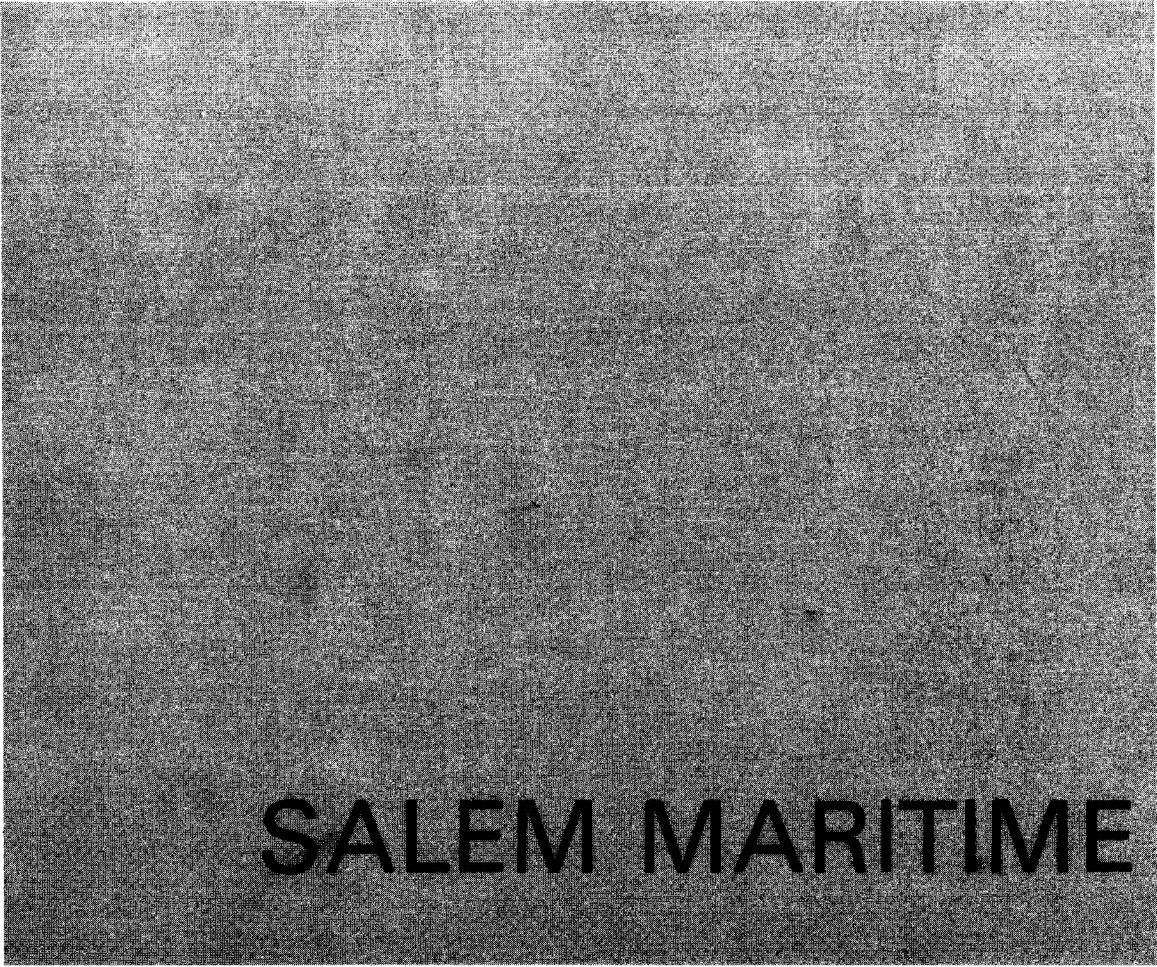


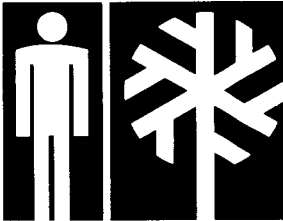
special history study

SHIPPING IN THE REVOLUTION



SALEM MARITIME

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE / MASSACHUSETTS



Special History Study

SHIPPING IN THE REVOLUTION

Salem Maritime National Historic Site
Salem, Massachusetts

Prepared by

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DENVER SERVICE CENTER
HISTORIC PRESERVATION TEAM
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Preface

The writer's reaction to this assignment was, at first, a startled "What, it can't be done!" The idea that trade survived at all seemed novel against the disruptive background of the American Revolution. Even a period specialist, long conversant with the economic side of the war, felt a quiet dismay at ever gaining enough valid sources to demonstrate what happened, or even the highlights, illustrated by examples here and there. But he reckoned without the voluminous records in ancient Essex County, far more complete and important than comparable communities elsewhere in the country, unique in character and quality. Superintendent H. John Dobrovolsky of Salem Maritime National Historic Site had no doubts, suggesting lines of inquiry and sources at the project's start and commenting on progress as it proceeded. The story began to emerge, with the help of interested people in Salem and vicinity, among them Mesdames Potter, Norton, and Haggerty of the Essex Institute Library, Mills and Baldwin of the Peabody Museum Library, Hill of the Beverly Historical Society, Benham of the Cape Ann Historical Society (Gloucester), and Dodge of the Wenham Historical Society. Mr. Philip C. F. Smith of the Peabody Museum helped the writer to get his bearings among sources and societies. The Flahertys at the Massachusetts Archives explained the records of a public nature left behind by the activities being studied, while Miss Collins of the Massachusetts Historical Society contributed several sources. The staffs of the Boston Public Library and Harvard's Houghton Library offered their customary courteous assistance. The writer regrets that his visits ran athwart of the Marblehead Historical Society's seasonal closing with consequent loss of valuable materials.

It can be said with confidence that wartime shipping from Salem went on despite all the handicaps and discouraging times. In pursuing it, Salem's leaders showed courage, adaptiveness, and resourcefulness. And they built for a long-range and lasting commerce. Understanding what they did during the American Revolution is a requisite to comprehending what happened later.

I. Salem's Role in the American Revolution

The "great events" of the American Revolution took place a long way from Salem, Massachusetts. This is not to say that events of significance were all staged elsewhere, through much of Boston's heated troubles before 1775, the provincial government was conducted in Salem Massachusetts' first Provincial Congress was organized there. And Lexington and Concord's battle was foreshadowed there in a confrontation between the local Minute Men and Colonel Leslie's Sixty-Fourth Regiment of foot at the Drawbridge on February 26, 1775. But at this point the scene shifted abroad, not to focus again in quite the same way on Salem. Even on April 19, 1775 with the British in full retreat from the American Revolution's first fight, the Salem Minute Men were kept from a taste of war by Colonel Timothy Pickering's scruples over marching in good time. It remained for her men to make names for themselves aboard privateers and in specialised warfare with units such as Col. Israel Hutchinson's longboatmen.

Yet, through various forms of maritime activity Salem was to take an out-sized part in determining the outcome of the American Revolution. Though possessed of a port inferior to that of Boston, only eighteen miles distant, Salem was a principal commercial center having two harbors (the so-called "Winter" and "Summer" harbors) and flourishing fishing and shipbuilding industries as well as an important trade with the West Indies. By the outbreak of the Revolution a moneyed class of merchants had already emerged equal in experience and enterprise to America's best. Furthermore, Salem stood at the head of half a dozen like seaports in Essex County that as a concentration rivalled the major trading cities of British America: Marblehead, Beverly, Gloucester, Ipswich, Lynn, and Newburyport. Cooperation as well as rivalry could be expected from traders of these towns, fortified, of course, by cordial relationships founded on family ties and identical interest. As the course of the conflict developed, Salem's part in it took shape. Her normal commercial pursuits disrupted, she turned to other seaborne activity. Sources of trade remained intact and could be reached across the lines of enemy interdiction, with an effort.

Following the period of embargo and blockade of 1774-1775, Salem's traders took steps to do so. This led in the last stages of the war to designing and building the large and fast ships that were in time to take her trade to the East Indies. The voyages of 1781-1783 may be viewed as the first steps in extending American commerce to the ends of the globe. The capital, know-how, and industrial base were all present for such undertakings. The trade thus conducted in this period contributed materially and critically to the waging of war; meeting the needs of the Continental Army provided much of the impetus for this line of enterprise. An entire literature has grown up around the exploits of Salem privateers during the American Revolution. This subject, although reserved for separate treatment elsewhere, embodies much of the story of Salem's most important contribution to winning independence. Here, as with trade, the community's resources in shipbuilding, seamen, and entrepreneurs proved fortuitous and brought results.

In October 1775, John Jay, urging that Congress raise the Association's restrictions on shipping, gave as his opinion:

We have more to expect from the enterprise, activity and industry of private adventurers, than from the lukewarmness of assemblies. We want French woollens, Dutch worsteds, duck for tents, German steel, &c. Public virtue is not so active as private love of gain. Shall we shut the door against private enterprise?¹

Salem's answer was a resounding affirmation of his premise.

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1. "Notes of Debates in the Continental Congress by John Adams," quoted in Worthington C. Ford, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress (Wash., 1905), III, p. 496.

II. War and Trade: The Background of Commerce 1774-1783

A casual reader may easily fall into the error of assuming that trade virtually ended with the start of active military operations. Business as usual while a war for independence is being waged seems somehow inconsistent with the high moral tone desired to overcome the enemy's strength and numbers. And didn't the British Navy control the seas? And if the founding fathers weren't fighting, they most assuredly were passing declarations of independence and running the government, weren't they? Anyhow, hadn't they adopted a policy of non-intercourse to freeze out trade with the homeland and bring Lord North and his cronies to their senses? That the colonists were a self-sufficient lot too, and could take care of themselves without resort to goods from abroad also has a plausible ring in explanation of the riddle of trade.

In fact, trade did not simply close down for the duration the night the redcoats took the road to Lexington. Nor were colonial leaders unconcerned about mundane economic considerations. Nor did most of them feel they could go it alone, although one delegate to the Continental Congress argued that inter-colonial commerce would be enough to keep things going: "Will not the army be supplied if vessels go from one Province to another?"² As Robert A. East has shown in his study, Business Enterprise in the American Revolutionary Era, the war proved to a spur to business and a stimulant to the entrepreneurial imagination. Domestic production and internal communications were both expanded apace, while the virtues of diversification and specialization gained common recognition. But all this successful effort and a great deal more were needed to carry on the conflict against so great a military power while welding together a confederation of states and the ways of

2. "Notes of Debates in the Continental Congress by John Adams," quoted in Worthington C. Ford, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress, (Wash., 1905), III, p. 504.

administering them and their outside relationships. Outside help was a critical concern from the start, and trade and commerce the only ways of getting it. The shipping on which the colonists depended continued throughout the war. Commerce was never halted although it slackened when obstructed until methods could be found to release it. Foreign nations supplanted Great Britain as supplier through direct trade between Europe and America to some extent, but in much larger part by indirect trade siphoned through their West Indian island possessions. And this was a theater of trade already well known to the colonies, none better than the merchants and ship masters of Salem.

