade

⁴¹ Hoxse, 11.

⁴² Hoxse, 12.

⁴³ Hoxse, 13.

⁴⁴ Hoxse, 14.

⁴⁵ Hoxse, 14 italics in original.

⁴⁶ John Woolman, *The Works of John Woolman. In Two Parts*. (Philadelphia: Printed by Joseph Crukshank, in Market-Street, between Second and Third Streets, 1774), 216. See also, 215. On Woolman's abolitionism and condemnation of sailing as a trade that promoted depravity, see, Woolman, 226–27, 408–12. Geoffrey Plank,

corrupted seamen. Woolman did not give details. Hoxse gave more particulars. He wrote, “The hardships these poor negroes undergo on their voyage from Africa, by being stowed as they are, in the hold of a vessel, iron by the feet, two and two, and also irons on their hands, with only room enough to lie down side by side, beggars description.”⁴⁷ Woolman writes that crew before the mast told each other about these transatlantic slave voyages, and Hoxse writes some of what they said.

Early New England printers published a few narratives by slave trade survivors who later became mariners, including Venture Smith and Ukawsaw Gronniosaw. These narratives tend not to detail the transatlantic passage.⁴⁸ Slavers captured Broteer, later known as Venture Smith, somewhere on the savanna when he was a child and brought him to the Atlantic coast. There, Robertson Mumford, who was steward on a Rhode Island vessel, bought Broteer, renamed him, and shipped him to Rhode Island.⁴⁹ The entirety of what Smith prints about the transatlantic voyage was that it was an “ordinary passage,” although with high mortality from smallpox, with about 60 of 260 enslaved people dying before Barbados.⁵⁰ During his adulthood

“Sailing with John Woolman: The Millennium and Maritime Trade,” *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 1 (2008): 46–81, <https://doi.org/10.1353/eam.0.0012>.

⁴⁷ Hoxse, *Yankee Tar*, 13.

⁴⁸ Equiano, bought by a man in the navy, was an exception, see Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837), 55.

⁴⁹ Smith wrote that he was born in Dukandarra, Guinea in the Dukandarra tribe, but it is unclear where this location was. Paul Lovejoy deduces that “it is possible that the evidence indicates a Fulani background, in which case he might have come from north of Dahomey or some region in the middle Volta River basin, inland from the Gold Coast, although he also might have come from areas where there were no Fulani livestock herders, such as Bono (Brong) country to the north of Akyem and east of Asante. On the basis of his references to cattle and other livestock, it seems highly probable that he came from somewhere in the savanna, not the forested region close to the coast.” Paul E. Lovejoy, “The African Background of Venture Smith,” in *Venture Smith and the Business of Slavery and Freedom*, ed. James Brewer Stewart (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 36. ⁴⁹

⁵⁰ Smith, *Narrative*, 13.

in Rhode Island and Connecticut, Smith saved the wages he earned in the maritime work of fishing, lobstering, whaling, trading, and other jobs to buy his own freedom, the freedom of his family, and the freedom of three other men. At age 69, he printed his memoirs in New London.⁵¹ Ukawsaw Gronniosaw gave more details than Smith about the middle passage and later became a seafarer when he shipped as the cook on a New York privateer. A Bath, UK, press published the first edition of Gronniosaw's narrative in 1772, and Samuel Southwick of Newport reprinted it in 1774.⁵² Such narratives were one way that transatlantic slave trade survivors and mariners informed printers.

III. Before the 1760s

Six Rhode Island vessels before the 1760s are known to have had violent collective actions, and some of these vessels have records with some detail.⁵³ The narrative of the voyage of the sloop *Little George*, master George Scott (1730), is detailed enough to see how crew members and captives were each other's antagonists even on a vessel in distress. The voyage of the snow *Jolly Batchelor*, master John Cutler (1743), details how maritime communications from the Upper Guinea Coast spread beyond the reach of the Post Office and packet boats, aided by prints but not dependent on prints.

⁵¹ Smith, 27, 29.

⁵² James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, Written by Himself* (Bath, U.K. and Newport, R.I.: Reprinted and Sold by S. Southwick in Queen Street, 1774), 28; Equiano gives more details, see Equiano, *Life of Olaudah Equiano*, 55.

⁵³ For a list of the seventeen recorded uprisings in the 934 known voyages of the Rhode Island transatlantic slave trade Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 151; Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 179–213; Voyages Database 2.0, "Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database 2.0," Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database 2.0, 2019, <http://slavevoyages.org/>.

The story of the voyage of the sloop *Little George*, master George Scott (1730), represents the early years of the New England slave trade when there was little redundancy in the transmission of this story—or others—to the Americas. On June 1, 1730, the sloop *Little George* departed the Banana Islands near the Sierra Leone River estuary with a crew and enslaved captives on board.⁵⁴ This small, single-masted, 60-ton vessel was crowded with eight crew and ship officers and 96 captive people. According to the master, after five days at sea and about 100 leagues (ca. 345 miles) from land, the doctor and two crew members on the watch brought all of the captive people onto the deck while the other five crew members and officers were below deck. Some of the enslaved men broke through the mid-deck barricade, threw two of the crew on the watch overboard, and killed the third crew member outright.⁵⁵ These formerly-enslaved captives made the surviving crew members into their own captives.

Scott's narrative is a remarkably detailed account of the wooden world turned upside down during a successful slave-ship uprising. Someone in the cabin at the stern fired a pistol shot, causing most of the captives to rush to the vessel's bow, but two or three of the unchained men remained toward the stern, laughing. The laughing men closed the previously-open scuttle to the cabin, capturing the surviving crew inside. The crew continued to shoot from the cabin, striking and killing two of the formerly-captive slaves. One of these African men,

⁵⁴ Coughtry, *The Notorious Triangle*, 72, 70–80. A typical sloop is small and rigged with a single mast but with a deck and hold. Rhode Island slaving vessels were among the smallest in the transatlantic trade and were distinguished by a taller-than-usual 'tween-deck level of four to five feet that held slaves. This enabled them to fill their holds faster, leave the coast sooner, and reduce the risks of illness on the vessels. In addition, the shallow draft of these vessels compared to larger French and English ships allowed the Rhode Island vessels to sail further upriver and closer to shore.

⁵⁵ George Scott, "Capt. George Scott Narrative, 1730" (1730), Harris Family papers, 1640-1860 Mss. 17, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence; "Since Our Last We Have Had a More Particular Account of the Negroes Rising," *Boston News-Letter*, May 6, 1731; Elizabeth Donnan, ed., "The Voyage of the *Little George*, 1730," in *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), 118–21.

armed with an ax, destroyed a bomb of gunpowder in a bottle that the captive crew members attempted to light from the cabin. This started a fire, and a fire on a ship was always dangerous. The fire spread to the powder store, causing the cabin to explode and blowing open the deck. The explosion destroyed the clothing of the surviving crew and gravely injured the captain and the second mate with severe burns. The ship officers sent the ship's boy from the smoky wreck of the cabin to negotiate with their former captives. The former captives sent the ship's boy back without a settlement.

The negotiating position of the captives was strong: dozens of them who had everything to gain by escaping a one-way voyage versus a small and injured crew. As the smoke cleared, the crew members in the cabin fired more shots at the captives, striking several of them. The captives searched the vessel's hold and, finding some powder, loaded the carriage gun and the swivel gun. They turned these small cannons on the scuttle and bulkhead of the cabin. While one man held the carriage gun ready to fire, another man pulled open the scuttle. Suddenly, the crew members inside the cabin shot the man at the cannon. He fell overboard, dead. With the gun unmanned, the breech fell down, the muzzle swung skywards, and the round shot into the air, wasting the scarce powder. Improbably, one glass bottle of powder had survived the earlier explosion, and the crew was still armed. The captives needed a new tactic.

What happened next was exceptional: the captives successfully navigated the vessel almost three hundred fifty miles back to shore, making land within forty miles of their initial departure. During this four-day voyage, they threw water and billets of wood down into the cabin, attempting to strike their assailants below and wet the remaining powder. When the vessel came near the shore, it risked being wrecked in the shallows, so the freed captives stood

off the coast for another four days. Inside the remains of the cabin, the surviving crew members despaired of their lives. Their wounds festered in the heat. Their only food was hard, raw rice. The ship's boy grew too hungry and fled the cabin to join the freed captives, who clapped him in irons.

The crew members and ship officers became the ones with nothing to lose. Scott wrote that the crew decided to take desperate measures before they lost the last of their strength. The surviving crew members agreed to drill holes through the hull, causing three feet of water to fill the cabin. With the vessel listing badly, the shipmaster called out to the former captives and threatened to drown everyone on board, "which frightened them exceedingly." The former captives used the ship's boy as a shuttle to negotiate a plan to abandon the vessel. The shipmaster told this story as if his threats to kill everyone had forced the former captives to negotiate with him, but the former captives had already made it back to the coast. There was little left to negotiate.

That night, the former captives ran the vessel up the Sierra Leone River estuary, dangerously running it aground on a sandbar along the way. About three leagues further up the estuary, they ran the vessel ashore. When the tide went out the next morning, the sloop sat in just one foot of water. Locals with firearms waded out to it, where the former captives warned them that the crew was armed, dangerous, and would shoot them on sight. These locals convinced the adult captives to leave the vessel and "drove the young ones overboard." After the ship's boy reassured the crew that all the former captives and armed locals were gone, the then-freed crew ventured out of the cabin for the first time in nine days and boarded the ship's boat. The shore party began to fire on them, so the surviving crew fled to the far side of the

river and rowed two leagues (ca. seven miles) to a nearby sloop from Montserrat that took them on board. After this voyage of 200 leagues (690 miles) out to sea and back, they were only twelve leagues (ca. 41 miles) from their initial departure point.

Scott's narrative writes nothing about these dozens of freed captives spreading the story of the voyage in Sierra Leone. What it does say is how the story spread to Boston. All the former crew members died except for the boy, but not before the master George Scott narrated a 1,300-word account of events that one John Kilton wrote down. Someone sent the leaf with this narration to Newport. At first, the *BNL* printed a short report on the voyage's violent collective actions. A week later, the *BNL* printed Kilton's letter, with a few insertions and deletions compared to the manuscript.⁵⁶ A year later, both the *Boston Post-Boy* and the *Philadelphia Gazette* reprinted the Scott narrative.⁵⁷ These reprintings for the readers of New England and Pennsylvania do not show how the surviving ship's boy or the crew from Montserrat spread the story.

In the voyage of the snow *Jolly Batchelor*, master John Cutler (1743), both crew members and ship officers spread letters and word of mouth from Sierra Leone to Rhode Island and beyond. Similar to the *Little George*, maritime communication of the story of the voyage of the *Jolly Batchelor* traveled from the Sierra Leone Estuary back to Boston and Newport and

⁵⁶ *BNL* (Apr. 29, 1731) in Elizabeth Donnan, ed., "200. The Voyage of the *Little George*, 1730," in *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932), note.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Donnan, ed., *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. Vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), 118.

from there into the prints.⁵⁸ According to the surviving crew members and ship officers who retold the story of this voyage, in the spring of 1743, this two-masted snow had between seventy and eighty-four enslaved captives on board while it loaded more slaves near the mouth of the Sierra Leone River.⁵⁹ Around or about March 15, the vessel's longboat had been on shore for two days, enough time for the longboat and its crew to seem to be missing. So, the *Jolly Batchelor* sent a yawl to find the missing longboat, crewed by three more people, viz. the boatswain Alexander McKenzie and two black seamen who subsequent court records did not name. While the *Jolly Batchelor's* crew was diminished, about twenty armed Portuguese Africans came from the shore and boarded the vessel. The armed attackers killed the shipmaster and two of the seamen, and took control of the vessel.⁶⁰ According to the boatswain, when the boatswain and two black seamen returned a day later and climbed from the yawl back onto the *Jolly Batchelor*, "two Portuguese negroes laid hold on [the boatswain] and presented two cocked pistols at his breast."⁶¹ The attackers then used the yawl and longboat to ferry the enslaved captives to shore, salvage what useful items they could from the snow, and carry the surviving crew to the nearby settlement of St. Lewistown.⁶²

⁵⁸ RISA Admiralty Papers, Vol 2 1743-1744 *Birchall vs. Snow Jolly Batchelor*, 1-23, 4; *Charles Wickham et al. and Mariners vs. Jolly Batchellor*, 1743 in Towle, *Records of RI Vice-Admiralty*, 234-235, 226-227.

⁵⁹ The witnesses gave differing numbers of the number of slaves: 70-80, 75, and 84.

⁶⁰ Deposition of John Battey and Oliver Arnold in *Geo. Burchell etc vs. Snow Jolly Batchelor and Cargo* (1743) in Towle, ed., *RI Vice-Admiralty*, 229.

⁶¹ Deposition of Alexander McKennie in *Geo. Burchell etc vs. Snow Jolly Batchelor and Cargo* (1743) in Towle, ed., *RI Vice-Admiralty*, 227.

⁶² Deposition of Charles Wickham in *Geo. Burchell etc vs. Snow Jolly Batchelor and Cargo* (1743) in Towle, ed., *RI Vice-Admiralty*, 228-229; Deposition of John Battey and Oliver Arnold in *Ibid.*

Once on shore, the surviving crew and ship officers were on the move with a story to tell. Three of the crew negotiated their release through the government at St. Lewistown. From there, they traveled overland for three and a half days, then took a vessel to the Banana Islands, where they told the ship's agents, Captains Burchall and Wickham, about the events. The ship's agent, Burchall, launched a recovery mission to seek satisfaction for the owners' losses, salvage the vessel, and recover the enslaved captives. He dispatched thirty armed men in three shallops (small, open vessels with no deck) and a fourth, smaller boat (a yawl). At St. Lewistown, this party enlisted the support of a powerful local agent, the Portuguese-African trader Joseph Lopez. The armed search party recaptured thirty-four of the seventy-five missing enslaved people. Six weeks later, the re-outfitted *Jolly Batchelor* departed the Banana Islands with twenty of the recaptured people and a parcel of papers that documented the events.⁶³ The court records do not say how the forty-one captives who the *Jolly Batchelor* did not recover communicated their versions of these events in Sierra Leone.

The *Jolly Batchelor* carried the captives, crew, and parcel of documents from the Banana Islands to the American coast. In the Banana Islands, seaman John Kendall gave the documents to captain and part owner George Burchall – the other owners were the deceased shipmaster Cutler, the by-then deceased Boston merchant, Peter Faneuil, and John Jones of Boston.⁶⁴ Burchall then gave the documents to Capt. Wickham. The new master of the vessel, Wickham,

⁶³ Deposition of Charles Wickham, in Geo. Burchell etc vs. Snow *Jolly Batchelor* and Cargo (1743) in Towle, ed., *RI Vice-Admiralty*, 227.

⁶⁴ Libel of George Birchell, in Dorothy S. Towle, ed., "George Birchall vs. Snow *Jolly Batchelor* and Cargo, 1743," in *Records of the Vice Admiralty Court of Rhode Island 1716-1752* (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1936), 232; Voyages Database, "Voyage 25185, *Jolly Batchelor* (1743)," Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, 2009, <http://slavevoyages.org/voyage/25185/variables>.

the surviving crew, and the documents arrived in Newport on August 11 and Boston on August 19.⁶⁵ In September of that year, news of the vessel's arrival in Boston came to London. The London papers blamed the events on unspecified alleged misdeeds by the late shipmaster and his crew: "It is supposed that they had been guilty of some bad things ; for it is generally allowed that the Portuguese at that place are a very good sort of people."⁶⁶ Without recording how enslaved people told the story of the voyage, the *Jolly Batchelor* shows how crew and ship officers brought the story of the voyage to Rhode Island and Massachusetts, where the story entered print.