It is a matter of record that by 1774 the colonies had many old customers in the West Indian islands of France, Spain, Holland, and Denmark. Loose administration of Britain's Navigation Acts invited a sub-rosa trade during peace time and an illicit one during war. Tropical staples from the islands found a ready market on the mainland, while a wide range of foodstuffs and forest products met with favor in the West Indies. They needed each other and encountered little difficulty in making contact. These accommodations laid the groundwork for a heightened dependence once the rupture between colonies and mother country took place. The stark necessities faced in supplying munitions would have made continued trading a certainty without reference to other factors. But, such other factors were important too. Once coercion became a British policy, the colonies began to arm, and even before the Continental Congress had decided on a course of action, the rush to obtain firearms and gunpowder was underway.³

With the basis laid for such trade abroad, the First Continental Congress's principal measure for bringing Britain to terms, the so-called Association, passed and signed October 20, 1774, forced what trade was allowed into foreign channels. While

3. J. F. Jameson, "St. Eustatius in the American Revolution," American Historical Review, VIII (1903), p. 687.

the immediate effect of the Association was to put a damper on trade generally that prevailed until its repeal on April 6, 1776, it commenced the process of diverting trade away from the old channels and into new ones.

As a measure that for sixteen months influenced Salem's shipping, the Association deserves a little closer look. Intended, as stated in the preamble to "obtain redress of . . . grievances, which threaten destruction to the lives, liberty, and property of his majesty's subjects, in North America," its provisions were made on the assumption that "a non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation agreement, faithfully adhered to, will prove the most speedy, effectual, and peaceable measure. . . ."⁴ Timed to take effect on December 1, 1774, it thus left matters open long enough for the North ministry to repent its closing of the port of Boston and take action to restore the situation. Failing that, the apparatus for effecting the Association's restrictions having been readied, the system could swing into operation as scheduled. In the meantime, the best season for importation would pass with the weather, and merchants individually could dispose of surpluses and overcome shortages. "Peaceable" or not, the measure had the result of enormously increasing the traffic in arms and munitions with the West Indies.⁵ So great had this become that the same month Congress adopted the Association, a British Orders in Council prohibited the "exportation of warlike stores or ammunition to the British colonies in America."⁶

4. Ford, op. cit., I, p. 76.

5. Jameson, op. cit., p. 687.

6. Ibid.

In its specific provisions, the Association put into effect very thoroughly the policy of self-denial and non-intercourse suggested in the preamble.⁷ The first article proscribed importation directly or indirectly from Great Britain and Ireland of "any goods, wares, or merchandise whatsoever."⁸ It also proscribed

7. From the first resolution to the last along the road to Association, a full four weeks passed. How guarded the delegates were is not known, but it seems not unlikely that some word of the impending measures failed to get out. So, up to a month can be added to the preliminary period before the Association went into effect, a month's lead time, important to stocking ordnance and dispatching vessels. The first move was made on September 22 when Congress resolved unanimously to request that orders for goods not be sent to Great Britain and that execution of those already dispatched be delayed or suspended until measures had been made public. This was followed on September 27 by a resolution that there be imported after December 1 no goods directly or indirectly from Great Britain or Ireland. Next, on September 30, Congress resolved that exportation to Great Britain, Ireland, and the West Indies should cease entirely September 10, 1775, "unless the grievances of America are redressed before that time." A fierce struggle ensued on this resolution. The interests of the New England and Middle colonies were affected by the inclusion of the West Indies, while the Southern colonies shipped their staple crops to Europe. Yet non-exportation was considered the heart of the Association, a measure that would be needed to stop all trade with Britain and bring that nation to bankruptcy. While non-importation would affect Britain's manufacturers and revenue, non-exportation would hit her merchants and trade. As finally agreed to, indigo was excluded as a vital interest to the Southern Colonies, leaving rice, the other great staple on the list. It took the committee the rest of the interval through October 20 to compose differences, work out the system of enforcement, and add to the other features that finally appeared in the fourteen articles of the Association. Ford, op. cit., I, pp. 41, 43, 51-2, 75-80.

8. Ibid., pp. 76-77.

the importation "from any part of the world" of East India tea. From the British West Indies islands no molasses, syrups, paneles (brown sugar), coffee, or pimentos were to be imported. No wines from Madeira (belonging to Portugal, Great Britain's ally), or any of the West Indies, and no indigo were to be imported. This had the effect of throwing the trade in the above-enumerated staples to the European islands of the West Indies, as well as the full range of manufactures normally obtained from England. Subsequent articles discontinued the slave trade, established a non-consumption agreement covering the goods denied entry, and announced a non-exportation of "any merchandize or commodity whatsoever to Great-Britain, Ireland, or the West-Indies, except rice to Europe."⁹ Specific prohibition of such actions as receiving and shipping goods listed in the agreements, raising prices, and unsupervised disposal of banned goods inadvertently imported put teeth into the agreement. And these were supplemented by provisions for enforcement through committees in "every county, city, and town" chosen by the electorate to watch and publish their observations and committees of correspondence to inspect books of the custom houses for progress of the work. Finally, the Association agreed to "encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts and the manufactures" while discountenancing and discouraging "every species of extravagance and dissipation."¹⁰ This hint of an attempt at self-sufficiency coupled with Spartan self-discipline aimed to show that the colonists meant business; that their demands for repeal of repressive Parliamentary acts must not go unheeded.

The committees went to work with a will, enforcing the agreements so rigorously as to rule out all but the most clandestine violations. As agencies for revolution they functioned

9. Ford, op. cit., I, pp. 76-77.

10. Ibid., p. 78. Included were horse-racing, gaming, cock fighting, plays, entertainments, and expensive diversions.

effectively, and there is good authority for the belief that their operations constituted an important first step to Independence and political union.¹¹

When the Association failed to elicit the desired response as hoped, its purpose in being came under review. In the wake of Lexington and Concord the importation of munitions became an imperative need. And on July 15, 1775, Congress resolved that those vessels that would import gunpowder, saltpetre, sulphur, brass field pieces, and good muskets fitted with bayonets, could export produce of value enough to make payment, "the non-importation agreement notwithstanding."¹² This was only the first such breach of the Association forced by the exigencies of war, and Congress was at some pains to conceal it, publicizing the exception only by means of handbills to avoid newspaper publication. In October 1775 Congress shifted control and to some degree responsibility for such exceptions to the colonial assemblies and conventions by recommending to them that they export provisions to the European West Indian islands in exchange for arms and ammunition.¹³

By then a strong current of opinion had been generated in Congress favorable to opening American ports. But the time was not yet ripe for so fateful a step. To the doubt-ridden delegates in Congress, their minds beclouded by uncertainties, clinging to hope for reconciliation, and disquieted by the implication that so drastic a deed inevitably meant cutting themselves adrift from Britain's protective cover, this was too much to ask for all at once. They debated musingly the unfamiliar ground for months after any reasonable hope of concessions from the British ministry had gone aglimmering.

11. Edmund Cody Burnett, The Continental Congress (New York, 1941), p. 57.

12. Ibid., p. 93.

13. Jameson, op. cit., p. 138.

John Adams summarized the trepidation with which Congress approached non-exportation in the fall of 1775 to a correspondent with fitting gravity:

A more intricate and complicated Subject never came into any Man's thoughts than the Trade of America. The Questions that arise when one thinks of it, are very numerous. If the Thirteen united Colonies should immediately Surcease all Trade with every Part of the World what would be the Consequence? . . . If it is certain that it would distress Multitudes in these Countries, does it therefore follow that it would induce any foreign Court to offer Us assistance, and to ask us for our Trade or any Part of it? . . . if We Stop our own Ships, have we even a Probability that the Ships of foreign Nations, will run the Venture to come here, either with or without the Countenance and Encouragement of their several Courts or States. . . ? It is not easy for any Man precisely and certainly to answer this Question.

He then entertained the alternatives facing the colonies should such a step be taken:

Suppose then We assume an intrepid Countenance, and send Ambassadors at once to foreign Courts, what Nation shall We court? . . . Would not our Proposals and Agents be treated with Contempt? and if our Proposals were made and rejected, would not this sink the Spirits of our own People Elevate our Enemies and disgrace Us in Europe? If then, it will not be safe to Stop our own Ships entirely and trust to foreign Vessells coming here either with or without Convoy . . . , what is to be done? Can our own People bear a total Cessation of Commerce? Will not such Numbers be thrown out of Employment and deprived of their Bread, as to make

a large discontented Party? . . . Shall we be able to maintain the War, wholly without Trade?¹⁴

Congress' descision respecting non-exportation, given these circumstances, was as tentative as the questions themselves. On November 1, the delegates resolved "That no produce of the United Colonies be exported, . . . before the first day of March next, without the permission or order of this Congress."¹⁵ This limited measure (from which exception was made for strategic materials), Samuel Adams hoped would by spring have effect enough to drive the European nations into the arms of the United Colonies: "Perhaps Alliances may then be formed with foreign Powers, and Trade opened to all the World, Great Britain excepted."¹⁶ John Adams, noting that "We have agreed not to export to B[ritain]., I[reland]., and the W. Indies. Parliament has made an Act that We shall not export to any other Place. So that Trade is entirely stopped," added with heavy irony that considering the effect economically on Britain, the Association was ". . . a formidable Shield of Defence for Us. It is Shearing of its Beams that Luminary, which, in all its Glory might dazzle our feeble Sight."¹⁷

14. Adams to James Warren, Oct. 7, 1775, Edmund C. Burnett, ed., Letters of Members of the Continental Congress (Washington, 1921-1936), I, pp. 218-219.

15. Ford, op. cit., III, p. 314. The wording of the resolution was qualified so as not to preclude intracolonial commerce and strategic materials: "except from colony to colony, under the direction of the committees of Inspection and observation, and except from one part to another of the same colony . . . nothing herein contained shall be construed to vacate the resolutions of Congress for the importation of arms, ammunition, etc."

16. Adams to James Warren, Nov. 4, 1775, Burnett, Letters of Members, I. p. 248.

17. Adams to James Warren, Oct. 28, 1775, Ibid., p. 243.

Yet, this mild show of resolution and the stout passage of arms around Boston had attracted attention abroad, and feelers were received from the French, prompting appointment of an agent to France. As the winter passed sentiment favorable to opening the ports increased and that wanting the advantages of foreign alliances with it. And the essential prerequisite, Independence, gained supporters all the while as Paine's Common Sense made partisans out of doubters.

Then in February 1776 the news of Parliament's act of December 22, 1775, removing the colonies from protection of the Crown, prohibiting trade with them, and authorizing seizure and confiscation of American ships at sea reached America. Now, with an anxiety that paused only to pass a resolution permitting issuance of American letters of marque and reprisal, Congress at last on April 6, 1776 resolved to open this country's ports to all the world.¹⁸

This measure was not to bring automatically the shipping of other nations to America's shores. Great Britain was determined to cut it off. But the situation foreseen by John Adams in advance of the resolution came to pass, and for two years before the benefits of alliances could be brought to bear gave the struggling nation a lifeline:

If We must have Trade how shall We obtain it?
There is one Plan, which alone, . . . will answer
the End in some Degree, at first. But this is
attended with So many Dangers to all Vessells, cer-
tain loss to many, and So much Uncertainty upon
the whole, that it is enough to make any Man
thoughtfull. . . . Our Country furnishes a vast
abundance of materials for Commerce. Foreign
Nations have great Demands for them. If We should

18. Burnett, The Continental Congress, p. 140.

publish an Invitation to any one Nation or more, or to all Nations, to send their ships here and let our Merchants inform theirs that We have Harbours where the Vessells can lie in Safety, I conjecture that many private foreign Adventurers would find Ways to send Cargoes here thro all the Risques without convoys. At the Same Time our own Merchants would venture out with their Vessells and Cargoes, especially in Winter, and would run thro many Dangers, and in both these Ways together, I should hope We might be supplied with Necessaries.¹⁹

This prophetic utterance by a leader who was ever the advocate of bold measures, stemmed from his profound conviction that "We shall finally be obliged to depend upon ourselves." Through a combination of stealth, fast ships, connivance of European officialdom, and courageous and resourceful seamanship, shipping filtered through the blockading British to the West Indian islands of France and Holland particularly, where needed supplies could be traded for American produce. France's interest in the American cause brought credits and a steady flow of material, under the supervision of this country's commissioners in Paris and agents in the islands. Following the great victory at Saratoga, Franklin was able to negotiate the alliance with France that would guarantee a successful outcome to the war by means of that country's intervention on America's side. It also encouraged the other colonial powers to institute and maintain trade with the United States. Spain opened her ports to American shipping a year later, while Sweden followed suit and

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19. To which he added: "All this however Supposes that We fortify and defend our own Harbours and Rivers. We may begin to do this. We may build Row Gallies, flatt bottomed Boats, floating Batteries, Whale Boats, Vesseaux de Frize, nay, Ships of War, how many, and how large I can't say. To talk of coping Suddenly with G. B. at sea would be Quixotism indeed, but the only Question with me is, can We defend our Harbours and Rivers? If We can, We can trade." Adams to James Warren, Oct. 7, 1775, Burnett, Letters of Members, I, pp. 219-220.

Holland expanded her already flourishing commercial ties. When Holland's principal entrepot in the West Indies fell to Admiral Rodney, the Danish islands took its place.

Thus, with the French alliance began a new phase of shipping activity. By the terms of the French treaties, conditions for conduct of trade were laid down and its protection assured. The Treaty of Amity and Commerce, signed February 6, 1778, made such concessions to United States shipping as relaxing export duties, providing reciprocity and most favored nation treatment, and establishing one or more free ports in France and confirming those already existing in the West Indies.²⁰ But the key provision, detailed in Article VI, threw French naval power behind this trade:

The most christian king shall endeavour, by all the means in his power, to protect and defend all vessels . . . of the said United States, being in his ports, havens or roads, or on the seas near to his countries, islands, cities or towns. and to recover and restore . . . all such vessels and effects . . . taken within his jurisdiction; and the ships of war of his . . . majesty, or any convoy sailing under his authority shall upon all occasions take under their protection all vessels belonging to . . . the said United States . . . holding the same course, or going the same way, and shall defend such vessels as long as they hold the same course, or go the same way, against all attacks, force or violence, in the same manner as they ought to protect and defend the vessels belonging to the subjects of the most christian king.²¹

20. Ford, op. cit., XI, pp. 419-447.

21. Ibid., pp. 425-426.

So quickly were these protective clauses invoked, that Franklin reported in the letter transmitting copies: "Several of our American Ships, with Stores for the Congress, are now about sailing, under the Protection of a French Squadron."²²

By the terms of the second compact, the Treaty of Alliance, Eventual and Defensive, also signed on February 6, 1778, an omnibus guarantee was made for the purpose of "strengthening those engagements, and of rendering them useful to the safety and tranquility of the two parties." They pledged that either "direct hostilities" or "hindering . . . commerce and navigation in a manner contrary to the rights of nations" would meet with a common front, they having "resolved, in that case, to join their counsels and efforts against the enterprise of their . . . enemy." Article II spelled out the "essential and direct end of the present defensive alliance" as "to maintain effectually the liberty, sovereignty, and independence absolute and unlimited of the said United States, as well in matters of government as of commerce."²³ As summed up by Franklin, the "great Principle in both Treaties is a perfect Equality and reciprocity; no Advantages being demanded by France, or Privileges in Commerce, which the States may not grant to any and every other nation."²⁴ The treaties meant war between France and Britain, a war that brought the French presence into the sea lanes. And with this change in circumstance Salem's shipping received a needed stimulant. Her merchants' letterbooks and accounts reflect the new

22. Albert Henry Smyth, ed., The Writings of Benjamin Franklin (New York, 1907), VII, p. 111.

23. Ford, op. cit., XI, pp. 448-453.

24. Smyth, op. cit., p. 110. Both nations agreed to respect each other's spheres of interest. As provided in the treaty, those continental possessions in the hands of the United States at the war's end would remain uncontested by France while those West Indies islands in France's would be guaranteed by this country. Canada and the British West Indian islands were the prospective possessions thus covered.

conditions of trade and a new impulse now that they were not dependent solely on their own devices. They had been intrepid and persistent in launching trade through the British blockade. Now, given the encouragement of French warships, friendly harbors, and faster vessels, they intensified their efforts to extend trade during the war's last stages.

III. Some Consideration of Salem Port, Its Principal Traders, Merchant Marine, and Commerce

In the years before the American Revolution Salem's growth and prosperity depended on maritime enterprise. According to a leading authority on the old town,

The Salem of this period was pre-eminently a seaport. Her interests were primarily with the sea, and her men were chiefly interested in shipping and fishing. . . . Shipping was the popular and profitable industry of the day, and money flowed into it as later it flowed into turn-pikes, railroads, and cotton mills.²⁵

The experience gained as mariners and the lives led by Salem's seafarers stamped them with singular character and prepared them for the role they would play during the war to come:

All the really adventurous young men went to sea, the best of them soon rose to be captains, and the wisest and ablest early began to own ships and send them out under other captains. Every captain had also to be a trader. The cargo was usually consigned to him to sell in any port where it could be sold to best advantage. He was usually allowed space in the vessel for ventures of his own, and could make money on his own trading in addition to his wages. The life produced an extremely independent, forceful, and daring group of men. It was dangerous and exciting, toilsome and difficult. . . . There were rich rewards and heavy losses, but in the long run the rewards far outweighed the losses and shipping brought vast wealth to the town.²⁶

25. James Duncan Phillips, Salem in the Eighteenth Century (Boston, 1937), pp. 240, 247.

26. Ibid., pp. 247-248.

In gross tonnage, numbers of ships, and other statistical measures of importance, Salem occupied a place some distance behind the great ports of Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Charleston. But, in rate of activity, for the carrying trade was a great specialty, and multiplicity of Atlantic seaboard contacts, she stood second to none. Prominent in Massachusetts, producer of the greatest volume of shipping in America, "Salem was in some ways a more important port than Boston. Foreign vessels . . . might bring [goods] to Boston, but they had to repair to the ports of Essex County to get the cargoes of fish and lumber which formed the staple return cargoes."²⁷

Nature had seen to it that Salem would offer no threat to America's commercial centers. But eighteen miles north of Boston, in the heart of that stretch of coastline known as the "North Shore," it was one of a number of Essex County seaports that enjoyed protected harbors of a much indented shore. But none of them could equal Boston for the extent of harbor and ample roadsteads though possessed of many good anchorages. Appealing as they were at the time of settlement when the seventeenth century's smaller vessels made lesser demands, these minor harbors could hardly be considered competitive for the world's trade in the 1770's. As was acknowledged by Timothy Pickering when the British ministry imposed the "Intolerable Acts" in 1774: "By shutting up the Port of Boston some imagine that the course of trade might be turned hither [Salem], and to our benefit; but Nature, in the formation of our harbour, forbids our becoming rivals in commerce to that convenient

27. James Duncan Phillips, Salem in the Eighteenth Century (Boston, 1937), pp. 248-249. Marion V. Brewington, "Maritime Philadelphia, 1609-1837," Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, LXIII (1939), p. 106.

mart."²⁸ That is not to say, however, that a community of 5000 inhabitants, organized almost entirely around shipping and fishing industries was an inconsiderable force economically, and lacking in potentiality in the wartime scheme of things. In fact, the very characteristics of the port that inveighed against its becoming a commercial giant, very much favored the role it was about to play during the Revolution.

Vessels approached Salem through Massachusetts Bay from the open ocean, past Marblehead on the south and Beverly to the north, and below Salem Neck, into the roughly oval Salem Harbor. The harbor dimensions spanned a mile by two miles at the widest points. (See Illustration No. 1 for the features referenced above.) The town of Salem then as now enclosed the harbor on the north and west sides, while Marblehead bounded the south side and the entrance waterway (occupied on the Salem by Winter Island) the east side. Emptying into the harbor through Salem town was the so-called South River. And it was within the narrow confines of this tidal basin that Salem's waterfront was located at the time of the Revolution. Wharves on the one side and warehouses on the other handled ships and their cargoes efficiently, where great size was no consideration. Six or eight "Topsail" vessels and many more of other types could be found in port before the war.²⁹ Salem Harbor conformed

28. Written in reply to General (then governor of the province) Gage's proposal that Salem, at the time temporary seat of government, replace Boston as New England's principal port of entry. Pickering also disclaimed such ambitions as callous and ruthless opportunism: "And were it otherwise, we must be dead to every idea of justice - lost to all feelings of humanity - could we indulge one thought to seize wealth and raise our fortunes on the ruin of our suffering neighbors." Quoted in Gerard H. Clarfield, Timothy Pickering and American Diplomacy 1795-1800 (Columbia, Mo., 1969), p. 7.

29. Phillips. op. cit., pp. 240, 274.

perfectly to John Adams' prescription for "Harbours where . . . Vessels can lie in Safety," and at its entrance - on Salem Neck, Winter Island, and Naugus Neck - were build forts that barred passage to all but friendly traffic.