IV. The 1760s

By the 1760s, maritime communications between New England, the Upper Guinea Coast, and the West Indies became redundant and robust. The voyage of the brigantine *Sally*, master Esek Hopkins (1764-1766), was the best-documented of all eighteenth-century slaving voyages,⁶⁷ so it suits the methodology of voyage study, where microhistories illuminate global history.⁶⁸ The many versions of letters and word of mouth about these voyages in the Upper

⁶⁵ Letter by George Birchall in Geo. Burchell etc vs. Snow *Jolly Batchelor* and Cargo (1743) in Towle, ed., *RI Vice-Admiralty*, 232.

⁶⁶ "'There Are Letters in Town with an Account, That the Jolly-Batchelor, Cutler, off [Sic] and from Boston...,'" *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, no. 2783 (September 23, 1743); "There Are Letters in Town with an Account, That the Jolly-Batchelor, Cutler, of and from Boston...," *London Evening Post*, no. 2477 (September 24, 1743); "There Are Letters in Town with an Account, That the Jolly-Batchelor, Cutler, off [Sic] and from Boston...," *General Evening Post*, no. 1562 (September 24, 1743).

⁶⁷ The business records of its owners, Nicholas Brown and Company, are among the most complete of any partnership from that time. The voyage was longer than intended, it had a slave uprising en route, two of its owners, the brothers Moses Brown and John Brown, later became figures for and against abolition, and the master, Hopkins, later became Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Navy. James B. Hedges, "The Brown Papers: The Record of a Rhode Island Business Family," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 51 (April 1941): 21-46.

⁶⁸ e.g., Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*; Robert Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (Basic Books, 2008).

Guinea Coast, the West Indies, and mainland British America had enough redundancy to correct errors in these stories despite letters going missing.

Historians usually retell the voyage of the *Sally* as a tragedy born of incompetence.⁶⁹ Nicholas Brown and Company—the partnership of the four brothers John, Nicholas, Moses, and Joseph Brown—outfitted the *Sally* in the summer of 1764. They were new to the slave trade, as was their chosen shipmaster, Esek Hopkins, a privateer who years later became Commander in Chief of the Continental Navy.⁷⁰ In September, the *Sally* departed Providence. By November, it was on the Coast of Senegambia where the supply of rum was saturated and there were few enslaved people for sale.⁷¹ The *Sally* traded with passing vessels and local traders for enslaved people and goods, traders who included the local ruler and traders at the market at Geba. As time passed, the vessel hired local Portuguese-African sailors as crew. Unlike experienced slavers who traded and departed quickly, the *Sally* languished on the coast for more than nine months. Disease broke out. By the time the vessel departed, nineteen enslaved people were already dead, and a twentieth enslaved person was close to death.⁷² Four more enslaved people died during the first week at sea, bringing the total to twenty-four deaths. By the end of

⁶⁹ e.g. James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: The Colonial Years* (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1968), 75–87.

⁷⁰ Joseph Wanton Jr. to Nicolas Brown & Co., August 13, 1764, BFBR 340-7-8/13/64, JCBL.

⁷¹ On the market at Anamabu on the Gold Coast, see Nicolas Brown & Co. to Joseph Wanton and William Wanton, July 19, 1765, BFBR 31-4/7/19/65, JCBL.

⁷² Esek Hopkins, “Account Book of the Brig Salley” (1765), Brown Papers V52, JCBL.

the voyage, at least 109 of the 196 captives were dead (56%), plus three or four of the crew:⁷³ Hopkins' incompetence had terrible consequences.

Unlike that history of incompetence, the voyage of the *Sally* can be retold as a history of enslaved peoples' resistance and refusal. The second death on the vessel was a woman who hanged herself. With the ships' crew weakened by disease, the shipmaster put some of the captives to work, helping to sail the vessel. After a week at sea, some of these enslaved people freed other captives and launched an uprising. The crew put down the uprising by firing on these people and throwing some overboard, killing eight immediately and mortally wounding two more.⁷⁴ During the remainder of the forty-three-day passage to Barbados and Antigua, the survivors stopped eating, and some jumped overboard, acts that historians often interpret as resistance and refusal.⁷⁵ The shipmaster's book tracks how the outbreak of disease worsened, and enslaved people died almost daily.⁷⁶

In Antigua, the auction of the enslaved people dispersed the survivors and put a monetary value on some of the effects of the uprisings. The auctioneer's agent advertised the sale with a drummer. Yet, the condition of the survivors and their association with an uprising meant the final prices were low. This cost Nicholas Brown & Co., for the partnership hoped to

⁷³ Hopkins, Dec. 20, 1765; "Articles for the Brig Sally" (September 1764), BFBR 707-9-9/64, JCBL. There are two copies of the shipping papers and one documents that four seamen died, although histories of the *Sally* usually state that three died.

⁷⁴ Hopkins, "Account Book of the Brig Salley," Aug. 27, 1765; *Newport Mercury* (Nov. 18, 1765) and *MG&BNL* (Nov. 28, 1765) in Donnan, *Documents III*, Vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies:213.

⁷⁵ Aptheker, "American Negro Slave Revolts," 512; Bly, "Lake of Fire," 181.

⁷⁶ Hopkins, "Account Book of the Brig Salley," 86-87 (Aug. 21, 1765 to Dec. 20, 1765).

sell the captives for an average rate of £28 per person, and.⁷⁷ Instead, these unhealthy survivors sold for an average price of less than £15 per person and as little as £4 5s. each. Only two sold at a prime rate of £50 each.⁷⁸ At least sixteen buyers bought people from this voyage, dispersing them among the island's population of less than 3,000 whites and 36,000 Blacks.⁷⁹ Hopkins brought four of the boys in the best condition to Rhode Island. These records do not say exactly how these eighty-some survivors spread awareness of the voyage in Barbados, Antigua, Rhode Island, and elsewhere.

A parallel story about maritime communication accompanies these stories of incompetence, resistance, and refusal on the *Sally*. Early in the voyage, Nicholas Brown & Co. sent updated instructions via shipmaster Nicolas Power to the *Sally*.⁸⁰ During the voyage, Hopkins sent one or more letters to Nicholas Brown & Co. describing the uprising and other acts of resistance. The first of these letters to reach Providence was dated October 8 from Antigua and finally arrived in November.⁸¹ Based on Hopkins' letters, the *Newport Mercury* and the *Boston News-Letter* printed that the vessel's crew had "killed, wounded and forced

⁷⁷ Alexander Willock, "Sales of Twenty Four Negros" (November 25, 1765), BFBR 680-8-11/25/65, JCBL.

⁷⁸ Willock; Esek Hopkins, "Sales Record for the Brig Sally in Antigua" (January 8, 1766), BFBR 680-8-1/8/66, JCBL; Nathaniel Hardcastle, "Sales of Negros" (November 16, 1765), BFBR 680-8-11/15/65, JCBL; Alexander Willock to Nicolas Brown & Co., November 25, 1765, BFBR 643-2, item 9, JCBL.

⁷⁹ Willock, "Sales of Twenty Four Negros"; Hopkins, "Sales Record for the Brig Sally in Antigua"; Hardcastle, "Sales of Negros"; Willock to Nicolas Brown & Co., November 25, 1765; Mrs. Flannigan and Mrs. Lanaghan, *Antigua and the Antiguans : A Full Account of the Colony and Its Inhabitants from the Time of the Caribs to the Present Day, Interspersed with Anecdotes and Legends : Also, an Impartial View of Slavery and the Free Labour Systems : The Statistics of the Island, and Biographical Notices of the Principal Families ...* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1844), 123, 140 The population was estimated at 39000 in 1800 an a census found it to be 35000 in 1820.

⁸⁰ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Nicholas Power, November 9, 1765, BFBR 469-10; Item 4-11/9/65, JCBL; Nicolas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, November 9, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 8, JCBL.

⁸¹ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, November 16, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 10, JCBL.

overboard eight” enslaved people during the uprising.⁸² Nicholas Brown & Co. sent letters to their other ship captains advising them of the *Sally*’s uprising in some detail.⁸³ These records do not say exactly how the vessel’s crew communicated the story of the *Sally* when they dispersed in port.

Owners Nicholas Brown & Co. in Providence used these maritime communications during the voyage of the *Sally* to correct conflicting, false, and missing stories about the voyage. At first, months went by with no communication about the *Sally* arriving in Providence. Then, while a Rhode Island vessel was on the Upper Guinea Coast, the captain heard that the *Sally* and all its hands were lost. That vessel’s captain, named Morris, brought that rumor back to Newport. In Newport, Benjamin Mason heard Morris’s rumor and sent a letter about this to Nicholas Brown & Co. in Providence. Nicholas Brown & Co. wrote back to Mason, asking him to find Morris and get more details.⁸⁴ The partnership knew better than to trust their fellow merchants. As recently as the September of the *Sally*’s departure, Nicholas Brown himself proposed manipulating other merchants’ perceptions by planting a false newspaper story that the Windward Coast had a depressed market in rum.⁸⁵ After Morris’s rumor, there was a long silence in Rhode Island about the *Sally* in Rhode Island.

⁸² Newport Mercury, Nov. 18, 1765 and MG&BNL Nov. 28, 1765 in Donnan, *Documents*, III: New England and the Middle Colonies:213 N.B. Donnan’s edition contains a typo of “eighty” instead of “eight.”

⁸³ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Abraham Whipple, George Hopkins, and Nicholas Power, November 17, 1765, BFBR 536-9-11/15/65, JCBL.

⁸⁴ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Benjamin Mason, August 23, 1765, BFBR 233-10-8/23/65, JCBL.

⁸⁵ Nicolas Brown to John Brown, Joseph Brown, and Moses Brown, September 12, 1764, Moses Brown Papers, Mss. 313, B1c, F6, RIHS.

Just enough robustness arose from that redundancy for messages to get through. During these silences, the merchants and shipmaster alike sent letter after letter with similar messages. Most of these letters were about market information, and most did not reach their intended recipients.⁸⁶ Eventually, the merchants and shipmasters sent enough letters that some got through and corrected the rumor. Captain Esek Hopkins sent a letter from the Upper Guinea Coast dated May 15 or May 17 that a vessel carried to Newport. The letter arrived two months later, on July 17.⁸⁷ The man who carried the letter knew that the *Sally* was thought to be lost and read the letter before giving it to Moses Brown in Newport. The letter carrier was supposed to give the letter to the wife of Esek Hopkins, in Providence. In Newport, Moses Brown heard the news that the *Sally* was not lost and wrote a letter to the partnership in Providence, conveying the news.⁸⁸ The shipmasters had sent enough letters that two arrived and reversed the earlier rumor. These maritime communications were redundant enough that this system of communication began to be robust.

When Hopkins' letter arrived in Newport, it released a paper avalanche of redundant letters from Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins and the partnership's other shipmasters and fellow merchants. The partnership sent two letters from Providence to Hopkins on the Upper Guinea Coast and a third to Hopkins in Barbados, one carried by Capt. Tillinghast. Nicholas Brown & Co. then sent three letters from Providence to the Newport partnership of William Wanton and Joseph Wanton. In these letters to Wanton & Wanton, Nicholas Brown & Co.

⁸⁶ See Appendix: Records of the Brigantine *Sally* and *the* Brigantine *Othello*

⁸⁷ Moses Brown to Nicholas Brown & Co., July 17, 1765, BFBR 674-3-7/17/65, JCBL.

⁸⁸ Brown to Nicholas Brown & Co.

bought more insurance for the voyage, requested that their letters be forwarded to Hopkins in Jamaica via Captain Moor and Captain Briggs, and instructed that another letter be forwarded to Barbados for Captain Stephen Hopkins; Stephen Hopkins was another of their shipmasters.⁸⁹ The partnership sent a letter with the news via ship to Captain Abraham Whipple, somewhere in Suriname or the West Indies.⁹⁰ The partnership sent letters to New York banker David Vanhorne, one for Vanhorne himself and another that they asked Vanhorne to forward to Hopkins on the first ship from New York to Barbados.⁹¹ A week later, the partnership sent another letter to Vanhorne, this time via Samuel Warner.⁹² In a letter to one of their other captains, Nicholas Power, they instructed Power to meet another captain, Abraham Whipple, then to find and assist Hopkins in Barbados or elsewhere in the Windward Islands or Jamaica.⁹³ Nicholas Brown & Co. deployed these vast maritime communications of redundant ship letters and shipmasters to broadcast instructions to Hopkins and their other vessels across the Windward Coast and the West Indies.

The *Sally* was not unique because another vessel on what was supposed to be a normal route had similar maritime communications that even overlapped the *Sally's* communications. The brigantine *Othello*, master Thomas Rogers, cleared from Newport the same year as the

⁸⁹ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Wanton and Wanton, July 19, 1765.

⁹⁰ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Abraham Whipple, July 29, 1765, BFBR 31-4/7/29/65, JCBL.

⁹¹ Nicolas Brown & Co. to David Vanhorn, August 5, 1765, BFBR 339-4-8/5/65, JCBL.

⁹² Nicolas Brown & Co. to David Vanhorne, August 14, 1765, BFBR 339-4-8/14/65, JCBL.

⁹³ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Power, November 9, 1765.

Sally departed nearby Providence.⁹⁴ Merchants Samuel Vernon and William Vernon of Newport instructed the *Othello* to sail for the Cape Verde Islands, the Gold Coast, and the Windward Coast, where the shipmaster was to trade to the owners' best advantage.⁹⁵ The merchants further instructed the shipmaster to voyage to Barbados, where they planned to send another letter for the shipmaster to collect from the merchant Valentine Jones, an island resident. In the absence of instructions to the contrary, Vernon and Vernon instructed the *Othello* to proceed from Barbados to Antigua and South Carolina or Georgia and sell the enslaved people.⁹⁶ This route "down the islands" was entirely typical for New England vessels in the West Indian trade (See Chapter 1), and so the *Othello* was intended to be a normal voyage on a normal route.

The voyages of the normal *Othello* and extraordinary *Sally* are comparable because the two voyages resembled each other in crews, delays, diseases, deaths, uprisings, and maritime communications. In April or May 1764, the *Othello* cleared from Newport for the African coast with at least ten officers and crew.⁹⁷ The crew included Dick Holmes, an enslaved African

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Donnan, ed., "159. Newport Custom-House Entries, 1764," in *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932), 202; On Rogers as a typical slave shipmaster with specialized knowledge, see, Donald D. Wax, "Thomas Rogers and the Rhode Island Slave Trade," *The American Neptune: A Quarterly Journal of Maritime History* XXXV, no. 4 (1975): 293, 301.

⁹⁵ On Vernon and Vernon, see Kelley, *The Voyage of the Slave Ship Hare*, chap. 2 *passim*.

⁹⁶ Samuel Vernon and William Vernon, "Orders to Capt. Thos. Rogers" (March 12, 1764), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22419, N-YHS; Samuel Vernon and William Vernon, "[Letter from S. W. V. to Capt. Thos. Rogers]" (May 12, 1764), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22444, N-YHS.

⁹⁷ The TSTD records 13 crew, presumably by counting all those who shipped during the voyage, not only those who shipped from Newport.