Improvements along the South River provided all that was needed to handle Salem's shipping, so much of which came and went in small schooners and sloops of thirty tons or so. The latter's needs were cared for by the throng of wharves along the riverfront. A few wharves were scattered along the open harborfront and elsewhere on Winter Island and the North River, back of the town. Important merchants docked larger vessels at Long or Union Wharf, at the river's mouth. Just beyond it Derby Wharf, begun in 1762 with two-storied, hipped roof warehouses dating from 1767, stretched all the way out to the river channel and could berth deep draught vessels.³⁰ On Stage Point, across the river where the former Naumkeag Mills stand today, were shipyards for building smaller vessels. Becket's shipyard on the town's harbor side handled larger ones. Vessels of the usual run could be beached, caulked and repaired on ways located on a number of inlets. Cordage came from two ropewalks that stretched onto piers into Collins Cover, northeast of town. Sailmakers worked on the premises of ship and yard owners. Chandlers and blacksmith shops were here and there along the waterfront.³¹

Several well-established mercantile houses and many smaller though active ones operated these facilities. At the head of the trading community stood the Derby family, recently successor to the Ornes of mid-colonial note as Salem Kingpins. Loyalist Samuel Curwen's tart sizing up of the 1780 scene discloses the status they had come to enjoy through the fortunes of war and enterprising disposition:

30. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 274-275.

31. Ibid., pp. 276-277.

Those who five years ago were the meaner people, are now, by a strange revolution become almost the only men of power riches, and influence. The Cabots of Beverly, who, . . . had but five years ago a very moderate share of property, are now said to be by far the most wealthy in New England; Hasket Derby claims the second place in the list.³²

Presumably, Curwen meant the reference to Derby as a contrasting fillip, for the Derbys were no arrivistes, though their wartime activity had broadened their holdings and capitalization considerably. Still at the center of family councils if by now inactive in trade was Richard Derby, sire of the renowned name. A force in Salem's marine life for half a century, he had started as a captain for the Ornes, and had come to own several vessels working the fisheries and trading among the colonies and the West Indian Islands. During the colonial wars his interest had shifted increasingly to trade, and his two able sons Richard Derby, Jr. and John Derby captained vessels along with sons-in-law George Crowninshield and George Gardner. His other son, Elias Haskett Derby, stayed home from the sea and specialized in the business end of family activities. By the time of the Revolution he had become an executive and manager of great ability, and it doubtless was owing to his grasp of affairs that family business then extended all the way to the Mediterranean by way of various stops along the middle passage. Other masters in their employ before the war included Edward Allen, John Masury, and Joseph, Jr., all to be heard from during the hot engagements to come. Some eight vessels bore their house's colors by 1765; vessels of the larger type up to 160 tons. This squadron they maintained with regularity until the war called for other exertions.³³

32. Quoted in Robert E. Peabody, Merchant Venturers of Old Salem, A History of the Commercial Voyages of a New England Family to the Indies and Elsewhere in the XVIII Century (Boston, 1912), p. 47. Curwen also wrote: "E. H. Derby's province tax is £11,000, and his neighbors complain he is not half taxed."

33. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 243-244.

Next in importance were the Pickmans. The elder Benjamin Pickman with vessels in the fishing and trade ends of things was a power until his retirement just before the war. The younger Pickman chose to be a Loyalist, and does not figure in the story of wartime shipping. His brothers did.

After the Pickmans came the Salem Cabots, Francis and Joseph. They owned outright half a dozen fishing schooners and had shares in a number of overseas traders. Privateering during the war was to make them wealthy.³⁴

Jonathan, George, Jacob, and John Crowinshield were next in importance. Ignoring the fisheries, they stuck to foreign trade and made their alliances accordingly. Two brigantines made up their holdings in vessels before the war, but that conflict was to change this drastically as they became prominent in privateering ventures. Their strong stand among the patriots prepared the way for greater days ahead. They alone of the principal families "were not descended from the Puritan aristocracy of ministers and magistrates. . . ." ³⁵ Their union through George's marriage to the Derby family laid down important ties that helped to overcome their parvenu status.

Finally, there were the Gardners; Samuel, Jonathan Samuel Jr., and his brother-in-law, Daniel Mackey. With several fishing vessels and two or more overseas trading ships, they had become well known in the West Indies by wartime. Their interests did not keep pace during the war, though they were actively trading at various times during it.³⁶

34. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 245-246, 409.

35. Ibid., pp. 246-247.

36. Ibid., p. 247.

After the first families came a great many owners of ships, often a single one of which they were the master. From this group some of the better names of the Revolution came. Indeed, some were but part owners of the ships they sailed, which interest provided a lively incentive and alert attention to the business in which they engaged. These men concentrated first of all on being good mariners rather than the tricky business of ship-ownership. Also included among owners were some Salem residents who were neither merchants nor masters, but investors from among the professional or office-holding class.³⁷

Under the old system prevailing before the Revolution, advancement in Salem's merchant marine tended to be a deliberate process, illustrative of the slow and methodical development of shipping interests through the eighteenth century. In the system's resource of shipmasters was to be found its mainspring. A durable and versatile lot, they shifted assignments as readily as opportunity offered advantage in change. The records show much change in ownership of vessels and correspondingly many changes in masters. This has been termed by a leading authority "evidence of the intense activity and vitality of the shipping interest."³⁸ And the same authority believes these ship captains made the system work:

. . . it was really the skill of the captains faithfully trading in hundreds of ports in hundreds of small ventures that brought success to the entire undertaking. To the fidelity of these men who did their duty well in the face of great dangers and difficulties belongs the real credit.³⁹

37. Phillips, op. cit., p. 247. William Gray, of whom more will be heard later, started as a mariner and clerk in a very small way. Joshua Ward, also to be heard from later, rose during the war in a like manner.

38. Ibid., p. 242.

39. Ibid., p. 248.

Numbering three to four hundred in that twenty year period, they had undergone the gamut of sailing experience before being entrusted to command of a vessel. Having once attained that exalted status, they had few enough active years at the helm left to them: "It . . . took these men, who often began as cabin boys or seamen, years to work up to their commands, but they usually sailed as commanders for only about ten or fifteen years. . . . Some sailed only a few voyages." By then the time had come to assume a quieter and more materially rewarding role, if a less responsible one, leaving their commands to younger hands: "A goodly number became part owners of one or two ships, and a few emerged with fleets of their own . . . as a class they succeeded magnificently, and it was their energy and resourcefulness that made the whole commercial venture a success."⁴⁰

The prominence attained by these ship masters through their sea ventures is demonstrated by the progress of the Salem Marine Society. Established in 1766 by eighteen sea captains as an "association for mutual benefit and the relief of women and children," it ceased before century's end to be exclusively a ship captain's organization, and in time enrolled all the greatest figures in Salem's commercial history.⁴¹ In its early years the society promoted the improvement of conduct among ship masters and sought to dignify their calling. The members took a decidedly Whig stance when war came. They soon became famous for their benefactions. Before long such activities raised their stock greatly and their status in the community as well.

40. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 249, 251.

41. Ibid., pp. 251-252. The Society is still in existence, by now a hereditary fellowship.

Little is known about the crewmen of Salem's merchant ships. Several hundred of them served in crews of 4 or 5 and 8 or 9, depending on the ship. The names of many are still to be seen on the old portledge bills in the Essex Institute's collections of the Derby family. One such wartime record for the Schooner Nancy, inward bound from the Mole St. Nicholas, Allen Hallett master, gives wages of the four seamen and two masters aboard ship, along with interesting details under a number of headings: "When ship'd," "Quality," "Advances before Sailing," "Advance wages in the West Indies," "Wages Due," "Whole Wage," "Time of Service," and "When Discharged."⁴² The monthly wages during the war varied for masters between £2.8.0 and £3.7.0, for mates £2.5.0 and £3.0.0, for able seamen £2.8.0 and £2.14.0, for common seamen £1.17.0 and £2.8.0, cooks £1.7.0 and £2.6.0, and cabin boys £1.4.0. The entire crew shipped for the round voyage, receiving a month's wages before sailing and the balance on their return. The apparent disparity between a master's wages and his responsibilities was bridged by a feature of his terms of employment referred to as being "on primage." This meant that he received a certain percentage of profits in addition to wages.⁴³ And, of course, his right to trade on his own account gave him a substantial privilege to turn to his advantage.

Vessels of the Salem merchant fleet numbered around one hundred in the period before the war, with ownership of many shared by the sixty or seventy so involved. Of the 88 owned by Salemites in 1765, 53 were engaged primarily in the fisheries and 35 in foreign trade, according to an authority.⁴⁴ They included by type, sloops, schooners, brigs, brigantines, and ships, commonly, as well as snows and cutters. A ship might

42. Derby Family MSS, VII, Commercial Papers, folio 38, Essex Institute.

43. Peabody, op. cit., p. 11.

44. Phillips, op. cit., p. 242.

have been as large as 200 tons and a schooner or sloop as small as 25 or 30. Of those engaged in the West India trade a size of around 100 tons was common. Fishing schooners ran around 50 tons. The war brought an expansion in the size of Salem's fleet to over 200 vessels, more than half of them engaged in privateering, and many of the remainder armed merchantmen.⁴⁵ They are reported to have carried some 2500 guns and required the services of between 7000 and 8000 men, altogether, 3000 of them on the high seas at one time.⁴⁶

The cargoes borne by these ships contributed much color to the Salem scene at the time of the Revolution. Wharf Street's busy caste and its reflection of the emphases of the town's ship-ping interests are caught accurately in the following description:

Hogsheads of molasses, casks of indigo, barrels of sugar, and casks of rum and wine would be seen moving from ships to warehouses already piled with bales of English goods lately received, or barrels of salted beef and piles of dry salt codfish ready to ship. Cargoes were coming ashore to the noise of hand-turned windlasses and capstans, while lumber and barrel staves, hickory barrel hoops, firkins, buckets, and all sorts of woodenware went aboard. Cheeses, barrels of pork and beef, and boxes of Yankee notions helped in a small way to make up the cargoes.⁴⁷

45. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 240, 242. Phillips classifies the pre-war Salem fleet as follows: ". . . trading vessels that went overseas to Gibraltar, Spain, Portugal, and the wine islands; vessels that traded to the southern colonies and the West Indies, and vessels that were engaged chiefly in the fisheries." Ibid., p. 227. Other deepwater ports, such as Philadelphia, regularly berthed ships of 250 tons burden. Brewington, op. cit., p. 106.

46. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 440-441.

47. Ibid., pp. 275-276.

In other words, Salem's stock in trade consisted of fish, brought from the banks by the town's own fishermen; wood products, acquired from nearby district of Maine sources by the town's vessels; and meat and dairy product's from the farming towns of Essex County's interior. The fish often was traded directly in the Catholic countries of southern Europe. Or with the other items in the West Indian islands for sugar, fruit, molasses, and cotton. A voyage to the islands might then proceed home or carry a cargo to the southern or middle colonies to trade for indigo, tobacco, or flour before returning. Or some variation of trading back and forth between mainland and islands or carrying assigned cargo and establishing balances on the books of overseas correspondents along the way might answer to turn a profit. No such opportunity in any combination was to be missed though it might protract a voyage. Some years after the war a traveller described the employment of the stock in trade of Salem and like towns in the following vivid manner:

Fishing provides the first and most important article of export of the state of Massachusetts and of its cities, especially Boston. Fishing is of two kinds and takes place in two seasons of the year. Whaling is practiced solely by the citizens of . . . Nantucket. . . . The other fishing, which takes place in April and August, is the only occupation of the inhabitants of Salem, Marblehead, Beverly and Cape Cod. They catch herring, mackerel, salmon, but above all cod or stokfish.