American whose owner signed for the wages he earned of £21 0s. 4d. per month.⁹⁸ The wages of the other crew members were higher, between £31 6d. per month and £45 per month, and many of the crew traded on their own accounts in addition to those wages. All but one crewmember signed the shipping papers with their names, which indicates they had a high degree of literacy.⁹⁹ After trading in the Cape Verde Islands, the vessel arrived on the Sierra Leone Coast at the Los Islands on June 4. Over the subsequent thirteen months, the *Othello* traded rum and other goods for 94 slaves and trade goods at a minimum of twenty-five locations. These locations included Bunce Island in the mouth of the Sierra Leone river and Anomabu. Similar to the *Sally*, the *Othello*'s voyage was very long, totaling 507 days, while the vessels sailed windward and leeward, attempting to find places not already overrun with rummen. At times up to fourteen other vessels selling rum were in sight, so the price of slaves was high, and the price of rum was low.¹⁰⁰ The original American crew weakened and sickened during the early months on the coast. Mate James Lewis died of a fever on November 1, 1764, and apprentice William Strange died on January 11, 1765.¹⁰¹ While trading on the coast, the vessel employed Black laborers and trade workers, including carpenters, and it hired a Black

⁹⁸ Samuel Holmes Account in Thomas Rogers, "Book Containing What the Men Have Taken up on the Voyage on Board the Brig't Othello Thos. Rogers Comd'r" (1764), n.p., Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22811, N-YHS; Voyages Database 2.0, "Voyage 36293, Othello (1765)," Voyages 2.0: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, 2019, <http://slavevoyages.org/>.

⁹⁹ Rogers, "Men's Book," *passim*.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers]" (October 6, 1764), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22036, N-YHS; Thomas Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers to Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon]" (December 24, 1764), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22033, N-YHS.

¹⁰¹ Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers to Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon]," December 24, 1764; James Lewis account in Thomas Rogers, "Brigatine Othello Trade Book" (1764), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 25134, N-YHS; William Strange account in Rogers, n.p.

sailor for five months from February to June 1765.¹⁰² At least nine enslaved captives died before the voyage arrived in Barbados. The *Othello's* intended route was normal, but the voyage did not go as intended. In many respects, it resembled the voyage of the *Sally*.

The *Sally* was not unique because the *Othello's* communication by ship letters resembled the *Sally's* redundant, robust communication by ship letters. Just as the Providence merchants Nicholas Brown & Co. sent the *Sally* many ship letters that contained only incremental differences, the Newport merchants Vernon & Vernon sent the *Othello* many ship letters that contained only incremental differences. Both shipmasters attempted to send letters to Rhode Island containing updates on the voyages. At the Los Islands on October 5, 1765, one Capt. Penigar brought Capt. Rogers a letter from Vernon & Vernon.¹⁰³ When Rogers arrived in Barbados, he received another letter from Vernon and Vernon at Valentine Jones' house, dated eleven months prior. This letter instructed Rogers to continue with his original intended route to Georgia or South Carolina. Rogers heard that the prices for the slaves were likely to be good at St. Kitts, so he sailed for the Leeward islands instead. Rogers defending this decision by writing that the captives were too sick, his vessel sat too low in the water, and it was too late in the season to sail to Carolina, for if they were to meet a winter gale, "it would drown all the slaves."¹⁰⁴ So, Rogers shipped four new crew members and sailed for St. Kitts with a total of 70

¹⁰² Rogers, "Brigatine Othello Trade Book," Oct. 29, 1764; June 4, 1765.

¹⁰³ Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers]," October 6, 1764.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers to Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon]" (September 25, 1765), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22044, N-YHS.

enslaved people on board, including some loaded in Barbados whom he carried for other owners.

Unlike the *Sally*, the uprising on the *Othello* occurred in the West Indies. On October 1, while the vessel was near the small island of Desiada, near Antigua, the enslaved people were not chained and began an uprising. The crew killed “or lost” twelve or thirteen of the enslaved people right away, and four more died afterward from “the flux” (dysentery), eleven of them belonging to Vernon & Vernon.¹⁰⁵ By another, contradictory account, the thirteen slaves jumped overboard while the crew killed one and injured several others.¹⁰⁶ The vessel set in at Antigua. There, Rogers hired a doctor to treat the survivors and sold at least 41 of these enslaved people via Alexander Willcock. The sale was a loss due to the survivors' poor condition and their association with an uprising.¹⁰⁷ As for the crew, another seaman died at Antigua, John Hammon.¹⁰⁸ In total, 24 of the enslaved people died during the voyage or 36% of those who embarked.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Samuel [?] Vernon [?] and William [?] Vernon [?], “No. 10 Remarks to Be Make Aware of in y’e [the] Action for Breach of Orders” (1766), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 23003, N-YHS; Samuel [?] Vernon [?] and William [?] Vernon [?], “No. 11 Remarks” (1766), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 23000, N-YHS; “1070. Samuel Vernon and William Vernon merchants vs. Thomas Rogers bailiff for goods on Brig Othello (Docket no. 292)”, in Fiske, *Gleanings*, n.p.; “1068. Sarah Lewis widow and adminisitratrix of James Lewis mariner vs. Thomas Rogers mariner to recover property from Sierra Leone (Surriloan) after death (Docket no. 262),” in Fiske, n.p.

¹⁰⁶ Messrs. Samuel and William Vernon to ----, Newport Mercury (Nov. 25, 1765) in Donnan, “Newport Custom-House Entries,” 201, 213.

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Willock, “Sales of 9 New Negro Men, 6 Women, 13 Boys, and 13 Girls, Imported in the Briggatine Othello, Thomas Rogers Master and Put into by Hands for Sale by Said Rogers on Account of His Owners, Messrs. Samuel and William Vernon, Merchants in Rhode Island” (November 23, 1765), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22586, N-YHS.

¹⁰⁸ John Hammon Account in Rogers, “Men’s Book,” n.p.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Rogers, “Brigg’tn Othello to Sundry Disbursements at Antigua” (November 1765), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22492, N-YHS; Vernon [?] and Vernon [?], “No. 11 Remarks.”

What the well-documented *Sally* shows about maritime communication can be generalized because the maritime communication of the *Othello* matched the maritime communication of the *Sally* step-for-step. While trading on the Upper Guinea Coast, Rogers sent at least six letters via other shipmasters to the vessels' owners in Rhode Island. These letters included at least three letters from the Los Islands on July 30, 1764, September 5, 1764, and October 10, 1764, respectively, one letter from Monserado on December 24, 1764, and one letter from Anomabu on February 26, 1765. The conveyors of these letters included Capt. Crowell of New York via Barbados, Capt. Ralph via Barbados, and Capt. Knowles via Jamaica. Rogers later sent a seventh letter from Barbados on September 25, 1765.¹¹⁰ At Barbados, six of the crew members took cash advances on their wages; these records hint that the sailors suddenly needed cash without confirming that these men spent this cash on vendors in bumboats or on shore.¹¹¹ These records do not confirm, either, who these crew may have told the story of the voyage in Barbados.

At times, the maritime communications of the *Sally* and the *Othello* overlapped by using the very same actors. The *Othello's* agent at Antigua, Alexander Willcock, was the same agent that the *Sally* used. In fact, Willcock sold slaves from the two voyages at the very same time: he sold slaves for the Browns between November 2 and November 9 and billed Hopkins on

¹¹⁰ Thomas Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers]" (February 26, 1765), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22025, N-YHS; Thomas Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers to Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon]" (July 30, 1764), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22028, N-YHS; Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers to Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon]," December 24, 1764; Thomas Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers to Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon]" (September 25, 1765), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22044, N-YHS; Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers]," February 26, 1765; Thomas Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers]" (September 5, 1764), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22041, N-YHS; Rogers, "[Letter from Thos. Rogers]," October 6, 1764.

¹¹¹ Thomas Rogers, "Brigg'tn Othello to Sundry Disbursements" (September 27, 1765), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22519, N-YHS.

November 23, and he sold slaves for Vernon and Vernon between October 10 and November 9 and billed Rogers on November 25. Willcock sold the slaves from the *Othello* to two unnamed cash accounts and eleven named buyers.¹¹² One buyer, William Brakenridge, bought slaves from both the *Sally* and the *Othello*: one man from the *Othello* and, in partnership with John Muir, three men and three women from the *Sally*.¹¹³ The same auctioneer, Caesar Roach, sold enslaved people from both the *Othello* and the *Sally*.¹¹⁴ From Antigua, Willcock wrote to Vernon and Vernon in Newport, presuming that the Newport merchants had heard of Rogers' "misfortune." The price information was also similar: Vernon and Vernon complained that the prices at auction were a "trifling sum."¹¹⁵ The *Newport Mercury* and the *Boston News-Letter* reported on the voyage of the *Othello* in the same issues that they reported on the voyage of the *Sally*. The *Sally* and the *Othello* used the very same agents and auctioneers, in some cases the enslaved people from these voyages went to the very same owners, and the very same printers publicized these events. These letters, invoices, and newspapers by merchants, shipmasters, and printers do not say in so many words how those enslaved people communicated about these voyages throughout the island.

Shipmasters communicated about the *Othello* on land and at sea. Capt. Robert Stoddard heard the story from merchant Valentine Jones and made a statement under oath in Rhode

¹¹² Willock, "Sales of 9 New Negro Men, 6 Women, 13 Boys, and 13 Girls."

¹¹³ Willock, "Sales of Twenty Four Negros"; Willock, "Sales of 9 New Negro Men, 6 Women, 13 Boys, and 13 Girls."

¹¹⁴ Hardcastle, "Sales of Negros"; Willock, "Sales of 9 New Negro Men, 6 Women, 13 Boys, and 13 Girls."

¹¹⁵ Samuel Vernon and William Vernon, "Messers. William and Samuel Vernon To ----," in *Documents Illustrative of the Slave Trade to America*, ed. Elizabeth Donnan, vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1932), 202.

Island about what Jones had told him.¹¹⁶ Other shipmasters spread the word from vessel to vessel: Capt. Peter Dordin was in a house in Georgia at the end of January 1766 when he met the captain of a snow from Antigua who told him the story of how “Capt. Rogers had met with a shocking misfortune in going down to Antigua in losing part of his slaves etc.” According to what Dordin said under oath in Rhode Island, that captain, whose name he forgot, bought half a dozen of the *Othello*’s survivors and brought them to Georgia. The other shipmaster actually pointed out a woman from the voyage who the houseowner had bought.¹¹⁷ Even though he laid eyes on one of these survivors who was in the room when the other shipmaster told him about the uprising, Dordin did not say how those survivors of the *Othello* spread their story in Georgia.

When merchants retold the story of the *Othello*, they made it sound as if the shipmaster was to blame for their misfortunes. Blaming the shipmaster instead of the enslaved people was similar to the early historians who retold the story of the incompetent master of the *Sally*, Esek Hopkins. The power of the enslaved people falls away from these stories of the voyage. Much like Wanton, who read Hopkins’ trade book after the voyage of the *Sally*, Vernon and Vernon scrutinized Rogers’ trade book after the voyage of the *Othello*. Vernon and Vernon discovered inconsistencies between Rogers’ trade book and the letters Rogers had sent to them. They suspected that someone had doctored the records, writing, “all his letters to us from the coast convince us that this book of trade he has debited us is not genuine but a patched up,

¹¹⁶ Deposition of Capt. Robert Stoddard, 3 Nov 1766 in Donnan, *Documents III*, Vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies:201.

¹¹⁷ Deposition of Captain Peter Dordin, 3 Sept. 1766 in Donnan, Vol. III: New England and the Middle Colonies:200.

counterfeit thing.”¹¹⁸ These merchants suspected Rogers was hiding something from them about the *Othello*’s misfortunes. They sniffed out their suspicions in the redundancy of his letters.

The story of the *Othello* spread when crew members recounted the events, the story of the voyage entered print, and the survivors’ bodies attested to their experience. Seamen William Clark and Edward Strengthfield gave sworn statements in a lawsuit that widow Sarah Lewis brought against Rogers for property belonging to her late husband, the deceased mate who claimed ownership of one of the voyage’s enslaved people on his private account.¹¹⁹ Newspapers told readers what seamen, shipmasters, and merchants already knew, that “the Blacks made an attempt to over-come the vessel’s company, but were subdued and twelve of them killed.”¹²⁰ As for the enslaved people, their weakened bodies witnessed their ordeal. The merchant Willcock wrote that Rogers “applied to me to sell his slaves that he had remaining which I have done to the best advantage in my power the negroes [were] very thin and few people chose to have anything to say to them”¹²¹ The enslaved people’s bodies also wrote the story of the voyage and the buyers could read. These textual records do not, however, record how enslaved people verbalized the events.

¹¹⁸ Vernon [?] and Vernon [?], “No. 11 Remarks”; Vernon and Vernon [?], “Notes on Slave Inventory of Brigantine Othello, Thomas Rogers Master” (1766), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22564, N-YHS; Vernon and Vernon [?], “Memo Relating Charges” (1766), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22567, N-YHS.

¹¹⁹ Rhode Island. Inferior Court of Common Pleas, Newport County, “Lewis v. Rogers,” May 1766, Newport CCP Decon #264, Rhode Island Supreme Court Judicial Records Center, Pawtucket. Decon #292

¹²⁰ Newport Mercury Nov. 18, 1765 and MG&BNL Nov. 28, 1765 in Donnan, *Documents*, III: New England and the Middle Colonies:213.

¹²¹ Samuel Vernon and William Vernon, “[Manuscript Copy of Letter from Alex Willock to Messrs. Samuel & Wm. Vernon]” (November 23, 1765), Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22598, N-YHS.

V. Epilogue

Even after Massachusetts and Rhode Island prohibited the slave trade in the 1780s, maritime communication spread fear of enslaved African captives among American settlers in port. Those rulings notwithstanding, Massachusetts slave trading continued for decades. Reverend William Bentley, Unitarian minister from Salem, understood what it meant when the schooner *Felicity*, master William Fairfield, cleared for Cape Verde in September 1788. Bentley concluded that the *Felicity* was in the slave trade, given the schooner's cargo (which Bentley did not specify), the "easy circumstances" of owner Capt. John White, and the character of that owner who "confesse[d] he has no reluctance in selling any part of the human race."¹²²

Sure enough, six months after sailing from Salem, the *Felicity* departed Cape Mount in what is now Liberia, carrying a cargo of 35 enslaved people. The enslaved people rose up on the thirteenth day at sea, armed with an ax, a cutlass, and assorted other weapons, including pistols from the ship's cabin. In the fight, the enslaved people shot and killed the shipmaster, and the crew killed two or three of the people. The ship doctor, who spoke the Africans' language, negotiated a surrender. Four weeks later, the shipmaster's son, seaman William Fairfield, Jr., penned a letter from the *Felicity*'s destination of Cayenne in Guyana to his mother in Salem, Rebecca Fairfield. The son took 350 words to detail the story. He concluded the letter by relating that he himself was in good health and hoped "to find you the same and all my

¹²² Bentley, William, *The Diary of William Bentley, D. D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*, vol. 1: 1784-1792 (Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1905), 104 (Sept. 23, 1788) emphasis in original.

sisters and brothers and all that inquires after me.”¹²³ According to the minister, the news arrived in Salem within four weeks. The son returned within a month of that news arriving.¹²⁴ Maritime communication about this slave ship uprising connected seamen to family, clergy, and others on shore via letters and word of mouth.

Stories of the violent collective actions in the Rhode Island and Massachusetts slave trades indicate cumulative changes to maritime communications between New England, the Upper Guinea Coast, and the West Indies. These maritime communications were redundant enough to begin to be robust by the mid-1760s. Evidence that common seamen talked and wrote about these uprisings is rare but present: they communicated slave ship uprisings in the sense of informing other people. Narratives by seamen, abolitionists, and enslaved captives themselves describe the communication about the slave trade in general terms: maritime communication in the slave trades included ship officers on the quarterdeck, merchants, traders, family, sweethearts, printers, enslaved captives, free and enslaved crew and free and enslaved skilled trade workers. Four voyage studies show the details that other narratives lack. During the early years of New England’s slave trades, the *Little George* narrative retold a successful uprising according to a shipmaster and as experienced by a fearful crew. The voyage of the *Jolly Batchelor* further details how word of mouth, letter, and print moved across geographic distances. After New England’s African trade plateaued during the 1760s, the

¹²³ Fairfield, William to Rebecca Fairfield, April 23, 1789, MSS 0.188, PEM-JDPL; William Fairfield, “A Strange Epistle of a Century Ago [William Fairfield to Rebecca Fairfield, Apr. 23, 1789],” *Essex Institute, Historical Collections* XXV (1888): 311–12.

¹²⁴ Bentley, William, *Diary 1*, 1: 1784-1792:123 (May 29, 1789), 124 (June 28, 1789).

maritime communications of the *Sally* and the *Othello* were redundant enough to correct errors even when most of the letters got lost.

Questions remain unanswered about the conjunction of Blacks *and* seamen. Was there an intersectional Hydrarchy of resistance from below, what Marcus Rediker calls a “motley crew” of seamen and slaves whose crowd actions escalated into the American Revolution?¹²⁵ Did enslaved Blacks think the condition of free seamen was similar to their own condition?¹²⁶ Conversely, did seamen, the very people who were so violent on slave ships, believe that they shared membership with enslaved Blacks in a nascent alliance of oppressed people?¹²⁷ Are there textual records of historical precedents for the fictional voyage in Barry Unsworth’s novel *Sacred Hunger* where sailors and slaves mutinied together? On the one hand, David Brion Davis opined that the very few scraps of documentation that appear to record sailors and slaves forging alliances during mutinies do not stand up to scrutiny.¹²⁸ On the other hand, shipmasters tried to hide when slave uprisings took place on their voyages.¹²⁹ Consequently, whether these seamen mobilized and activated other slave uprisings is unlikely to be demonstrated in the textual records of shipmasters and merchants, or, indeed, seamen. In the world of these

¹²⁵ Rediker and Linebaugh, “A Motley Crew in the American Revolution.”

¹²⁶ Rediker, *The Slave Ship*, 350–52; Rediker and Linebaugh, *The Many-Headed Hydra*.

¹²⁷ Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807*, 91–94, 229.

¹²⁸ Davis, “Slavery—White, Black, Muslim, Christian,” n.p.

¹²⁹ Taylor, *If We Must Die: Shipboard Insurrections in the Era of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2; Aptheker, “American Negro Slave Revolts,” 512.

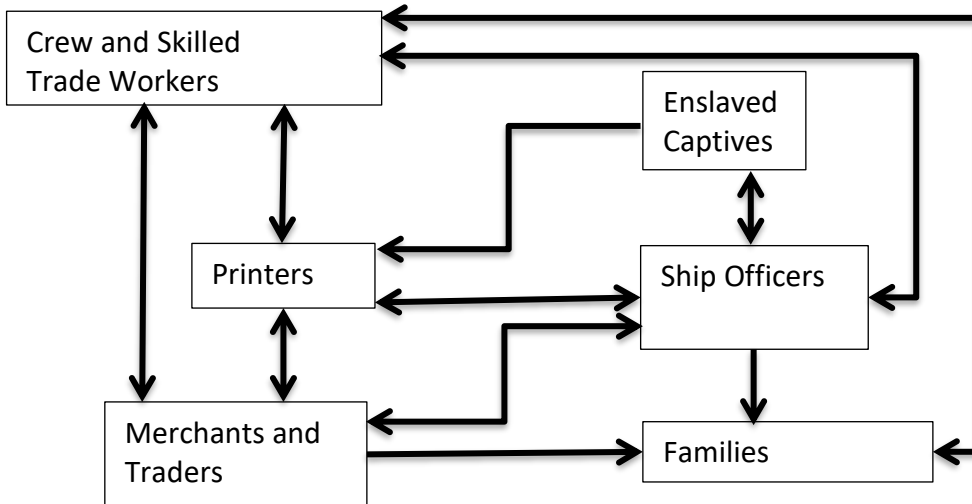
stories, Christine Sharpe argues, black bodies were always in the wake of the slave ship that made people subjects or objects and rippled trauma through their lives.¹³⁰

How most seamen, shipmasters, and merchants told the story of slave ship voyages was an arena for racialization. Their tellings and retellings represented the characteristics of enslaved Africans without the participation of these subjects. In maritime communication about violent collective actions in the slave trade, New England merchants and seamen who wrote about the trade believed enslaved people were dangerous and intransigent. These writers blamed slave ship uprisings on foolish, inexperienced, and malicious shipmasters. They did not credit effective, organized, and powerful enslaved people. Slave trade stories told by these merchants and seamen barely acknowledged enslaved people's personhood, so their records are not suited to addressing how enslaved people communicated. Early settler seamen wrote very little about how enslaved people told their own stories of the voyage in words, gestures, and silence.

¹³⁰ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016), 40, 100, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373452>.

VI. Figures and Tables

Figure 7. Schematic Diagram of Records of Maritime Communications in the Slave Trades



Definitions:

Enslaved Captives means cargos of enslaved men, women, and children, including gromettos and translators. It does not include enslaved laborers and enslaved skilled trade workers on vessels or on shore.

Crew means common seamen “before the mast”, including enslaved crew and boys.

Families means the mothers, wives, and siblings of quarterdeck, crew, and skilled trade workers. These women and men had many occupations.

Merchants & Traders are people engaged in overseas trade, including African traders.

Printers were skilled trade workers who included with master craft workers, journeymen, apprentices, enslaved trade workers, and widows.

Ship Officers means shipmasters, mates, and other ship officers, including surgeons.

Skilled Trade Workers means craft workers and artisans including apprentices and enslaved trades workers on a vessel, e.g. ship carpenters.

Table 10. Number of Transatlantic Slave Trade Voyages Departing from North America by Region (TSTD 2.0 data)

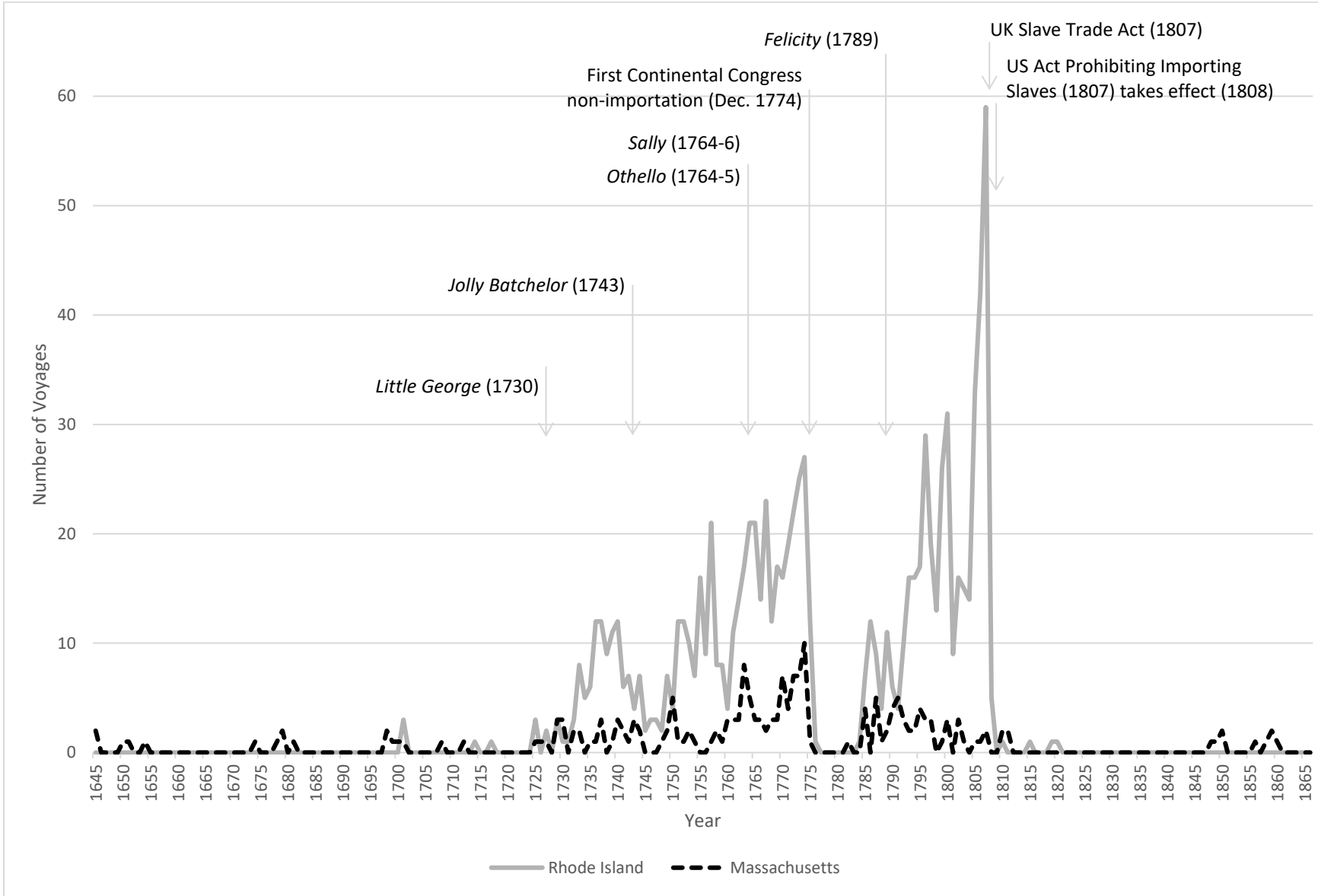
Years	NH	MA	RI	CT	NY	NJ	PA	MD	VA	SC	GA	FL	Gulf	Other N. Am.	All N. Am.	All TSTD
1501-1525																1
1526-1550																74
1551-1575																68
1576-1600																240
1601-1625																325
1626-1650	1	3													4	428
1651-1675		3													3	488
1676-1700		8			15			2	2	2				2	31	1,317
1701-1725		4	8		6		1		1	4				1	25	3,186
1726-1750	5	37	130		7		2		2	2				1	186	4,233
1751-1775	13	81	378	5	81	1	5	1	4	26	2			3	600	6,367
1776-1800		43	232	1	7		2		3	16	7			2	313	5,747
1801-1825	1	12	197		6		11	4	2	181	3	1		5	423	5,347
1826-1850		4			2								4	1	11	3,424
1851-1875		5			60			2		4	3		20		94	278
Total	20	200	945	6	184	1	21	9	14	235	15	1	24	15	1690	31523
Percentage N. Am.	1.2	11.8	55.9	0.4	10.9	0.1	1.2	0.5	0.8	13.9	0.9	0.1	1.4	0.9	100	
Percentage All TSTD	0.1	0.6	3.0	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	5.4	

Notes:

Data source: Transatlantic Slave Trade Database 2.0

Abbreviations: CT = Connecticut, FL = Florida, GA = Georgia, Gulf = Gulf Coast, MD = Maryland, MA = Massachusetts, N. Am. = North America, NJ = New Jersey, NH = New Hampshire, NY = New York, PA = Pennsylvania, RI = Rhode Island, SC = South Carolina, TSTD = Transatlantic Slave Trade Database 2.0

Figure 8. Number of Transatlantic Slave Trade Voyages Departed: Massachusetts and Rhode Island, 1645-1866 (TSTD 2.0 data)



Conclusion

Maritime communication was a political activity in which early Americans articulated and acted on their differences from Britain. For instance, in December 1764, the merchants Nicholas Brown & Co. of Providence sent a letter to Upper Guinea for the brigantine *Sally*, master Esek Hopkins. Along with their instructions to the shipmaster, the merchant partnership noted that the Rhode Island General Assembly had appointed a committee to address the Sugar Act of 1764. They enclosed a soon-to-be influential pamphlet about the Act authored by the shipmaster's brother, Governor Stephen Hopkins, and printed by William Goddard of Providence.¹ When the *Sally* arrived from Antigua in Providence in January 1766, the *Boston News-Letter* printed a letter from shipmaster Esek Hopkins that described Antigua's resistance against the Stamp Act. According to Hopkins, the Stamp Officer in Antigua turned down the appointment to this unpopular office, so the island's governor appointed a secretary to distribute stamped papers instead. After the *Sally* departed Antigua, a vessel from Turks Island told Hopkins that two New York vessels that arrived in Antigua had instructions not to sell their goods on any islands that used stamped paper. Hopkins wrote that when Antigua's merchants and others heard this from the New Yorkers, they demanded the island's secretary surrender the stamped papers, "which were accordingly hove aside," and the two New York vessels cleared without using the required stamped paper for their documents.² British-American

¹ Nicolas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, December 30, 1764, BFBR 643-2, Item 2, JCBL; Stephen Hopkins, *The Rights of the Colonies Examined* (Providence, R.I.: William Goddard, 1765); Andrew J. O'Shaughnessy, "The Stamp Act Crisis in the British Caribbean," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (April 1994): 204, 210–12, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2946860>.

² "Extract of a Letter from Providence, Jan. 29, 1766," *Massachusetts Gazette [BNL]*, February 6, 1766.

vessels informed each other about these conflicts by word-of-mouth and brought the news to other colonies. They communicated resistance by connecting people, by informing people, and sometimes by activating people's behaviors.

This episode encapsulates the politics of how early American maritime communication helped Americans to imagine how they differed from Britain. These changes affected seamen of all socioeconomic levels in early Massachusetts and Rhode Island, connecting seamen to all ranks on shore at a time before industrial class formation. The regions of shipmasters' declared movements closely followed changes in wars and treaties, connecting these people to the British Atlantic at a time before an international society of nation-states, when empires governed their movements. Informal letter conveyance gave seamen and other early Americans independence from relying on printers and postmasters to be informed. Early Americans politicized this letter conveyance during the 1760s when debating whether avoiding new postage regulations for ship letters meant resisting imperial taxation. Indeed, printers and postmasters depended on faster-moving maritime communications that brought letters and news to printing offices and post offices. There was no clear line between rumors and news, and mariners used both to resist impressment by the British navy and capture by enemy vessels. The fears about authoritarianism they expressed in rumors grew from fears of Catholic despotism into fears of English tyranny, and colonists at large adopted these concerns. The overlapping categories of rumors and news about impressment made abstract rhetoric about anti-authoritarianism all-too-real for both seamen and colonists as a whole: the navy was coming for their children. Mariners' songs expressed changing attitudes about women, courtship, and marriage while also documenting ephemeral face-to-face communications and

letters between seamen, women, and others in port. The songs and verses seamen drew from England's broadsides and ballads expressed Anglicized, patriarchal values about women, courtship, and marriage that prescribed attempting to control women. The songs and verses that seamen wrote themselves expressed Americanized values of sentimentalism in marriage based on friendship. They all heard how their "native land" saw courtship and marriage differently from England. Governors used these maritime communications to regulate provincials' overseas activities. When voyages north to Labrador increased during the 1760s, provincial knowledge of Labrador improved, governors of Massachusetts and Newfoundland used maritime communications to regulate the fisheries and Inuit trade, and provincials protested these regulations as being more imperial mistreatment at the same time as the Townshend Acts. Merchants and enslaved captives also used maritime communications. American-grown maritime communications reached south to Upper Guinea and to the West Indies. Reports of violent collective actions in the slave trades, such as slave ship uprisings, indicated how the redundancy of communications to Upper Guinea became robust by the 1760s. American writings about the slave trade only hint at how enslaved African people communicated, racializing them differently from white settlers.