Before setting out to fish the owners of the small fishing boats come to the towns named above, and especially into Boston to buy salt. These boats carry six or seven people. The owner, providing the boat and the salt, takes a quarter of the whole catch; the three other parts are distributed equally amongst the fishermen. After loading the salt they sail to the Newfoundland Banks and throw out their rods, each with two hooks. Half the company fish while the other half gut and scale the catch . . . The codfish is then split open, salted and packed. . . . Returning home they spread the fish out on the shore on shafts or slatted

fences raised a few feet off the ground.
The wind blowing through and the sun dry the fish.

They are packed in bundles and brought to Boston or other cities where wholesale merchants buy them by the hundredweight. These merchants divide them into two categories: the worst fish, called Jamaica fish (because it was formerly to this colony that they were largely sent as food for the negroes), and the other class, the very best, called marchand's fish. These latter are sent to Europe, to the Catholic contries such as Spain, Portugal and Italy, and the profit here is the greatest. . . .

Another article of local trade is salt meat, carried by these sailors in their own ships to the West Indies. It is really very unfortunate that all the trade of these shores is in salted products, and must depend on salt imported from Europe. . . . Finally lumber for building is an important item of export. Of grain they send only mais in the kernel to Spain and Portugal. Wheat does not succeed here and all the white bread is baked with flour brought from Pennsylvania, Maryland, or Virginia.⁴⁸

Specific conditions affected the place of each class of goods in trade of that time. British restraint of trade abroad and attempts to manage that conducted within the empire cut across the natural lines of development stemming from these conditions. A remarkable trading affinity had gradually grown up between the new hemisphere's islands and mainland that was no respecter of empires and ethnic differences. In

48. Metchie J. E. Budka, transl, and ed., Under their Vine and Fig Tree. Travels through America in 1797-1799, . . . by Julian Ursyn Niemcewicz (Elizabeth, N. J., 1965), pp. 153-154.

great basins on France's sunny shores were produced the salt that New England's fish and meat processors could not do without. Regardless of other considerations salt had to be obtained, and trade made it available. The great exception to the Association's embargo other than arms and ammunition was made for salt, and vessels were sent to the islands even under convoy to bring it home. Sugar, enjoying universal favor in Europe and America, was grown throughout the West Indies. The special conditions it imposed on the society and economy of the islands shaped their destinies for centuries to come. In that faraway day requiring huge numbers of unskilled labor for cultivation, cutting, and milling, sugar drew on slavery for manpower with resultant social consequences to go with the limitations of a one crop economy. By mid-century France's islands had become the most efficient producer of sugar and could undersell the British West Indies. A brisk trade with English mainland America sprang up, one encouraged by arrêts de conseil of April 18, 1763 and July 29, 1767 that opened French colonial ports to livestock, pease, beans, fruits, and lumber and authorized export of molasses and rum from them as well as declaring the ports of St. Lucia and Mole St. Nicholas depots free and open to foreign merchandize. In an attempt to mitigate the effects, and particularly out of deference to the French fishing port of St. Malo, salt fish and flour were prohibited.⁴⁹

Flour from the middle colonies presents a like case in point. Paralleling French sugar, efficiency of American flour production and virgin soil had enabled colonial sellers to outstrip all others in the world's markets. As was acknowledged by one economist of the time, "Mr. Arthur Young in his Political Arithmetic has very ably proved that in the year 1774 the American farmer could not only supply the West India market with flour much cheaper than the English farmer could do, but

49. Henri Sée, "Commerce between France and the United States, 1783-1784," American Historical Review, XXXI (1926), p. 732.

even exclude the English farmer from supplying the domestic markets of Britain."⁵⁰ It was produced in three grades, the middling and common for home consumption and ship use (with a surplus reserved for New England's fishing fleets), and superfine for the export trade.⁵¹ The demand for flour was universal, and it was peddled throughout the western hemisphere and at points abroad as far away as Leghorn.

To a lesser extent but with collective force, other continental products also influenced the course of trade. Livestock, especially horses, had ready sale in the islands. Structural lumber, particularly New England's easily worked and durable pine softwoods, created great demand in the timber poor West Indies. Then plentiful and cheap, it was represented in virtually every cargo made up from Salem. Moisture resistant cedar shingles enjoyed as great a popularity as superior to thatch and essential for the island's many frame buildings, unable to stand the weight of tile or slate.⁵² On the other side cotton from the islands was much in demand on the continent. Both sides craved tobacco.

Thus, reciprocal needs and production weighed most heavily on the scales of value in that period. As such trade was deemed indispensable, and had indeed become part and parcel of

50. Anne Bezanson et. al., Prices and Inflation During the American Revolution. Pennsylvania, 1770-1790. (Phila., 1951), p. 79.

51. Ibid., p. 73.

52. ". . . on account of their great weight embarrass the architect, and are not fit for the construction of large roofs." Shingle sizes of the period are given as ". . . the largest three feet by about six inches, and in thickness tapering from less than three fourths to about the ninth of an inch. There are some two feet, and others eighteen inches in length." Thomas Dobson, comp., Encyclopaedia; or a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Miscellaneous Literature. . . . XVII (Phila, 1798), p. 367.

a way of life, it found expression in policy and proved to be irresistible when reduced to issues. No superimposition of imperial writ could put it down, and it would be continued despite embargo and blockade and the will of ministries a force to be reckoned with.

The routes by which Salem's extended trade reached market stretched in every direction. Fishing vessels turned north past Cape Anne and then straight out to sea to reach the Newfoundland banks, while lumber vessels turned up the coast for Maine. Those bound for southern Europe and the Mediterranean or the Azores, Canaries, and Madeira went straight out and continued due east along the middle passage. Those bound for northern Europe followed the classic sea lane past the Maritimes and on to their destinations. Those bound for the continent's middle and southern ports or the West Indies sailed due south. By far the most widely followed route (fishing not included) of commercial vessels during the Revolution was this last, to the West Indies, where sources of supply needed strategic materials, and stores of profitable merchandise awaited transshipment. As with American commerce generally, that of Salem was conducted throughout the length and breadth of the West Indies. The ports of islands in the Greater Antilles, stretching north and west across the Caribbean, screened as they were by the British-controlled Bahamas, offered lucrative if risky trading. The many smaller islands of the Lesser Antilles, that chain stretching across the Caribbean's eastern end to the coast of Venezuela, with the broad Atlantic beyond its openings, offered as great profits and greater security. Small vessels could play hide and seek, in and out, among their shaded headlands and across their shallows. Speedy vessels could dodge and turn and pull away from pursuit and make poor targets among this profusion of dots and blobs. One need only consult a detailed map to appreciate the difficulties the British faced in policing these expansive and complex waters.

If there was one point of focus in this double chain of islands, it was to be found at the hinge between the Greater and Lesser Antilles. There the tiny island of St. Eustatius assumed such importance that Admiral Rodney made it the special subject of denunciation: "This rock . . . has done England more harm than all the arms of her most potent enemies, and

alone supported the infamous American rebellion."⁵³ As described by a great authority on the Revolution, the island's significance resulted from location and the philosophy of her masters rather than her production:

St. Eustatius is a small rocky island near the north-west corner of the West Indian chain. It is neither large nor fertile. Its area is less than seven square miles; and at the time of the Revolution it did not produce more than six hundred barrels of sugar a year. It had but one landing place and its fortifications had never been important. But its relative position was such as to give it, in the hands of the Dutch, exceptional advantages. The ancient British colony of St. Christopher lay but some eight miles to the Southeast. Northward, a few miles farther away, lay the French island of St. Bartholomew. St. Croix, a Danish island to the westward, was but little more remote; and beyond, at no great distance, lay St. Thomas and the Spanish colony of Porto Rico, while beyond St. Christopher to the southward, lay intermingled the rich islands belonging to England and to France-Antigua, Guadeloupe, Dominica, Martinique, Barbadoes, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, Tobago . . . the Dutch had early been converted to the principles of Colonial free trade. Accordingly, St. Eustatius, a free port belonging to a highly commercial nation and set in the midst of English, French, Danish, and Spanish colonies, then rich and prosperous, but managed on the restrictive system which prevailed before Adam Smith, had even in times of peace the opportunity to become an important mart of trade.⁵⁴

53. Quoted in Jameson, *op. cit.*, p. 695.

54. *Ibid.*, pp. 683-684.

More will emerge about St. Eustatius itself later. Specifically, strategic materials came largely from the French islands of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Haiti of Hispaniola. St. Eustatius and the Dutch mainland colony at Surinam also staged such materials through to American carriers. Later in the war Santo Domingo, the Spanish part of Hispaniola, and Havana provided like services. A steady, if smaller, trade was carried on with the Danish islands of St. Croix and St. Thomas while occasional voyages were made to French owned or occupied islands, Dominica, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Kitts, Tobago, and Montserrat, among them.⁵⁵ Although such important British islands as Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica were closed off officially by the war, some illegal trade even brought their products to American Shores to a limited extent.

The famous Marquis de Chastellux, visiting Salem on November 14, 1782, found a bustling scene: ". . . Mr. de la Fille called to take me to see the port and some of the warehouses. I found the harbor well suited for trade, as all vessels may unload and take in their lading at the quays; there were about twenty in the port, several of which were ready to sail, and others which had just arrived. In general, this place has a rich and animated appearance."⁵⁶ As a further mark of the prosperity enjoyed, he discovered that Salem merchants labored under heavy imposts:

. . . besides the duty of 5 per cent on importations required by Congress, the state imposed another tax of the same value on the sale of every article, in the form of an excise on rum, sugar, coffee, etc. These taxes are very strictly levied: a merchant who receives a vessel is obliged to declare the

55. Bezanson, op. cit., p. 3.

56. Howard C. Rice, Jr., transl. and ed., Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782 (Chapel Hill, N. C., 196), II, p. 495.

cargo, and nothing can go out of the ship or warehouse without paying the duty.⁵⁷

And yet that discouraged them not a whit: "On the whole it is difficult to conceive the growth and prosperity of this country after so long and so disastrous a war."⁵⁸

57. Howard C. Rice, Jr., transl, and ed., Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782 (Chapel Hill, N. C., 196), II. p. 492.

58. Ibid., p. 495.

IV. Embargo, Blockade, and the Decline of Shipping, 1774-1776

When the Continental Congress instituted the Association, Salem had her customary allotment of vessels at sea, engaged in fishing and trade at the usual places. An exception was made for the sake of the Boston populace, with enough of Salem's smaller sailing craft diverted from their day-by-day traffic to move needed supplies into that port. As the nearest port of size to Boston, Salem received much of the food and other necessities sent by the colonies to the south for relief of the beleaguered city. From Salem much of it went overland, but coastal boats were also allowed to tranship the vital supplies as the port remained open to them.⁵⁹ Salem merchants also lent assistance to Boston merchants in the transaction of their business during this emergency.