This history's key contribution to early American history retells the Imperial Crisis story according to New England seamen and what mattered to them – representing how the Revolution meant many different things to many different people. Unlike Virginia planters or Philadelphia merchants, historians often forget the conflicts these seamen cared about; some have said they were inarticulate. Far from it. Mariners' revolutionary-era conflicts included ship letters and postage, impressment, and regulations on fishing, whaling, and trading voyages to

the north. These provincial-imperial conflicts about immediate, urgent, and concrete events made abstract ideas seem very concrete—ideas about political enslavement, corruption, and legal rights and liberties. These discourses concern many neo-Whig historians. The maritime communications of seafarers were also instances when imperial, colonial, and Indigenous powers conflicted. Those politics concern neo-Imperial historians. Governors used these maritime communications to regulate shipping in the north, where colonists' violence against Indigenous people and resentment of imperial regulations resembled the better-known conflicts of imperial, colonial, and Indigenous interests in the west. This study of maritime communication advances new progressive histories about how people expressed many localized and often marginalized visions for America that differed from the Continental Congress's vision. Vessels in the slave trade and other trades connected and informed colonies, although it usually remains hard to show how these seamen organized and activated political behavior in other colonies.³ This alternative story of the Imperial Crisis from the perspective of seamen focuses on what mattered to them.

This history's key contribution to Atlantic history provides evidence that the *Common Wind* thesis about the Haitian Revolution also applied to the American Revolution—seamen and mobile workers were vectors of communication even before revolutions began. The related Motley Crew thesis argues that sailors and slaves led pre-revolutionary crowds in the vanguard of an intersectional resistance movement that Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh call the Hydrarchy. Without demonstrating that these communications politically mobilized or

³ The Continental American seamen who participated in the Stamp Act riots of St. Kitts are an exception to this claim.

politically activated seamen and colonists at large, this maritime communication thesis models how the seamen of New England informed each other and other colonists about many topics.

This history's key contribution to communication history suggests how the communications revolution was about more than faster transmission—transmission mattered because communication was political. This study's chronology differs from Richard John's argument about how the number of post offices and volume of mail vastly increased after the federal government's 1792 Post Office Act. This study's chronology synchronizes with Robert G. Albion's argument that communication speed increased and communication costs decreased due to post office reforms in the 1750s and new canals and turnpikes during 1760s. Changes happened when early Americans realized the political importance of their informal communications.

Broadly, this means that communication was not an independent factor in the rise and fall of governments but an arena for politics where early Americans imagined how they differed from Britain. The first chapter establishes who these American seamen were and where they went in a British-American Atlantic. It argues that early mariners were a skilled trade who represented people from all ranks of New England. The many ranks of their trade suggest that maritime communication connected to all sorts of people in New England. Furthermore, early mariners called on their English nationality when moving within a legal seascape of the British empire, even during West Indian smuggling and interloping. These characteristics suggest that the Red Atlantic argument that mariners were dispossessed, transnational laborers does not apply to early New England where many seamen were not marginalized, and people mostly

moved within empires. Seamen are a useful study group for understanding how all ranks of New England connected to the British Atlantic.

The second chapter, focusing on alphabet communication in letters and newspapers, argues that printers and postmasters were only one branch of early American communications. Seaman conveyed vast numbers of private and often illicitly-conveyed letters. These letters often avoided the post office altogether. Debates over the Postal Act of 1765 politicized this private conveyance for many colonists who saw postal rates as illegitimate taxation. In addition, printers credited a slice of their news to shipmasters. This news was primarily about merchant interests. The *Boston News-Letter* rarely credited common seamen and rarely printed items specifically about common seamen. Historians largely neglect this maritime communication even though it was ubiquitous and was a site for imperial-provincial conflict during the 1760s.

The third chapter, focusing on the overlapping and unstable categories of rumor and news, argues that seamen's word-of-mouth expressed anti-authoritarianism in their fears of being captured by French and Spanish vessels or being impressed (conscripted) into the British navy. They used rumors to resist capture. Seamen had long feared that privateers sponsored by French and Spanish powers represented the threat of Roman Catholic despotism. To them, impressment represented the encroachment of English tyranny. During the 1760s, other provincials adopted seamen's opposition to impressment among their chief complaints about British rule. The anti-authoritarianism of seamen evident in rumors and news about impressment made abstractions about tyranny and political slavery immediate, urgent, and readily-grasped.

The fourth chapter, primarily about how songs and verses are evidence of seamen informing women and others in port, identifies which sailors' songs came from England's prints and musical cultures and which songs American seamen composed themselves. During and after the 1760s, the sentimentalism of how seamen talked about women, courtship, and marriage in their American-authored songs diverged from the patriarchalism they expressed with English-authored songs. The Anglicization that gave the future United States a shared British culture and the Americanization of diverse, local cultures advanced in tandem and in tension. Seamen heard how American attitudes differed from Britain any time they sang.

The fifth chapter argues that maritime communication was a continuation of politics by other means. Governors used maritime communications to regulate Massachusetts voyages to Labrador. More voyages from Massachusetts to Labrador increased what provincials knew about the north, how governors regulated voyages there, and how provincials resisted this regulation. These maritime contests of imperial, provincial, and Indigenous interests during the 1760s coincided with other crises between imperial, provincial, and Indigenous interests in the British-American West and were just as violent. The Imperial Crisis also unfolded in the north.

The sixth chapter, about the slave trades with coastal Upper Guinea and the West Indies, argues that communications about slave trade uprisings and other violent collective actions indicate how New England's home-grown long-distance communications were redundant and robust by the 1760s. It also addresses one piece of the problem of how enslaved people and seamen communicated about violent collective actions that included slave ship uprisings. Distinguishing between communication as connecting, communication as informing, and communication as organizing and activating clarifies that when we write that seamen

communicated in the slave trade, we mean that they connected and informed people. New England sources do not record seamen organizing or activating violent collective actions by enslaved captives. A weak version of the Common Wind thesis that seamen informed people about uprisings applies to New England's eighteenth-century slave trades. A strong version of the Motley Crew thesis that seamen and slaves jointly led revolutionary-era organizing is unproven for this setting.

Maritime Communication Transformed

Ninety-eight years after Benjamin Franklin, Sr., read about the lion-like Cape Cod sea monster of 1719 in the *Boston News-Letter*, sea monsters were still news in coastal Massachusetts. However, seamen were no longer considered credible sources for that news. During August and September 1817, a sea serpent appeared in and around Gloucester Harbor on Cape Ann. When Cape Ann fishermen brought the first report of the sea serpent to Gloucester in August 1817, the town's people dismissed it as the fishermen's "imagination."⁴ A visiting shipmaster brought a second report of the sea serpent, and the respectable people of Cape Anne derided his report, too. Later, "creditable" observers began to witness the serpent. Eventually, hundreds of people on Cape Ann glimpsed the creature. After this, printers publicized the appearance of the sea serpent. Henry Bowen printed a broadside on the topic, and the *Salem Gazette*, the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, the *Salem Register*, and *Low's Almanack* all

⁴ Nathanael Low, *Low's Almanack, and Astronomical and Agricultural Register; for the Year of Our Lord and Saviour 1818* (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1817).

printed items about the sea serpent.⁵ The Linnean Society of Boston issued a learned *Report* after deposing eleven witnesses to the sea serpent under oath, including three shipmasters, three or four seamen, and a ship's carpenter.⁶ The Justice of the Peace who conducted these inquiries, Lonson Nash, glimpsed the serpent through a spyglass, and the Committee of the Linnean Society accepted his word at face value.⁷ The maritime communication of rumors and news still preceded the prints but needed more verification.

These entertaining reports of the Gloucester sea serpent are also useful because they suggest that the articulation of mariners' communication with people on shore had changed over time. In the century since the Cape Cod sea monster, seamen became subordinate to and separate from other people in port. Mariners also slipped from their status among the most effective producers and distributors of communications in the eighteenth century. A bourgeois public sphere based in print, coffee houses, and similar settings emerged in England, Europe, and North America and benefitted commercial people. The North American print trade expanded from the single newspaper of the *Boston News-Letter* to dozens of periodicals in New England alone. Thirteen of the British mainland colonies united during a revolution. When early

⁵ Henry Bowen, *A Monstrous Sea Serpent, the Largest Ever Seen in America, Has Just Made Its Appearance in Gloucester Harbour, Cape Ann, and Has Been Seen by Hundreds of Respectable Citizens* (Boston: Printed and Sold by Henry Bowen, 1817); Low, *Almanack* 1818.

⁶ Linnean Society of New England, *Report of a Committee of the Linnaean Society of New England, Relative to a Large Marine Animal, Supposed to Be a Serpent, Seen near Cape Ann, Massachusetts, in August 1817* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1817); L. D. Geller, *Sea Serpents of Coastal New England*, third edition, New England Folklore Series (Plymouth, Mass.: Cape Cod Publications, 1992).

⁷ Nash to Davis et al. in Linnean Society of New England, *Report*, 9–10, 23–26. On gentlemen in natural philosophy, see Shaffer and Shapin's *Leviathan and the Airpump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*.

Americans spoke with seamen, they reimagined and reorganized how they thought about Britain, making maritime communication a continuation of politics by other means.

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Appendices

Appendix A. *Boston News-Letter* Study

The issues of the *Boston News-Letter* (*BNL*) sampled here are representative of all the issues of the *BNL* and are a fair example of all colonial newspapers. This sample shows that items from Britain or military news dominated the items the *BNL* attributed to mariners, and that the mariners who the *BNL* attributed as sources were usually ship masters. The reasons that the *BNL* was a fair example of all colonial newspapers include that the trades workers who ran the colonial presses that printed the *BNL* and other papers were a small group who were related to each other or trained with each other and whose print shops clustered together in the same Boston neighborhoods. The *BNL* was the prototype for other colonial papers that often reprinted from it just as it often reprinted from other papers. The *BNL* was the first and longest running colonial newspaper, which makes it possible to sample the longest possible time from one publication. To analyze the relationship between printers and mariners, this study took a one issue in eight systematic sample of the *BNL* during the period of 1740 to 1776. This was 11.43% of all *BNL* issues during those years and an estimated 12.43% of all pages the *BNL* printed during those years. This sample was large enough that many calculations based on it are statistically significant. Those news items in the sample that the *BNL* attributed directly to ships, ship masters, or crew members are coded here, along with advertisements related to the business of shipping, not including advertisements for cargos and manufactured goods for sale. The coding used mutually exclusive topic categories and mutually exclusive source categories.

The *BNL* is the best newspaper to study from New England because it was the prototype for other colonial newspapers that shared its content, trades workers, and geography. The *BNL* reprinted much of its content from other colonial newspapers, so sampling the *BNL* also

samples excerpts of the other presses as chosen by the *BNL* printers, too. In their early days, most newspapers in the colonies reprinted items from the newspapers of cities in Britain and colonial cities such as Boston and Philadelphia, so the *BNL* was also a source for many of these other papers, just as these papers were sources for the *BNL*.¹

The politics of the *BNL* were neutral tending to Tory.² The provincial government gave subventions to *BNL* to print government announcements as the official *Gazette*. The political tendencies of the *BNL* printers Richard Draper and later Ann Draper were Tory and Loyalist, unlike the oppositional politics of Edes and Gill's *Boston Gazette*. Although the exact names and numbers of the Boston newspapers varied, the five major titles during these years were *The Boston News-Letter* itself, *The Boston Gazette* (published by Kneeland and Green, printed by James Franklin, brother to Benjamin Franklin, and later printed by Edes and Gill), *The Boston Post-Boy* (published by Ellis Huske, more-or-less renamed later as the *Boston Weekly Advertiser*, published by Green and Russell), *The Boston Evening Post* (published by Thomas Fleet, Jr., and the Fleet Brothers), and *The Boston Chronicle* (printed by Mein and Fleeming). Significant newspapers in nearby towns included the *Newport Mercury*, printed by various members of the Franklin family and by Samuel Hall who later relocated to Salem where he printed the *Essex Gazette* with his brother Ebenezer Hall, and the *Providence Gazette*, printed by John Carter who

¹ Charles E. Clark, "Early American Journalism: News and Opinion in the Popular Press," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, History of the Book in America, v. 1 (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : [Worcester, Mass.]: Cambridge University Press ; American Antiquarian Society, 2000), 347–66; Hugh Amory, "The New England Book Trade, 1713-1790," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, History of the Book in America, v. 1 (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : [Worcester, Mass.]: Cambridge University Press ; American Antiquarian Society, 2000), 314–46.

² See discussion of press neutrality in Botein, "'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers."

had apprenticed with Franklin and Hall, and the *New Hampshire Gazette*, published in Portsmouth by members of the Fowle family. Bartholomew Green (of the *Boston Gazette*) moved to Halifax where he founded the *Halifax Gazette*, Benjamin Franklin moved to Philadelphia where he printed the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, and Benjamin Mecom, nephew and apprentice to Franklin, moved to Antigua and then to Boston.³ Consequently, the *BNL* is a window into all the newspapers of Boston that shared family, trade workers, and copy.

This study samples the *BNL* because it was the longest continuous publishing early American newspaper, with one family printing it for many decades. The *BNL* printed continuously from 1704 to February 1776 and was the only Boston newspaper that continued to print during the siege of Boston. It published weekly on Mondays starting when the postmaster John Campbell founded it in 1704. Campbell was the proprietor until 1722. Even though Campbell was the publisher, he delegated the printing to others, including members of the Green family who accounted for more than half the printers in New England between 1700 and 1750.⁴ Bartholomew Green printed for Campbell, (1704-1707, 1707-1722) as did James Allen (1707-1711). Green took over the paper from Campbell in 1722 and changed the printing day to Thursdays. Green printed the paper from then until his death in 1733, when his son-in-law, John Draper, took over the operation.⁵ John Draper, in turn printed the paper until his own death in 1762 when his son, Richard Draper took over the printing. For a short time, Richard

³ Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, vol. 2 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967), 12–83, 179–81.

⁴ Adelman, *Revolutionary Networks*, 23–24.

⁵ Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America with a Biography of Printers & an Account of Newspapers*, ed. Marcus A. McCorison, Reprint of the Second Edition (Barre, Mass.: Imprint Society, 1970), 216, 218, 225.