Thus, the Derbys, soon to be very active in sending out armed vessels, had several sloops and schooners in the West Indies in 1774-1775, as the scenario for war unfolded back home. To them were sent instructions intended to adapt their trading to market changes corresponding to the developing situation. Capt. Daniel Hathorn of the schooner Patty on May 9, 1775 was told about the bloodletting at Lexington and Concord and then directed to take a prudent and hopefully a gainful course in transacting business:

There hath not been as yet any stopping of ye trade, so I would have you get a load of molasses as good and cheap and as quick as you can and proceed home. If you have not sold [your cargo] and ye markets are bad where you are, you have liberty to proceed any other ways, either to ye Mole, Jamaica, or to make a fresh bottom, or anything else that you may think likely to help ye voyage, but always keep your money in your own hands.⁶⁰

59. Phillips, op. cit., p. 349.

60. Richard Derby to Daniel Hathorn, May 9, 1775, quoted in Peabody, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

From this letter it can be seen that despite the outbreak of hostilities British islands were still being traded with and conditions of trade had not yet been unduly disturbed. And so they continued for a time yet. But not without anxiety on the owners' part. The Derbys had already taken losses during 1775-1776 when their schooner, Jamaica Packet, under Capt. Ingersoll, was overhauled by a British cruiser and escorted into Boston on a return trip from Jamaica. Although acquitted of any violations, the ship and cargo remained in the besieged port (by the Continental Army), and was burned at a loss of £3000 when the British left.⁶¹ As a consequence, Elias Hasket Derby, adopted a flexible plan of operations when he succeeded his father as head of the family business in 1776. He managed their vessels in the West Indies through the agency of experienced Capt. Nathaniel Silsbee, based on Hispaniola. Three vessels were under his charge in February 1776, when Derby sent out the schooner Nancy, under Capt. Allen Hallet to St. Nicholas Mole, Haiti, with a credit of between £500 and £1000 to be used to best effect. With the Association in full force and winter for a while yet limiting British blockading vessels, Derby wrote by Hallet at length and revealingly of the intricacies of trade and the growing limitations to their activities. If things were to work out at all, Silsbee had to be informed as well as instructed:

If this letter should meet you at the Mole, you may ship me, by any vessels bound to Cape Anne, Newbury, Ipswich, or near to it, some cotton, cocoa, sugar,

61. Richard Derby to Daniel Hathorn, May 9, 1775, quoted in Peabody, op. cit., pp. 38-39. Salem Loyalist, Samuel Curwen, received from a Boston correspondent this advice concerning the fate of Derby's ship: "George Dodge in a schooner from Dominica and Samuel Ingersol in a schooner of Hasket Derby from Jamaica were lately sent in. The property of both vessels was transferred to merchants in the West Indies to cover the interest. . . ." William Browne to Curwen, Jan. 8, 1776, Curwen Papers, I, folio 1, Essex Institute.

molasses, duck, cordage, powder, or any other article you think many answer, as I make no doubt that any goods will make 100 per cent. But do not send any indigo, as that is contrary to the Association, but any foreign goods you have a right to bring.

Worsted stockings & Middleing Linen for shirting is at Present much wanted, as is Pins, Silk & Cotton Handkfs. & writing Paper, all which articles is worth at least 150 per cent. more than common, and ~~1~~150 Sterling well layd out in such articles will leave more Profitt than any Westindia goods, but they must not come [in a vessel] with an English Clearance, & neither must any of them be taken from Jamaica, as it would be in direct Violation of the Association, which I do not mean to break.⁶²

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62. Despite the Association's approaching end, the time had become less propitious than it had been when the issue was raised the fall before. As Robert R. Livingston observed on October 27, 1775, when Congress extended the Association: "This vote will stop our trade for fourteen months, although it professes to do it only to the 20th of March; for the winter, when the men of war cannot cruise upon the coast, is the only time that we can trade." Ford, op. cit., III, p. 503. Derby's concern over observance of the Association may be assumed to have had behind it strong patriotic motivation. Already a signatory of patriot petitions and a marcher in the ranks of emergency forces, he was about to undertake great privateering enterprises. Violations, even had they not been a matter of principle, would have been very distasteful to him in a community such as Salem. There local committees of correspondence were notably vigilant. Salem's in 1774 lost no time publishing the Association's 9th article "relative to selling of goods at advantage with violation penalty." (Broadside Collection, Essex Institute) Nearby Beverly's committee gave notice of serious purpose on July 18, 1775 by publishing as a supplement to the Salem Gazette a

In that part of the letter devoted to employment of Hallet, whose uninsured state made every move risky, the corner-cutting perplexities of the game being played stand out in sharp relief. Trade among the British islands with a French cargo in an American bottom could be very profitable, and Jamaican merchants could be expected to cooperate if officials and navy elements could be kept out of it. Here Silsbee's judgment would be important, though hedged in by Derby's restrictions:

I shall depend on your advising him in all matters. He has no clearance & therefore suppose it not safe to go to Jamaica for a Clearance, but you will judge of that. He has two Registers & if you think it safe & Best he may go down to Jamaica as from the Mole in Ballast belonging to Dominica, but I suppose he may be as safe with a Cargo of Molasses, Sugar, Cocoa, & Cotton from the Mole without any Clearance at all, Provided it is consigned to some Merchant in Nova Scotia & French Clearance to agree with that. The reason of my wanting his Papers so, is I think if he is taken there, he must be safe is he is leased to that government. I have ordered Hallet to throw all the Papers over in case he gets taken, but I do not think of loosing her as the Schooner sails very fast. If not taken & he meets an Easterly Wind, as it will be the right season of the year for it, he will stand a good chance to get into some of our Harbours on the North Shore, & I am well assured if he does well & has a good Cargo of Goods, he will make not less than 100 per cent after Paying the Insurance and charge which at present is high. I have insured the Schooner out &

public notice accusing two townsmen, one a member of the provincial congress, of "securing a permit . . . to take a vessel . . . to Nova Scotia so they might Continue to profit in the British fisheries" (also in Broadside Collection, Essex Institute).

while she lay at the Mole against all Risques at ten per ct. but if she goes to Jamaica it is to be 5 per cent. more, so that the Insurance down will be not less than 100 Dollars. At present I have not made Insurance at home as suppose I cannot at this time get it done under 25 per ct. & shall not make any at present for by the last acct. from England it seems they are tired of this unnatural War. . . .

Derby then concluded with a caution and a defiant gesture, as well at the end as a show of resolve:

There are many difficulties in carrying on business at this time, and I should be sorry to hear of your going to Halifax, or doing anything, however small, contrary to the Association of the Continent; and you may depend upon it, that if the present dispute should continue the next summer, that there will be no less than 100 sail of privateers out from the continent, and I suppose the interest of mine . . . must share the fate of other things, if taken. . . .

The times at present are such I cannot determine what will be for the best. . . . Should so large a fleet come on this coast in the spring as is talked of, I should think it not best to ship so much to the Northward or otherwise: . . . I commit you to the Almighty's protection, not doubting that we shall once more carry on business at Salem in peace and safety.⁶³

But Derby was about to reach a crisis in his conduct of shipping. Until now the accommodations required to carry on trade had been worthwhile. Hallet's cargo sold well, Silsbee

63. Quoted in Peabody, op. cit., pp. 41-43.

procured him a return loading, and he left for home on March 20, 1776. The Nancy reached Falmouth (now Portland) Maine in April, and Hallet sold his cargo at a profit. This, however, was the last of Derby's good fortune. British cruisers caught two of the other three vessels, despite Silsbee's every precaution, and Derby lost the entire value of ships and cargo. Derby sent out no more unprotected shipping. In June 1776 he fitted out one of Massachusetts' first privateers, the 90 ton schooner Sturdy Beggar, with six carriage guns, manned her with twenty five crewmen, and sent the vessel to sea under the command of Capt. Peter Lander. Then, he combined forces with Miles Greenwood of Salem to arm the West India trader, Revenge with twelve guns in September of the same year. Years were to pass before he would resume commercial ventures.⁶⁴

Business had turned bad correspondingly for other Salem merchants. While succoring Boston in 1774 Salem had imported 6852 barrels of flour and 9800 bushels of corn from Annapolis, Maryland, alone.⁶⁵ Now the war reduced such shipments to a trickle. Joshua Burnham might trade steadily from 1775 through 1777 with Dominica, St. Lucia, and elsewhere, taking out fish, pine boards, bricks, hoops, pork, potatoes, and flaxseed and returning with molasses, cocoa, cotton, rum, and nails, and evade trouble. But he used other ports freely.⁶⁶ And other merchants were never free of harassment. Although British authority had ended in Salem with the departure of the government early in 1775, the British presence remained in the area through the agency of war vessels. At the beginning of 1775 the 20 gun ship, Lively, with a crew of 130 and Capt. Thomas Bishop, R. N. commanding, was stationed in the harbor at Marblehead, in order, as the critical Massachusetts Spy put it (Feb. 16, 1775), "to harrass and impress the seafaring inhabitants of that

64. Quoted in Peabody, op. cit., pp. 43-45.

65. Phillips, op. cit., p. 374 and fn.

66. Joshua Burnham Paper, Misc. Shipping Papers and Accounts, 1758-1791 (Box 1760-1817), Essex Institute.

town." Although there appears to have been petty pique over an earlier incident involved in Admiral Graves' orders, his ships at Boston had fallen below quota, and he excused his choice of Marblehead as a "place extremely violent in supporting and carrying into execution the Resolutions and Directions of the Continental Congress respecting the Non-importation Agreement. . . ."67 Unable to fill his allotment of 30 by volunteers, Bishop also failed at impressment because, as the Spy reported, the "crew of the Lively are not suffered to land by the inhabitants of Marblehead, who seem determined to defend themselves against these unjustifiable proceedings." But the admiral persisted in maintaining the vessel on station there, ordering Bishop the day after the Battle of Lexington and Concord "to caution the Inhabitants . . . against assisting the Rebels upon pain of being considered as such and of having their Town destroyed."68 A few days later, he instructed Bishop: ". . . keep your Station as long as possible without risking the Ship."69 And on May 13, he reported: "The Lively continued at Marblehead raising Seamen and protecting the trade of those who are not in rebellion."70 This apparently included so much searching and seizure that merchants responded by stationing small craft offshore to detour merchantmen headed for Marblehead, Salem, and Beverly to ports farther up the coast.

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- 67. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Philip Stephens, Secretary of the British Admiralty, Feb. 20, 1775, William Bell Clark, Naval Documents of the American Revolution (Wash., 1964), I, p. 98. "List of the North American Squadron on the 1st of January 1775," *ibid.*, p. 47.
 - 68. "Narrative of Vice Admiral Samuel Graves," April 20, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 202.
 - 69. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Capt. Thomas Bishop, April 27, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 230.
 - 70. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Philip Stephens, Secretary of the British Admiralty, May 13, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 325.