Draper took Samuel Draper as a partner. Richard Draper renamed the publication *The Boston Weekly News Letter and New England Chronicle* then renamed it again *The Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News Letter*. In 1768 and 1769 Draper published the *BNL* as “split issues” of two titles printed together in one issue: one half was the *Gazette* and the other half was the *News-Letter* with the same title as before. Draper became partner with John Boyle starting in 1774, but died the month after the partnership began. Draper’s widow, Margaret Draper took over as printer, first in partnership with John Boyle, then in partnership with John Howe. Other papers came and went during these decades, but no other paper printed from as early as or for as long as the *BNL*. This one publication can be studied over a longer period of time than any other colonial newspaper and for that reason it is chosen to sample here.⁶

Readers at the time who wanted to read an account of a particular event or topic read episodically-printed broadsides or pamphlets that might be several dozen pages or broadsides of one page. Newspapers – regular serials that reported current, public, occurrences--were a new medium for readers.⁷ Printers, who were also the editors, composed early newspapers differently from pamphlets and broadsides. Printers did not research and synthesize all the reports into one story. Printers excerpted and typeset snippets of one paragraph after another roughly by the order in which these materials arrived at the printing office. Readers followed these topical threads across several issues of the newspaper or even across several reports in

⁶ Isaiah Thomas, “The Boston News-Letter,” in *The History of Printing in America with a Biography of Printers & an Account of Newspapers*, ed. Marcus A. McCorison, Reprint of the Second Edition (Barre, Mass.: Imprint Society, 1970), 215–31.

⁷ Nord, “Teleology and News,” 10; Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 14.

one issue of the newspaper, sorting out the story for themselves.⁸ A typical *BNL* issue was two to four pages long printed recto and verso on folio leaves. Roughly the first half of the content was reprints from English papers brought by recent vessels, as well as letters and government publications. Next came the news of various colonies, usually organized by town of publication and date, and similar to the British news, usually reprinted from other publications or letters. After that, the paper printed a couple column-inches of the Customs House entrances and clearances for Boston that listed vessels coming from and going to ports outside of New England. Next, came advertisements and public notices at the end of the newspaper. Starting in the 1760s, under Richard Draper's proprietorship, the *BNL* began to print these advertisements throughout the entire publication. During the 1750s and 1760s the number of advertisements increased, especially for imported goods from England and the East Indies. During the late 1760s, the paper printed more pieces about non-importation. In 1774 large parts of the newspaper covered the Continental Congress. These exceptions notwithstanding, from issue to issue the content of the *BNL* was excerpts of similar sources, presented in a similar order.

This study drew a representative, systematic sample from the whole of the *BNL* during the 1740s to 1770s. The sampling strategy selected the first available issue for each month of even-numbered years from 1740 to 1776. The sample size approaches one in eight issues. The number of issues sampled was 220 issues from a population of 1890 issues during this period,

⁸ Will Slauter, "The Paragraph as Information Technology: How News Traveled in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World," *Annales (English Ed.)* 67, no. 02 (June 2012): 253–78, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2398568200000662>.

or 11.43%.⁹ The total number of pages in this sample was 744 and the population size of pages was an estimated 5984 pages, of which the sample was 12.43% of the total pages. The most frequent size (mode) of the publication grew over time from two pages during its early decades, to four pages by 1758, to six pages by 1768, before dropping in size back to four pages in 1774 and down to two pages during the final two issues in 1776, during the Siege of Boston: the sample includes both the *Massachusetts Gazette* and the *Boston News-Letter*. During these years, the *BNL* published weekly on Thursdays and when it published extraordinary editions and supplements the Readex database of Early American Newspapers has catalogued these issues with the ordinary issue for the week of publication, so the sample included these extraordinary editions and supplements in the sample of the ordinary issue for those weeks.

To identify what news in the prints came from mariners, the coding is applied only to those items in this sample that *BNL* attributed *directly* to a mariner or vessel. Much of the *BNL*'s items had to be carried by vessel at some point including roughly half of the content that was news from Britain that was credited to incoming vessels or ship masters, items from islands such as Antigua had to have travelled on a vessel at some point, in addition to advertisements for manufactured goods that had arrived on recent vessels. Examples of items that directly attributed a mariner or a ship included: "By a vessel last week from Halifax, we have advice,"¹⁰,

⁹ Mary Farwell Ayer and Albert Matthews, *Check-List of Boston Newspapers, 1704-1780, With Bibliographical Notes*, vol. Volume IX, Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Cambridge, Mass.: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts ; University Press : John Wilson and Son, 1907).

¹⁰ "By a Vessel Last Week from Halifax, We Have Advice," *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2491 (February 1, 1750).

“By Capt. Lamphear ... we have a certain Account,”¹¹and “Capt. Chamber brought the *Edinburgh Courant*.”¹² Without such wording items could have come to the printer indirectly, through a passenger on a vessel, or from a blackboard or gossip at a coffeehouse. This strategy was to answer the narrow question of what news in the prints came from mariners.

To answer the question of what news in the prints came from mariners, these items are coded into mutually exclusive categories of source type, news type, and city of dateline. The printers usually attributed items to only one source, but sometimes it is unclear whether news was attributed to a vessel or the captain of that vessel. Although many items contained several pieces of news, each item is coded for one and only one news type, the most important piece of news in the item. Usually this was the first piece of news in the item. For instance, generally an embargo is coded as shipping news for the shipping it disrupted. To avoid coding this item in multiple categories, an embargo is not coded as military news for the navy vessels that enforced it, nor government news for the proclamations that enacted it, nor commercial news for the trade it prevented. Storms are generally coded as shipping because the *BNL* usually reported storms in relation to shipping that was lost. When the *BNL* did report storms without reporting effects on shipping the item is coded as Disaster, the same category as fires and earthquakes. This coding shows the focuses of items in the *BNL* from mariners and vessels.

¹¹ “By Capt. Lamphear, Who Arrived Here Yesterday in 40 Days from Gambia,” *Boston News-Letter*, no. 2925 (August 4, 1758).

¹² “Capt. Chamber Brought the *Edinburgh Courant* of August 9,” *Boston News-Letter and New England Chronicle*, no. 3401 (October 8, 1762).

Tables

Table 11 Items attributed to Mariners or Vessels in *BNL* Sample, 1740-1776

Year	Number of Items	Percent of Items
1740	32	6.1%
1742	22	4.2%
1744	26	5.0%
1746	37	7.1%
1748	20	3.8%
1750	8	1.5%
1752	17	3.2%
1754	25	4.8%
1756	50	9.5%
1758	51	9.7%
1760	33	6.3%
1762	45	8.6%
1764	15	2.9%
1766	18	3.4%
1768	40	7.6%
1770	32	6.1%
1772	32	6.1%
1774	20	3.8%
1776	1	0.2%
Total	524	100.0%

Appendix B. **Songs and Verses**

The songs and verses mariners transcribed are a rich and understudied record of the attitudes of eighteenth-century sailors. Songs and verses from mariners' writings are the most detailed evidence of how eighteenth-century American seamen participated in British-American popular culture. "Popular" means that many authors and listeners of various ranks contributed to and circulated these songs. The authors and appreciators included crews before the mast on vessels from New England ports, the mates who kept logbooks, printers in London and Boston, and others. Even when not identified, most of these verses were songs: the lyrics fit period melodies, printers sold many as broadside ballads, and many of the verses had a ballad form. The songs show how seamen thought about their ties to people onshore: the main themes were courtship, marriage, and women; the dangers of seafaring; decadence or moral decay; and religion or devotion. These themes in the 72 pieces here are typical of all seamen's songs from that time and place.

Many of these songs and verses represent Anglophone popular culture, in the sense that they circulated among all English-speakers at the time. As historians have come to think about it, popular culture means the beliefs and practices that all parts of society shared when masses and elites borrowed and appropriated from each other. Influenced by Michel de Certeau via Roger Chartier, historians' understanding of what is "popular" in popular culture has changed from meaning objects that circulated widely to how consumers of culture also

produced that culture.¹ Classic studies of popular culture variously argued that that elite culture documented masses, for instance, in Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, that masses accessed elite culture, for instance, through the cheap print *livrets* of the French *bibliothèque bleue*, and that subordinate and dominant cultures borrowed from each other, for instance in religious heterodoxy rooted out by the Roman inquisition.²

Almanacks and broadside ballads show Anglophone popular culture. Printers issued these inexpensive prints for popping into pockets and pasting onto walls. They composed the almanacks as small booklets that contained calendars and other useful and entertaining information, both original and copied with impunity from other printers.³ In broadside ballads, they reprinted folk songs and topical songs, again, sometimes original and other times copied from other authors. Communalist interpretations say that folk songs had no one author, while, according to individualist interpretations, individuals authored folk songs.⁴ Many of the ballads American mariners transcribed appeared first in England's oral-musical culture or England's prints (See, Table 12. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode

¹ Roger Chartier, "Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Steven L. Kaplan (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), 229–53.

² Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xii, xvi, xvii; Darnton, "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris," 30; Chartier, "Culture as Appropriation," 229–35.

³ Stowell, *Early American Almanacs*, 13–37, 141–42; Elizabeth Carroll Reilly and David D. Hall, "Customers and the Market for Books," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, *History of the Book in America*, v. 1 (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : [Worcester, Mass.]: Cambridge University Press ; American Antiquarian Society, 2000), 392; Thomas A. Horrocks, *Popular Print and Popular Medicine: Almanacs and Health Advice in Early America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 1–3.

⁴ Patricia Fumerton, "Why the Broadside Ballad?," *The Making of a Broadside Ballad*, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://press.emcimprint.english.ucsb.edu/the-making-of-a-broadside-ballad/why-broadside-ballads>.

Island Seamen, 1740-1759, on page 384, Table 13. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1760-1775, on page 387, and Table 14. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1776-1801, on page 392). The significance of this is that these songs of the American forecastle were a subset of the songs that people shared on both sides of the Atlantic, people with varying degrees of literacy and illiteracy, people who modified and propagated these songs on their own terms. For these songs, the communalist-individualist debate was a false dichotomy since individuals' song verses moved into communal revision.

These forecastle songs usually are not chanteys. Chanteys were African- and West Indian-influenced work songs from nineteenth-century longshoremen, seamen, and lumberjacks.⁵ Unlike those nineteenth-century workers, historians believe that eighteenth-century British American seamen worked in silence. These folk songs have multiple versions, usually without authoritative sources. One source of these many versions printers who created broadsides from folk ballads they heard or read elsewhere. Hawkers sold these broadsides by singing them out loud on the street. Readers bought these broadsides for a penny or sang them from paste-ups on tavern walls. Singers then whipped up new versions of old tunes again and

⁵ William Main Doerflinger, *Shantymen and Shantyboys: Songs of the Sailor and Lumberman* (New York: MacMillan, 1951), xii; Carleton Sprague-Smith, "Broad-sides and Their Music in Colonial America," in *Music in Colonial Massachusetts, 1630-1820: A Conference Held by the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, May 17 and 18, 1973*, ed. Colonial Society of Massachusetts, vol. I: Music in Public Places, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, v. 53 (Boston : [Charlottesville]: The Society ; Distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 1980), 329-32, <https://www.colonialsociety.org/node/2012#ch04>.

again. This union of melody, lyrics, and performance communicated stories and feelings about those stories.⁶

Most of these verses appear to be folk ballads, meaning that their singers also reworked them in a rough-and-ready way. The usual way to document folk ballads is printers' broadside ballads. The opening stanza often calls listeners to pay heed or describes strolling and singing. After this, ballads tend to tell stories. Usually, the lines have rhyming schemes of ABAB, ABCB, or ABABBCBC. Ideally, these lines alternate between lines in iambic tetrameter of four stressed beats and iambic trimeter of three stressed beats. New folk ballads often resembled pre-existing folk ballads in lyrics and melody. Consequently, which verses were ballads can be guessed with a bit of sleuthing.

These verses represent popular culture in the sense that a wide range of seamen shared these songs. Seamen swapped songs with each other, sometimes writing out songs into each other's books. Most of the surviving songs come from the logbooks that mates kept. Mates reused logbooks for several voyages, even on multiple vessels. Sometimes multiple mates reused each other's logbooks. The logbooks of Peter Pease are an example of this for these logbooks including voyages of the sloop *Nelle* (Nellie), schooner *Squerel* (Squirrel), brig *Mairmaid* (Mermaid), and brig *Union* from the years 1769, 1770, and 1774, together with accounts from the sloop *Freedom* (Freedom) from 1779. The songs Abner Butler and his crewmates wrote into Butler's 1755 logbook refer to his seven crewmates of Jonathan Bunker, Peter Pease, William Mackeldroy, Mathew Butler, Jamie Jenkins, Nathan Lonhan, and Joseph

⁶ Una McIlvenna, "When the News Was Sung: Ballads as News Media in Early Modern Europe," *Media History* 22, no. 3–4 (October 2016): 317–33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2016.1211930>; Sprague-Smith, "Broadside and Their Music in Colonial America," 157–62.

Jenkins. Altogether, at least 23 different seamen transcribed these 72 songs and verses: at least seven before 1759, at least eleven between 1760 and 1775, and at least eight after 1776. Many more people took part as singers and audiences, making these ballads popular in many senses of the term.

These 72 songs are an outstanding record of early mariners' attitudes about people onshore, especially women (see, Table 7. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1740-1801, on page 218). Of the 72 songs, thirty-four are mainly about courtship, marriage, or women, sixteen are about danger, nine are primarily religious or devotional, and five are about decadence or moral decline. Two devotional songs and one song about courtship are also about the danger of seafaring. Eighteen songs are in sources from 1759 or before, 29 songs are in sources from 1760 to 1775, and 27 songs are in sources from 1775 onwards. Two songs appear in sources from multiple periods (See, Table 7. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1740-1801, on page 218). The ratio of songs to years for this collection of eighteenth-century songs exceeds one-to-one (1:1). This compares favorably with the largest collection of American sailor songs from the nineteenth century: Stuart Frank collected approximately 200 songs from whale ship log books, giving a ratio of songs to years of about two-to-one (2:1).⁷ These are great results, given the rarity of eighteenth-century manuscripts, especially from before the Revolutionary War.

⁷ Frank, *Jolly Sailors Bold: Ballads and Songs of the American Sailor Excavated from Whalemens' Shipboard Manuscripts in the Kendall Collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum*.

Collecting is unlikely to change how the main themes were courtship and danger because these are also the dominant themes in other collections of songs. Anthologist Gale Huntington argues that sailor songs' themes remained consistent from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century.⁸ George Carey's edited collection of 58 songs that the captured American privateer Timothy Connor recorded while he was in an English prison during 1777-1778 had at least 28 songs about courtship, marriage, or women (48%).⁹ By comparison, 47% of the songs assembled here were about courtship, marriage, or women. Thomas Fanning, a ship's carpenter, Connecticut farmer, and Revolutionary War soldier, recorded a notebook of songs that the American Antiquarian Society describes many of Fanning's songs as being "about romance, going to sea, or marching off to war."¹⁰ Thus, these 72 songs are similar to other seamen's songs.

Ballads and forecastle songs had many editions and often had unclear authorship. That complicates authority control of assigning uniform titles to songs that had several titles, no title, or shared a title with other pieces. Indexes cross-reference these titles, the first line of each song, and sometimes the full lyrics. The most comprehensive of these indexes are the Roud Folk Song Index and the Roud Broadside Index, created by Steve Roud. Now-superseded indexes included the Laws Index, which codes songs by theme, and the Child Ballads. Similar broadside databases include the Isaiah Thomas Broadside Ballads Project at the American Antiquarian

⁸ Huntington, *The Gam*.

⁹ Carey, *Sailor's Songbag*.

¹⁰ American Antiquarian Society, "Connecticut Was the Fifth State to Achieve Statehood...", Instagram, June 22, 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BkUwLkH_y5/.

Society, the English Broadside Ballads Archives at the University of Southern California, and the Broadside Ballads Online from the Bodleian Libraries. These indexes, catalogs, and databases make it possible to trace many forecastle songs to Anglophone folk culture and British prints. Tracing some songs to England helps to identify the songs British American seamen likely wrote themselves.

Tables

Table 12. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1740-1759

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Decadence	"A Sugar Cain Marchant" <i>fits</i> "Derry Down."	[1755], [Abner Butler],	Butler, 916/16r			
Decadence	"Two Babes," <i>aka</i> "The Children in the Woods," "The Norfolk Gentleman's Last Will and Testament," <i>to</i> "Rogerero" or "Chevy Chase"	May 20, 1755, Abner Butler, Enock Benjamin et al.	Butler, 916/11r-12v; see also, Cahoon (1795), n.p.	288	Yes	Laws Q34; Frank, 13-15
Decadence	"The Pride of England, Or, the Folly of Man" or "O England," "As in Sweet Slumber I was Laid," <i>to</i> "Monstrous Women"	Jun. 25, 1755, 40° 35' N, Abner Butler	Butler, 916/10r	V9424	Yes	
Danger	"Come all you Nobel Semen Bold" <i>fits</i> "Chevy Chase," <i>resembles</i> "Admiral Benbow"	Feb. 20, 1755, [Abner Butler]	Butler, 916/14r			Seems original
Danger	"When Spring Returns with Western Gales" <i>aka</i> "A Whaling Song"	Mar. 15, 1755, 37° 27' N, William Pease	Butler, 916/13-15; see also, C. Pinkham (1764); by John Osborn (1713-53)	27559		Mass. original. See, Kettel, 118-24; Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 14-15 Likely original
Courtship	"On one of our Young Men's Courtship with a Lass in this Place"	May 24, 1744, Nantucket, [Benjamin Bangs]	Bangs vol. 1, n.p. [111-112]			
Courtship	"Draw Near you Gallant Whilst I do unfolde" or "Two Lovers of Exeter," or "The Young Shopkeeper"	Jan. 21, 1755, Abner Butler	Butler 916/16v	V14307	Yes	Thomas Ballads #278

Table 12. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Courtship	"It was through the grove I took my way"	May 6, 1755, Abner Butler, "This Song Riten By Me Abner Butler Year 1755 On Bord the Sloop Diligance Jonathan Bunker Commander"	Butler, 916/15r	Resembles V2963, V2972		
Courtship	"Bonny Cate of Windsor," or "It was Near the Town of Winsor Upon Pleasant Greene" or "Miller's Daughter," or "Be Kind my Dear"	May 8, 1755, [Abner Butler]	Butler, 916/16r	V7558	Yes	
Courtship	"A Rich Old Misard," <i>resembles</i> "William and Harriet"	Sept. 24, 1755, 42° 19' N, Sloop <i>Success</i> , Abner Butler.	Butler, 916/10v	Resembles 536		
Courtship	"O Venus buttey of the skies," aka "A Hymn to Venus"	Jan. 21, 1755, Edward Beacham, [1758], Peleg Folger "This he composed on entering his 24 th year"	Beacham, n.p.; by Sappho Folger, 1-2	V21802	Yes	Sappho
Devotional	[Untitled], "How soon my time hath flown away"					Original
Devotional	"Psalm 102," "Eternal one, bow down thine holy ear"	Apr. 3, 1758, [Peleg Folger]	Folger, 3-5		[Likely]	Trans. of Psalm 102
Devotional	[Untitled], "One early fair and pleasant morn"	[1758], Peleg Folger	Folger, 5-6			Seems original
Devotional	"Dissention dissuaded and love and unity encouraged," "Hail sons of Adam who would fain arise"	1758, Peleg Folger	Folger, 6-7			Seems original
Other (Patriotic)	"Rescommon's Essay on Poetry," <i>aka</i> Roscomon's "Essay on Translated Verse"	1746, Quebec, Anonymous	Anonymous, Nov. 2, 1746; by Roscomon		Yes	Roscomon, "Essay on Translated Verse"

Table 12. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Other (Patriotic)	"At length the time is come which Heaven was please to show"	1747, Quebec, Anonymous	Anonymous, Jul. 26, 1747			Seems original [English diarist?]
Other (Doctors)	"When the Devil, but this blundering / Death's harbinger could have prescribed"	1746, Quebec, Anonymous	Anonymous, Sept. 17, 1747			Seems original [English diarist?]
<i>Sources:</i> See note, below. ¹						

¹ Benjamin Bangs diary, typescript, 1742-1765, Massachusetts Historical Society; Peleg Folger, "Peleg Folger his book: The Collected Writings of an Eighteenth-Century Nantucket Whaleman," Nathaniel Philbrick and Thomas Philbrick, eds. Unpublished typescript. n.p., n.d., [1751-1776]; Journal kept on board the Sloop Success, kept by Abner Butler, master Joseph Jenkins 1755-1756, New Bedford Whaling Museum Library, KWM0916; Ruben Pinkham, Eagle (Schooner) logbook, 1755. Peabody Essex Museum Philips Library; Carleton Sprague-Smith, "Broadships and Their Music in Colonial America," in *Music in Colonial Massachusetts, 1630-1820*, ed. Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, v. 53-54 (Boston : [Charlottesville]: The Society ; Distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 1980), 157-367; Samuel Kettel, "John Osborn," in *Specimens of American Poetry: With Critical and Biographical Notices in Three Volumes*, vol. I (Boston: S. G. Goodrich and Co., 1829), 118-24. Edward Beacham, "Eagle (Schooner) Logbook, Master Daniel Emery, 1755," 1755. Log 3, Schooner Eagle. Phillips Library, Peabody-Essex Museum, Salem, Mass. Anon, Remarkable Occurrences, 1748, JCBL.

Table 13. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1760-1775

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Decadence	"Come lend me your ears, loving brethren, a while" to "Derry Down"	[1769-1774], Thomas Dade	Pease, 136-137	1179	Yes ²	<i>Free-Mason's Pocket Companion</i> Huntington 264-266
Danger	"New Whale Song Tune ye Parliament Wo"	1764, Christopher Pinkham	C. Pinkham	[9153?]		Resembles Roud 2227, 388, 9153, V20066, Laws D1
Danger	"When Spring Returns with Western Gales" <i>aka</i> "A Whaling Song"	1764, Rueben Pinkham	Butler, 916/13-15; C. Pinkham; by John Osborn (1713-53)	27559	Mass. prints.	Original from Mass. by John Osborn; see, Kettel 118-24; Huntington, <i>Gam</i> , 14-15
Danger	"A Song consarning Ships Sailing one the oshen" / "Ships in the Ocean"	[1769], [Peter Pease]	Pease, 148	27520	Yes	Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 115-116

² "32 Come Lend Me Your Ears, Loving Brethren, a While," in *The Free Mason's Pocket Companion*, Second edition (Edinburgh: Printed for Alexander Donaldson and sold at his shops in London and Edinburgh, 1763), 242–46.

Table 13. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Danger	"A New Years Wish for the year 1770"	[1770], 56° 34' N 57° W,	Pease, 144			
Danger	"A new Song in the year 1770" or "It was the Twelfth Day of June Just a Bout Noon In the year seventeen hundred and four"	[Peter Pease] Mar. 4, 1770, [Peter Pease]	Pease, 143			Seems original
Danger	"a new Song in the year 1770 &c" or "you gentlemen of England that Lies at home at Ease" <i>aka</i> "Gallant Seaman" <i>aka</i> "The Mariners"	Apr. 19, 1770, 62° N 47' W, Shubal Davis	Pease, 142	18526	Yes	
Danger	"Com all good people young and olde I will until you tell"	Oct. 16, 1774, Rueben Pinkham,	R. Pinkham, n.p.			
Danger, Devotional	"Dominum Collaudinum," or, "Let us Praise the Lord"	1775, Peleg Folger	Folger, 11-16			"composed by Peleg Folger 1775"
Devotional	"Reading mr allines Book Entitled alarm to the Unconverted"	Mar. 25, 1770, 48° N 45° W, "These Verses rought one Board of the Brig mairmaid," Peter Pease,	Pease, 146			Seems original
Courtship	"The Man's Choice"	1769, Peter Pease	Pease, 4		Mass. prints	<i>Low's Almanac</i> 1770

Table 13. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Courtship	"Modesty a Dissembler"	1769, Peter Pease	Pease, 4		Yes	<i>Gentleman's Magazine</i> ³
Courtship	"A Song Concerning A Fair Lady and Deth," <i>aka</i> "Death and the Lady"	Rueben Pinkham	R. Pinkham, n.p.	1031	Yes	
Courtship	"One morning one morning in may," <i>aka</i> "The Gentle Shepherd"	1767, Frances Boardman,	Boardman, n.p.	V4970	Yes	
Courtship	"One Night I Dreamed I Lay Most Easy Down by a Morning Breeze."	[1767-1769], John Hodges, Jr.	Hodges, n.p.			Seems original
Courtship	"Come you Gentlemen and Ladeys I pray you to Look back"	[1767-1769], John Hodges, Jr.	Hodges, n.p.	[Huntington cites as 297 but it does not fit]	Not found.	[Huntington cites it as "Cupid's Garden," but it does not fit.]
Courtship	"A Love Song in the 1769 &c" or "Down By one Shady Bower Nigh To a Pleasent green"	1769, [Peter Pease]	Pease, 149	2087		May be original [Roud Index cites only Huntington who cites only Pease from Mass.]

³ Gunapistos, "Modesty A Dissembler."

Table 13. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Courtship	"A boald Seamans Song in the year 1769," or "A Dew To You Ladies of Lisborn," or "Spanish Ladies"	1769, Zaddock Macksfield	Pease, 147	687	Yes	Palmer no. 54; Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 144-146
Courtship	"William ware a faith Lover" <i>aka</i> "William Taylor"	[1769], [Peter Pease]	Pease, 140-141	158	Yes	Laws N11 Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 153-159.
Courtship	"The Turkey Factor in Foreign Parts"	[1769-1774], [Peter Pease]	Pease, 132-136	572	Yes	e.g. EBBA 31369
Courtship	"I am an a Wever By my Trade" <i>aka</i> "The Weaver"	[1769-1774], [Peter Pease]	Pease, 129	17771	Yes	e.g. EBBA 21142; Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 210-211
Courtship	"Recruiting Sargeant Recitative" or "Island of Love"	[1769-1774], Thomas [Dade]	Pease, 128; by John Potter	2085	Yes	By John Potter ca. 1770, sung at Vauxhall
Courtship	"A New Song," or "One morning early in the Spring" <i>aka</i> "The Seaman's Complaint for His Unkind Mistress of Wapping" <i>to</i> "He that Loves Best Must Suffer Most"	Jul. 12, 1774, 7° 30' N, Samuel Atkins	Atkins, n.p.	152	Yes	Laws M1; e.g. EBBA 22192, 33977, 34684

Table 13. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Courtship	"A New Song," or "My Love She abides in the north Country Wide," aka "Molly of the North Country"	1774, 7° 50' N Guinea, [Samuel Atkins]	Atkins, n.p.	V4792	Yes	
Courtship	"When Stormy winds do blow"	[1775], Rueben Pinkham,	R. Pinkham, n.p.			
Other	"A New Song" or "Com all you Jovel Seamen that Cros the Roring Sea" or "You Seamen Bold" or "The Ship in Distress"	[1774-1775], Samuel Bunker	Atkins, n.p.	807	Yes	
Other: Nursery Rhyme	"I saw a peacock"	Rueben Pinkham,	R. Pinkham, n.p.	19790	Yes	
Other: Memorial	"The Farewell to Rachael Wilson"	Jan. 23, 1775, Rueben Pinkham	R. Pinkham, n.p.			Seems Original
Other: Convivial	"A Very Fine Dity Concearning Gin, Pery & kitty"	Jan. 14, 1775, "Writ & Sold By Antena Woodenjaws Nantucket," Rueben Pinkham	R. Pinkham, n.p.			Mass. original

Sources: See note, below.⁴

⁴ Samuel Atkins, Journal on the brig *Polley* Mar. 17 - Jan. 16, 1775, Nicholson Whaling Log Collection, no. 562 (Providence Public Library, Providence, R.I.); Logbook of the Schooner General Wolfe, John Hodges, Jr. Master, kept by John Hodges, Jr. May 25, 1767 – November 2, 1767, May 19, 1768 – October 31, 1768, Apr 10, 1769 – May 13, 1769. NBWMRL IMA F-1065B-170 F-1065C-170; Peter Pease, Sloop Nelle Logbook, New Bedford Whaling Museum Library, No. ODHS 0458A. Peter Pease. Schooner Squirel Log Book, 1769. New Bedford Whaling Museum Library No. ODHS 0458B; Peter Pease. Brig Mairmaid Log Book, 1770. New Bedford Whaling Museum Library No. ODHS 0458C; Carleton Sprague-Smith, "Broadides and Their Music in Colonial America," in *Music in Colonial Massachusetts, 1630-1820*, ed. Colonial Society of Massachusetts, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, v. 53-54 (Boston : [Charlottesville]: The Society ; Distributed by the University Press of Virginia, 1980), 157–367. Frances Boardman, "Frances Boardman His Book", PL-PEM; Kettel, "John Osborn."

Table 14. Themes of Songs and Verses in Writings of Massachusetts and Rhode Island Seamen, 1776-1801

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Decadence	"The Children in the Woods," "The Babes in the Woods" <i>to</i> "Roger" or "Chevy Chase"	1795, [unknown hand]	Cahoon, n.p.; see also, Butler (1755), 916/11r-12v	288	Yes	Laws Q34; Frank, 13-15
Danger	"When wee Set sail and left our Native Land"	ca. 1775-1788, [unknown]	Swaine, n.p.			Seems original
Danger	"Come all you Noble Semon bold" <i>fits</i> "Chevy Chase"	1781, brig Lark, [unknown]	Swaine, n.p.	<i>Resembles</i> 227 and 388. <i>Fits</i> 223.		Seems original
Danger	"A Song of Whailing" <i>to</i> "The Ship in Distress"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.	27532 [Roud Index cites only Huntington and Frank]		Seems original: Frank, 36-37; Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 36-39.
Danger	"A New Song Maide" <i>to</i> "The Storm" or <i>to</i> "The Bold Princess Royal"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.	27528 [Roud Index cites only Huntington and Frank]		Seems original Frank 32-33, Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 94-95.

Table 14. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Danger, Devotional	"The Drownded Miner": "Come gentle muse assist my song"	1790, Sloop Dolphin		25987 [Cites only Huntington]		Seems original: Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 128-130
Courtship	"A Song Concerning a Lawyer and his Da[fter]" <i>aka</i> "The crafty lover," or "The lawyer out-witted" <i>to</i> "I'll love thee more and more"	1783, Rueben Pinkham	R. Pinkham, n.p.	188	Yes	Laws N26
Marriage	"Dear peggey Since the Single State" <i>aka</i> "Wedlock" <i>aka</i> "Advice to a Young Lady Lately Married, "Dear Lady since the single state / You've left and chose yourself a mate"	1781, [Swaine], Nantucket 1790, Sloop Dolphin	Swaine, n.p. (Nantucket) Benjamin Paddock, Jr. master, logbook keeper unknown (Nantucket) By Esther Clark	27551	Yes	By Esther Clark; Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 325-328.
Courtship	"[As you mean to set sail For the] Land of Delight," <i>aka</i> "Sailor's Advice," <i>aka</i> "Sam Sounding's Advice For Weathering Cape Horn"	1793, Ashley Bowen	Bowen, 594-595	V4157	Yes	
Courtship	"Suffolk Miracle"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.	246	Yes	Child no. 272; Frank 7-9

Table 14. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Courtship, Danger	"Constant Lovers," aka "Silk Merchant's Daughter"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.	552	Yes Also in Boston Prints	Laws N10; Frank 16-20; Huntington, <i>Gam</i> , 184-188
Courtship	"A Song of Old," aka "A New Song in Favor of Courting" aka "The Whore on the Snow Crust"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p., Israel Perkins	27531	Boston Prints	Frank 21-22; Huntington, <i>Gam</i> , 330-332; Thomas Broad-sides; Perkins.
Courtship	"A-Walking and A-Talking," aka "The Cuckoo" to "On Top of Old Smokey"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.,	413 & 414	Yes	Frank, 23-25
Courtship	"An Old Song" aka "Sweet Combeana"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.,	9233 [Roud Index cites Huntington, Frank. Poor match for 20 th century Ireland)		May be original: Frank, 26; Huntington, <i>Gam</i> , 235.