When the time came to withdraw the intrepid Capt. Bishop for more pressing duties at sea, Graves sent in his place Capt. William C. Burnaby of the sloop Merlin, 16 guns and a crew of 100.⁷¹ Now that a war was being fought, he put Lt. George Dawson of his Majesty's Schooner Hope, six guns and a crew of

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71. "You are hereby required and directed forthwith to proceed in his MaJs Sloop under your Command to Marblehead, where you are to use your utmost Endeavours to prevent all kinds of illicit and contraband Trade agreeably to the general Orders and the other Orders and Directions you will receive herewith. Lieut. Graeme commanding [temporarily for Bishop] his MaJs Ship Lively, whom you are to relieve, will give you such Information of the Place and Inhabitants &c as are necessary for the better carrying on the Kings Service at Marblehead, where you are to remain until further Order. . . ." Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Capt. William C. Burnaby, His Majesty's Sloop Merlin, May 27, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 548. "Disposition of the Fleet on the 30th of June 1775," *Ibid.*, p. 785. Capt. Bishop rejoined the Lively at Charlestown, Mass. on June 7, 1775. "Journal of His Majesty's Ship Lively, Captain Thomas Bishop, Commanding," June 7, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 623. Thus, he was in position the morning of June 17 to be first to detect entrenchments on Breed's Hill, and fire the first guns in the battle of Bunker Hill. *Ibid.*, p. 700 and n.

30, on station at Salem with orders for "seizing and sending to Boston all Vessels with Provisions, Molasses, Salt, Arms, and Ammunition, &c."⁷² Backing them up at this time was Lt. Thomas Graves of the schooner, Diana, 6 guns and 30 men, assigned to cruise between Cape Ann and Cape Cod, across the mouth of Massachusetts Bay.⁷³

These vessels of the Royal Navy found things very hot at their new places of assignment. The Merlin's journal for June 18, 1775 records that from their mooring in Marblehead Harbor, the crew "Fired 4 Guns & 4 Swivels at some Rebels who fired at the Ship."⁷⁴ But they continued their depredations, expropriating provisions as well as impeding movement: "I am very glad you have got all the Bread from Salem which was demanded for the Merlin and I desire you will get as much more as you can without Risque."⁷⁵

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72. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Lt. George Dawson, Commanding His Majesty's Schooner Hope, May 25, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 526. "Disposition of the Fleet on the 30th of June 1775," *ibid.*, p. 785. ". . . whereas I have directed Lieutt Dawson and his Maj's Schooner Hope to lye at Anchor at Salem, or cruise occasionally, the better to prevent the Rebels receiving Supplies or Provisions, Fuel, Salt and Molasses as the said Lieut Dawson shall send or bring to Marblehead, until they have entered at the Custom House, and are cleared again for Boston, where you are to send them round either with hands from the Merlin or by the Hope Schooner. . . ."
73. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Philip Stephens, Secretary of the British Admiralty, May 13, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 324. "Disposition of the Fleet on the 30th of June 1775," *ibid.*, p. 785.
74. "Journal of His Majesty's Sloop Merlin, Captain William C. Burnaby, Commanding," June 18, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 713.
75. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Captain William C. Burnaby, H. M. S. Merlin at Marblehead, June 19, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 718.

Then, Graves decided to change his tactics. Late in June he made the Marblehead and Salem stations an occasional matter only, assigning both ships to patrol duty. In so doing he changed the emphasis to Salem:

Lieutenant Dawson is not directed to quit Salem Station, but, leaving either the Hope or Tender there, to run now and then in the other Schooner along the Coast as far as Piscataqua; but, as I find that Manchester, Salem, and Cape Ann Harbours are the Places from whence the Rebels can receive Supplies with most facility, I have directed him to make those the chief Object of his attention for some time to come.⁷⁶

And to Capt. Burnaby went similar orders:

In order to enable you more effectually to carry into Execution my Orders to . . . , for seizing and sending to Boston all Vessels laden with Arms and Ammunition, Provisions, Grain, Flour, Salt, Mollasses and Wood: You are hereby required and directed to cruize in his Majesty's sloop under your Command between Cape Ann and Cape Cod, anchoring occasionally at Marblehead or Salem, and putting to Sea again as you shall think best for the Kings Service: And you are also at Liberty to extend your Cruize to the Isle of Shoals or Piscatagua River, but not to anchor at either place, unless constrained there to by bad weather or any unavoidable accident, but to return again and Examine the

76. Graves' overall purpose, of course, was to support British Army operations in the area of besieged Boston. With the carnage of Bunker Hill fresh in mind when he wrote this, he could be expected to react to Burnaby's dispatches even more vehemently than usual. Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Capt. William C. Burnaby, H. M. S. Merlin at Marblehead, June 28, 1775, *ibid.*, pp. 768-769.

Bay of Salem and the Harbours therein, in order if possible to prevent every Kind of Supply getting to the Rebels by Sea. And whereas his Majesty's Schooner Hope is stationed within the Limits of your Command, for the same purpose of cutting off the Rebel supplies. You are to take Lieutt Dawson under your Command and employ him and the said Schooner in the most effectual manner you can to answer the above purposes, the punctual Execution of these Orders being at this time of very great consequence to the Kings Service.⁷⁷

From this point forward there was little restraint shown in carrying out the campaign to interdict North Shore shipping.

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77. To which he added: "And in respect to pressing [impressing] from Vessels fishing to supply the Towns of Marblehead and Salem; You are hereby required and directed not to impress any of the said Fishermen so long as your Boats are allowed to land at the sd Towns to purchase and bring away such things as his Majesty's Service may require, but whenever that Intercourse shall be stopped on their parts or they shall act in an hostile manner towards any of the Squadron, You are then to seize not only their People but their Boats and send them to Boston, or otherwise dispose of them as upon your representing the circumstances I shall hereafter direct." Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Capt. William C. Burnaby, R. N., July 5, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 820.

Joined by Capt. John Linzee of the sloop Falcon, 14 guns and a complement of 100 men, and Capt. John Collins of the sloop Nautilus, 16 guns and 100 men, King George's navy swept the seas off Salem.⁷⁸ Marblehead rigger Ashley Bowen reported on July 18, 1775: "This afternoon the Merlin passed. She fired six shots at Major Pedrick's sloop and Mr. William Harris' schooner as they passed from Marblehead for Salem."⁷⁹ His journal, filled with entries recording sailings sighted from the vantage point of his shop, date the taking of Salem vessels by these and other British warships on August 8, November 30, and December 8, as well as a great many vessels from other ports.⁸⁰

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78. "Disposition of the Fleet on the 30th of June 1775," *ibid.*, p. 785. "Captain Linzee . . . sailed the 30th with Directions to cruize between Cape Ann and the Isle of Shoals to intercept Supplies of Ammunition and Provisions coming to the Rebels." Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Philip Stephens, Secretary of the British Admiralty, Aug. 17, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 1164. "His Excellency the Governor [General Gage] having represented to me that it is of the utmost Consequence to seize all Vessels laden with Provisions, as well as to distress the Rebels as to be of use to his Majesty's leige Subjects here; You are hereby required and directed to be vigilant in looking out for and searching all Vessels and to secure such as may have Provisions, Arms or Ammunition on board, and not suffer them to [enter] any of the Ports of this Province but Boston. . . ." Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Capt. John Collins, R. N., May 14, 1775, *ibid.*, p. 329.
79. Journals of Ashley Bowen, Day Book and Journal 1775-1777, American Antiquarian Society.
80. *Ibid.* He records seizures from other North Shore ports as well. In point of fact, Graves' official report of seizures for this period show a total of 72, only four of them from Salem. "An Account of Ships and Vessels seized, and brought into Port by his Majesty's Squadron in North America . . . between the 1st of June & the 31st of December 1775," *ibid.*, II, pp. 1373-1377.

The most devastating experience of all belonged to Francis Boardman, who committed it to his logbook as "A Journal of A Voyage by Gods Assistance In the Sloop Adventure my Self Master Bound from Salem to St. Vincents Pray God Send us Safe to our Desired Port." In the company of Capt. Joseph Lambert also of Salem and a Boston sail, he weighed anchor June 11, 1775 "with a havey hart on Acc^t of Leaving my wife & Relations in these Difficult times. . . ." By July 13 he had spoken at sea with Capt. Groves of Salem off the island of Dominica, and together they had gone ashore to solicit sales of their fish. Having poor luck there, he fared no better at St. Vincent and at St. Lucia. Eventually returning to Dominica, he made his sales, and took cargo for George Town, S. C., sailing January 1, 1776. Arriving there safely 29 days later, he loaded 260 casks of rice totalling 70 tons, 1500 lbs. of indigo, and deerskins and sailed March 6 accompanied by Capt. Magery of Salem and Morrow of Providence. By March 8 he had been taken by the sloop-of-war Falcon and the frigate Siren. In the hold of the latter he received "arouf treatment from that Damd Raskel John Linzey Captain of the Falcon," presumably during interrogation. In time he escaped overboard and returned home 1000 miles on foot.⁸¹ Boardman's next recorded voyage did not take place until 1783.

British naval depredations along the trade routes in time discouraged all but the hardiest merchants and ship masters. Although attempts at trade persisted in some volume through most of 1776, they dwindled finally to a virtual quietus. With suspension of the Association came the last dying sorties; but with it also came increased British vigilance. His Majesty's ships made life miserable for shippers by screening the coasts with a line of heavily gunned frigates coupled with fast cruisers or tenders that could be sent into shoal water in pursuit of Salem's shallow draught traders. Three capital vessels, H. M. S. S. Chatham, Milford, and Liverpool with their auxiliaries cruised

81. Francis Boardman Book of 1784, Logbooks, Essex Institute.

between Cape Ann and Nova Scotia's Cape Sable, cutting off the fishing grounds and the sea lanes of the northern passage.⁸² To the South lay the bulk of British naval units, presenting the Salem merchantman with a veritable gauntlet to run in his search for markets of the islands and continent.

Faced with no real alternatives, Salem moved with a will into privateering. So long as the war theater was centered in the northern colonies and Canada, British supply routes offered appealingly close and frequent targets. In shifting emphasis from shipping to privateering, Salem buttoned up her harbor. This move became conjunctive more by accident than design; it started as an effort to deny the harbor to the aggressive British sloop-of-war in 1775 and acquired momentum after an enemy expedition burned Falmouth, Maine to the ground.⁸³ Thus it was that in 1776, when privateers were first being armed, the harbor had already been blocked by the hulk of the brig Neptune while work had already been begun on refitting and manning forts at strategic locations. When finished, batteries on Salem Neck's Juniper Point and off-shore Winter Island commanded the harbor approaches and entrance. These measures thus had the effect of turning Salem into a strong point and safe harbor at the instant when both were wanted for support of privateering. It was from this background of frustration over the curbing of their normal trade that the storybook adventures of Salem's

82. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 400-401.