Table 14. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Courtship	"New Song": "Ye Maidens Pretty in town and Cittys / Come hear with Pity my mournful Strain" <i>aka</i> "The Sailor Dear" <i>aka</i> "The Lovely Sailor"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.	6905	Yes	Frank 27-28; Huntington 216-217.
Courtship	"A Song Concerning Love," <i>aka</i> "The Captain Calls All Hands" <i>aka</i> "The Distressed Maid"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.	602	Yes	Frank 30-31; Huntington, <i>Gam</i> , 162-163.
Courtship	"A Song": "One morning one morning one morning in may," <i>aka</i> "Soldier and the Lady," <i>aka</i> "The Lady and the Grenadier," <i>aka</i> "The Nightingale['s Song]," <i>aka</i> "One Morning in May"	1795-1796, A. Brown Tillinghast	Tillinghast, n.p.	140	Yes	Laws P14
Courtship	"A New Song," "As Lovely Nancy sat Lamenting"	Jan. 15, 1796, 18° 20' N, A. Brown Tillinghast	Tillinghast, n.p.	[V9512?]		Madden Collection 22 (Country Printers 7), no. 206.
Courtship	"Through Cities towns and Watars where I did use for to rove," <i>aka</i> "The Choice of a Wife," <i>aka</i> "The Batchelor's Resolution"	May 20, 1801, 30° N 59' 30° W, Hezekiah Smith	<i>English Pilot</i> , Book 4, "Avalon Peninsula," verso	V1453	Yes	

Table 14. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Marriage	"An Acrostick wrote at Sea Hannah Otis Nicholson"	June 17, 1790, Thomas Nicholson	Nicholson, n.p.			Original
Devotional, marriage	"Plymouth that town that gave me birth"	[1790], Thomas Nicholson	Nicolson, n.p.			Original
Devotional	"Gethsemane": "Jesus, while he dwelt below"	[ca. 1801], [Hezekiah Smith]	<i>English Pilot</i> , Book 4, "Caribbee Islands," verso		Yes	Hart (1759) no. 75
Other	"Virtuous Wife" to "Chevy Chase" aka "The Grecian Daughter"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.	27535	Yes	Frank 10-12, Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 345-351.
Other	"Free Thinker's Reasons for Refusing to Preach" aka "De Mott"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon, n.p.; Jenks, 22-23.	27501 [Roud Index cites only Frank and Huntington)	US-printed by Jenks	Jenks; Frank, 25; Huntington <i>Gam</i> , 317-318
Other	"I am a brisk and Sprightly Lad," aka "Yeo, Yeo, Sir," from "The Spoiled Child"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon n.p., By Isaac Bickerstaff	8823	London stage, Irish author	Frank, 29 Bickerstaff (1792 Irish playwright in London)

Table 14. Continued

Theme	Title and/or First Line <i>fits/to</i> Melody	Date, Location, Hand	Source(s)	Roud no.	England Prints	Other references (Selected)
Other (Whaling)	"A Song of Whaling"	1795, Stephen Cahoon	Cahoon n.p.,	27525 [Roud Index cites only Frank and Huntington]		Seems original Frank, 34- 35; Huntington, <i>Gam</i> , 33-35

Sources: see note, below.⁵

⁵ Thomas Nicholson, Thomas Nicolson navigation and logbooks, 1766-1813, Ms. N-590. Ashley Bowen, *The Journals of Ashley Bowen (1728-1813) of Marblehead*, ed. Philip Chadwick Foster Smith, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1973). *Broadside Ballads Online*, Stephen Cahoon, Logbook of the ship *Polly*, master Elkanah Mayo, 1795 NBWMRL KWM #423. *English Broadside Ballads Archive*, *English Pilot, Book 4* (London: Printed for Mount and Davidson, 1789), JCBL; Frank, *Songs of the Polly*. Olsen, "Racy Songs"; Bowen, *Journals*. [Eunice Swaine?] Journal, 1776-1788, Nantucket Atheneum. W.E. Tillinghast, "Account Book, 1795-1796" John Carter Brown Library. Tillinghast papers. Rueben Pinkham, "Ruben Pinkham His Book 1773, 1783," 1783 1773. Log 3, Schooner Eagle. Phillips Library, Peabody-Essex Museum, Salem, Mass. Stephen Jenks, *Jovial Songster no. II*, 22-23.

Appendix C. **Records of the Brigantine *Sally* and the Brigantine *Othello***

Selected Records of the Voyage of Brigantine *Othello*, master Thomas Rogers, 1764-1766

- Rogers, Thomas. "Book Containing What the Men Have Taken up on the Voyage on Board the Brig't Othello Thos. Rogers Comd'r," 1764, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22811, N-YHS.
- . "Brigg'tn Othello to Sundry Disbursements," September 27, 1765, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22519, N-YHS.
- . "Brigg'tn Othello to Sundry Disbursements at Antigua," November 1765, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22492, N-YHS.
- . [Letter], September 5, 1764, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22041, N-YHS.
- . [Letter], October 6, 1764, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22036, N-YHS.
- . [Letter], February 26, 1765, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22025, N-YHS.
- . To Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon, July 30, 1764, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22028, N-YHS.
- . To Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon, December 24, 1764, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22033, N-YHS.
- . To Messrs. Samuel & William Vernon, September 25, 1765, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22044, N-YHS.
- Vernon [?], Samuel [?], and William [?] Vernon [?]. "No. 10 Remarks to Be Make Aware of in y'e [the] Action for Breach of Orders," 1766, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 23003, N-YHS.
- . "No. 11 Remarks," 1766, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 23000, N-YHS.
- Vernon and Vernon [?]. "Memo Relating Charges," 1766, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22567, N-YHS.
- . "Notes on Slave Inventory of Brigantine Othello, Thomas Rogers Master," 1766, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22564, N-YHS.
- Vernon, Samuel, and William Vernon. To Capt. Thos. Roggers, May 12, 1764, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22444, N-YHS.
- . To Valentine Jones, February 19, 1771, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 23000, N-YHS.

———. To Capt. Thos. Rogers, March 12, 1764, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22419, N-YHS.

Willock, Alexander. To Messrs. Samuel & Wm. Vernon, November 23, 1765, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22602, N-YHS.

———. To Messrs. Samuel & Wm. Vernon, November 23, 1765, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22598, N-YHS.

———. “Sales of 9 New Negro Men, 6 Women, 13 Boys, and 13 Girls, Imported in the Brigantine Othello, Thomas Rogers Master and Put into by Hands for Sale by Said Rogers on Account of His Owners, Messrs. Samuel and William Vernon, Merchants in Rhode Island,” November 23, 1765, Slavery Collection Series I Subseries 2 no. 22586, N-YHS.

Selected Records of the Voyage of the brigantine *Sally*, master Esek Hopkins (1764-1766)

Brown, Moses to Nicholas Brown & Co. July 17, 1765, BFBR 674-3-7/17/65, JCBL.

Brown, Nicholas to John Brown, Joseph Brown, and Moses Brown, September 12, 1764, Moses Brown Papers, MSS 313, B1c, F6, RIHS.

Gardner, Benjamin to Nicholas Brown & Co. May 15, 1765, Moses Brown Papers, MSS 313, B1c, F7, RIHS.

Nicholas Brown & Co to Esek Hopkins, Letter of Instruction, Sept. 10, 1764, BFBR 643-6, Item 1, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Abraham Whipple, George Hopkins, and Nicholas Power, November 17, 1765 BFBR 536-9-11/15/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Benjamin Mason, August 23, 1765, BFBR 233-10-8/23/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Benjamin Mason, June 17, 1765, BFBR 233-10-6/17/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Benjamin Mason, November 24, 1765, BFBR 233-11-11/24/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to David Vanhorne, August 14, 1765, BFBR 339-4-8/14/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to David Vanhorne, May 14, 1764, BFBR 339-3-5/14/64, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to David Vanhorne, August 5, 1765, BFBR 339-4-8/5/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, December 30, 1764, BFBR 643-2, Item 2, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, June 4, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 4, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, July 15, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 5, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, July 17, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 6, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, July 19, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 7, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, November 9, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 8, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Esek Hopkins, November 16, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 10, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Joseph Wanton and William Wanton, July 19, 1765, BFBR 31-4/7/19/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Joseph Wanton and William Wanton, October 12, 1765, BFBR 340-8-10/12/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Nicholas Power, November 9, 1765, BFBR 469-10; Item 4-11/9/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Wanton, Joseph and William August 11, 1764, BFBR 340-7-8/11/64, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Abraham Whipple, July 29, 1765, BFBR 31-4/7/29/65, JCBL.

Nicholas Brown & Co. to Abraham Whipple, December 3, 1765, BFBR 43-9-12/3/65, JCBL.

Wanton, Joseph and William Wanton to Nicholas Brown & Co. June 26, 1765, Moses Brown Papers, MSS 313, B1c, F7, RIHS.

Wanton, Joseph G. to Nicholas Brown & Co. 4 Aug. 1764, BFBR 674-3-8/4/64, JCBL.

Wanton, Joseph Jr. to John Brown, June 20, 1766, BFBR 340-8-6/20/66, JCBL.

Wanton, Joseph Jr. to Nicholas Brown & Co., August 13, 1764, BFBR 340-7-8/13/64, JCBL.

Willock, Alexander to Nicholas Brown & Co., November 25, 1765, BFBR 643-2, Item 9, JCBL.

Appendix D. Naval Office Shipping Lists

Table 15. Total Entrances and Clearances at Salem Customs House, 1751-1767

	Future Canada		Fourteen Colonies				West Indies				
	Cape Breton and Quebec	New-found-land	Northeast	Middle Colonies	Chesa-peake	Southeast	British West Indies, "West Indies"	Danish West Indies	Dutch West Indies	French West Indies	Spanish West Indies
1751		19	16	4	43	12	77		36		4
1752		51	15	22	70	14	74		67		1
1753		53	21	8	79	12	64	1	57		3
1754		40	13	6	78	13	64		52		
1755		4	37	7	45	16	69		36		2
1756			58	9	49	12	38		50		1
1757			76	32	83	19	77	2	43		4
1758	10		64	30	109	23	36	6	42		3
1759	18	3	35	22	80	19	47	5	22	1	5
1760	16	9	53	28	129	38	127		21		14
1761	8	3	17	10	51	18	50	2	14		10
1762	2	3	25	25	129	35	141		29		9
1763	3	8	12	21	104	51	122	1	34	50	6
1764	3	10	15	26	119	42	163	1	27	10	4
1765		7	12	26	95	37	119	4	21	15	7
1766	3	10	9	25	76	27	43	5	28	44	6
1767	3	6	8	14	83	21	89	5	26	22	22
Total	66	226	486	315	1422	409	1400	32	605	142	101

Table 15. Continued

	Southern Europe and Atlantic Islands										Northern Europe	
	Spanish						Portuguese		Sardinia, Livorno	Gibraltar, Mahon	British Isles	Total
	Canaries	Balearic	Anda- lusia	Galicia	Basque	“Spain”	Portugal	Azores, Madeira				
1751		5	28		19	7	30	3	2	10	315	
1752		2	20		30	7	17	5		13	408	
1753			37		20	3	17	8		4	388	
1754		1	31		30	4	15	6		12	366	
1755			34		10		49	4		6	319	
1756			28	1	4	6	63	6		1	326	
1757			16	7	4	3	52	6		4	433	
1758			3		4	2	64	7		4	424	
1759	1		15	1	3		54	2		10	343	
1760			21	1	9	3	37	6		2	526	
1761			7	2	9	1	23	4		8	239	
1762			1				34	6		4	454	
1763			25		16		33	6		8	504	
1764	1	3	18		35		22	4	2	10	518	
1765		1	30		27	2	41	3		2	451	
1766		3	17		23	2	21	5		7	355	
1767		5	28		33	8	21	6		2	406	
Total	2	20	359	12	276	48	593	87	4	83	6775	

Data source: Tapley, Harriet Sylvester, ed. *Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750-1769*. Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1934.

Table 16. Total Entrances and Clearances at Boston Customs House: Extant Records and Estimated Missing Records, 1752-1765

	Future Canada		Fourteen Colonies				West Indies				
	Cape Breton and Quebec	New-found-land	Northeast	Middle Colonies	Chesa-peake	Southeast	British West Indies, "West Indies"	Danish West Indies	Dutch West Indies	French West Indies	Spanish West Indies
1752		24	136	272	192	384	240		32		
1753		74	124	244	154	286	214	12		24	24
1754		74	98	198	138	256	210	12		40	40
1755		68	150	152	130	252	150	2		2	2
1756	2	38	158	190	102	250	108			36	36
1757		35	235	166	128	163	219		3	11	11
1758	33	30	272	184	163	195	128	6		48	48
1759	171	56	254	214	182	224	272	16		14	14
1760	24	52	132	144	196	236	208	48		4	4
1761	82	82	152	210	226	220	180	90		6	6
1762	56	76	142	272	290	312	294	74	8	10	10
1763	51	123	120	139	240	379	232	112	62	19	19
1764	38	98	80	210	174	298	234	32	14	28	28
1765	38	118	120	216	251	310	187	72	30	54	54
Total	488	946	2172	2810	2565	3764	2876	476	148	294	294

Table 16. Continued

	Southern Europe and Atlantic Islands										Northern Europe			Total
	Spanish					Portuguese			British		British Isles	Nether-lands	None	
	Can-aries	Bal-earic	And-alusia	Gal-icia	Bas-que	“Spain”	Portugal	Azores, Madeira	Sardinia, Livorno	Gibraltar, Mahon				
								Cape Verde						
1752					16		8	16			320	8	240	1888
1753		4	18		10		16	16			182		220	1598
1754	2	2	28		14		36	26	2		156	4	230	1526
1755		4	22		6	2	66	4	2	2	146		222	1384
1756		2	28	2	10		60	10	6		144		238	1386
1757			30	3			56				118		155	1318
1758	3		14				43	8			112		128	1363
1759	14						16	14		14	168	8	246	1878
1760	4		16				20			8	68		160	1332
1761	8		12				14	2		22	138		152	1604
1762							26	2		6	156	10	134	1872
1763	3		19		6		16	14		6	192		214	1958
1764	2	6	26		2		18	26			220		142	1652
1765	3	8	16		6		14	6	3		240	11	67	1771
Total	38	26	228	5	69	2	408	142	13	57	2360	41	2546	22528

Data Source: Lawson, Murray, G. "The Routes of Boston's Trade, 1752–1765." *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 38 (February 1948): 80–120.