83. British naval vessels had carried pursuit into North Shore harbors on more than one occasion, and had behaved vindictively when opposed. In August 1775 Captain Linzee in the sloop-of-war Falcon chased two Salem schooners into Cape Ann Harbor. Catching one, he lost it back and 35 men to boot trying to take the other. He bombarded the town, striking houses left and right, and tried to burn it down, in an effort to provide his men diversionary support. The incident was a lesson on the value of fortified harbors,

privateersmen sprang; from the stronghold of wartime Salem sallied the privateers who were to earn a lasting renown.

as much as the firing from prepared positions. This was not lost on Salem. Capt. John Linzee, R. N. to Vice Admiral Samuel Graves, Aug. 10, 1775, Clark, op. cit., I, pp. 1110-1111. Capt. Collins of the sloop Nautilus on October 10, 1775, drove a privateering schooner into the harbor at Beverly where both went aground and a cannon-ading took place that struck several buildings before the tide brought an end to the engagement. Capt. John Collins, R. N. to Vice Admiral Samuel Graves, Oct. 12, 1775, *ibid.*, II, p. 417. New England Chronicle, Oct. 12, 1775 quoted in *ibid.*, p. 416. Even before this second incident, Graves had ordered harsh measures be taken against offending towns. Noting that there was "undoubted Intelligence of their fortifying their Sea Ports, and of their determination to cut off and destroy his Majesty's Subjects serving in his Fleet and Army whenever it is in their Power. . . ." he ordered that combined operations be conducted against several coastal towns by a squadron consisting of a sloop-of-war, a transport carrying a detachment of marines, and a schooner. He "required and directed" the commander to "burn destroy and lay waste to . . . [Cape Ann Harbor] together with all Vessels and Craft in the Harbour that cannot with Ease be brought away. Having performed this Service you are to take the advantage of Wind and Weather, or any other favourable Circumstances, to fall upon and destroy any other Towns or places within the Limits aforesaid, and all Vessels or Craft to seize and destroy." He went on to acknowledge: "My design is to chastize Marblehead, Salem, Newbury Port, Cape Ann Harbour, Portsmouth, Ipswich, Saco, Falmouth in Casco Bay, and particularly Mechias [scene of another incident]." In conclusion he reiterated: "You are to go to all or to as many of the above named Places as you can, and make the most vigorous Efforts to burn the Towns, and destroy the Shipping in the Harbours. . . . You are to bestow your whole attention to annoying the Rebels and the Security of your own Vessels." Vice Admiral Samuel Graves to Lieutenant Henry Mowat, H. M. Armed Vessel Canceaux, Oct. 6, 1775, Clark, op. cit., II, pp. 324-326.

V. Shipping at the Nadir, 1776-1778

It took time to break the British hold on the seas. At first, establishing the Continental Army was exigent, and not until October 1775 did the Naval Committee of the Continental Congress, the first organ of naval administration, come into existence. In December of that year it became the Marine Committee, charged with carrying out the country's first program of warship construction. Thirteen frigates were to be built with the objective of furnishing power to meet the British. To the committee fell the many problems that had arisen as the war continued and widened and naval operations were undertaken: most of them administrative while creating a force in being and seeking to acquire the initiative, but involving as well providing convoys for critically important voyages and whatever protection to trade in general that could be gathered. It was a gigantic and discouraging task. From the start the British North American Fleet had had things pretty much their own way. While military operations remained at one point, it seems not to have mattered so much. But at the conclusion of the siege of Boston began the war of movement, one in which the British with their balance of land and sea forces were superior. As it became necessary to move Continental Army units long distances and establish supply routes through the interior, the strain began to show. But it was in getting essential supplies from abroad that the situation in trade became most critical. Departures of merchantmen from coastal cities had to be surreptitious before escort became available. By the end of 1776, the sloop-of-war, Hornet, was being used to carry rice and indigo for the Secret Committee, to be traded for arms.⁸⁴ Only after delivery of her cargo could she cruise against enemy vessels in the Caribbean. When the first frigate to be

84. John Hancock to William Bingham, Dec. 14, 1776, Charles Oscar Paullin, ed., Out-Letters of the Continental Marine Committee and Board of Admiralty August, 1776-September, 1780 (New York, 1914), I. p. 57.

commissioned, the ill-fated Randolph, commanded by Nicholas Biddle, put to sea, her orders were not only to "contend warmly on All necessary occasions for the honor of the American flag," but also to receive from naval agent, William Bingham, at Martinique, "a quantity of Arms Ammunition Cloathing and other Stores . . . and return with utmost expedition to the Coast of America in order to get them landed in some safe place, from whence they can be transported by land to our Armies or Magazines."⁸⁵ It was explained to him: "These supplies are exceedingly necessary for the service of the ensuing Campaign and you cannot render your Country a more essential service than by bringing them safe in."

By then the Delaware had been bottled up tightly, preventing remittances reaching American agents in the West Indies.⁸⁶ Things were no better at the principal point of trade, Cap Francois on Hispaniola (Santo Domingo), where, according to information received, American trade had been "nearly destroyed by the Cruizers from Jamaica consisting of two Frigates, Two Brigantines, Two 14 Gun Sloops and 4 or 5 small schooners. . . ."⁸⁷ At the North Carolina Capes, traders had to contend with loyalist privateers and British vessels. In the fall of 1778, the Marine Committee had to warn the Commissary General to send flour overland: "The enemy being now masters of the Sea between the Capes of Virginia and Boston, perhaps you may see it convenient not to send out flour yet by water for the Army."⁸⁸ When sending Capt. Joseph Olney, master of the Queen of France out early in 1779 to cruise along the southern coasts where

85. Robert Morris to Capt. Nicholas Biddle, Feb. 15, 1777, *ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

86. Marine Committee to Capt. Nicholas Biddle, April 26, 1777, *ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

88. Marine Committee to Jeremiah Wadsworth, Sept. 14, 1778, *ibid.*, II, p. 4.

"small armed Vessels from New York . . . lurk . . . to the certain destruction of almost every Merchantman that sails," his orders to seek and destroy were combined with a caution: "The superiority of the Naval force of the enemy on this Coast and the misfortunes that have heretofore happened to some of our ships, will we trust make you extreamly vigilant and active."⁸⁹

The situation at Salem was just what might be expected, given these prospects. By April 1776 the impact on the town had been so great that an estimate of £30,000 covered only out-and-out losses, not counting less tangible effects:

Estimate of the Loss of Our Trade In Our Merchandies
& Fishery Since April 1775

50 Sale of Fishing Vessels in April 1775	7500.00.00
worth 300 £ Each Now Worth 150 £	

Mat[er]ials for curing & Drying fish Flakg	2500.00.00
&c for 50 Sale Vessels at 50 Each Tott- aly Destroyd	

To the Loss of the Fishing 1 Year for	5000.00.00
50 Sale at 100 £ Each	

6 Sale Costing Vessells at 1/2 Price	900.00.00
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60 Sale of Shipping of which 10 Sale	12000.00.00
only are Improved at 400 Each and now Worth but 200 Each	

Loss on Our Mark[e]tell Trade

Rents of our Roall Grates Fell One third Part

⁸⁹. Marine Committee to Capt. Joseph Olney, Feb. 10, 1779,
ibid., p. 42.

50 Houses & Parts of Do Ha[d] no improvements

Our Stores & Warehouses going to Ruin & not Improv'd

the Extraordinary Price for wood By Reason of
our Harbors being Blockt up By the Minsteriall
Fleett

We were taxed for more than 100,000 £ trading
Stock what is our Stock now

Many Seamen are yearly lost in all Seaport Towns,
their places are supplied by strangers coming
in, but that Class of People left us when our
troubles Come on and left their wives & Children
for us to support -

Half or thereabouts of our men are in American Army,
and we are obliged to support Many of their famil-
ies as being Seamen chiefly are very improvident

The Town largely in Debt.

The Removall of 500 families into the Country & Back
at 4 p 2000..0..0⁹⁰

By 1777 in spite of increasing activity in the field of privateer-
ing, Salem's economy was greatly strained. For a community that
depended as did Salem on the sea, the shutting down of trade
meant shortages and hardships: prices of farm commodities rose
while foodstuffs came by sea only in a trickle, ships bearing
wood had stopped coming in so fuel became scarce and high priced,
cost of shoes and clothing reached prohibitive prices, and
bread became very scarce as flour became a casualty of the war.⁹¹

90. Clark, op. cit., IV, pp. 1324-1325.

91. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 373-374.

Celebrated though privateering was, it offered, as one authority puts it, "a very precarious means of existence."⁹² True, in the absence of other outlets, it became Salem's chief industry: "Privateering gave the people employment, relieved the economic scarcity of essential supplies, and provided the money to the whole group with which to pay the very heavy taxes."⁹³ Much of what was captured turned out to be war materiel, or uniforms and field equipment.

Again in 1778 Salem's economy languished. The same shortages and high prices, brought to higher levels in time by currency inflation, made meat and bread expensive where they could be found, and affected other goods correspondingly.⁹⁴ But now, a change was in sight in the town's fortunes. The blockade had never been tighter; during the year not fewer than eleven different vessels of the British navy made captures along the Massachusetts coasts, while at times three enemy frigates could be seen from Salem Harbor.⁹⁵ But by now France was in the war, and her navy could be expected to relieve some of this pressure. And, as important, through process of adaptation, the Salem merchants were on the verge of providing an answer of their own to the offshore prowlers. It was something different, the armed merchantman, and it was to add a new and vital capability to Salem's merchant marine that would make extended commerce again feasible.

In the meantime, trade, though at low ebb, had never been entirely abandoned. A handful of enterprising merchants, seeking high profits and willing to take risks, underwrote voyages

92. Phillips, op. cit., p. 373.

93. Phillips believes no great fortunes were made in Salem by wartime privateering. Ibid., p. 441.

94. Ibid., p. 377.

95. Ibid., pp. 413-414.

from time to time. Ashley Bowen from his workroom in Marblehead or while moving by water from one job to another in Salem area harbors during 1776 and 1777 noted a score of vessels leaving Salem or making their way to that town:

Jan. 14, 1776 Passed a schooner from sea for Salem

Feb. 20, 1776 I went to Salem. Sold some bunting. I find Samuel Tucker in schooner H[ancoc]k cruiser and sailed schooner Warren on a cruise.

Mar. 3, 1776 The last evening sailed a brig from Salem, Julicer, master, for the West Indies. . . .

Mar. 31, 1776 Two wood sloops sailed for Salem

Jun. 18, 1776 Sailed a large sloop, Fiske, for Salem.

Jun. 26 1776 This evening passed a Sloop, Fiske, from Salem.

Jul. 1, 1776 . . . passed two sloops cruiser for Salem.

Jul. 9, 1776 Sailed sloop, Fiske, from Salem.

Jul. 26, 1776 Sailed sloop, Fiske, from Salem.

Aug. 9, 1776 . . . passed a sloop from Martinique for Salem.

Aug. 11, 1776 Passed a brig for Salem.

Oct. 10, 1776 This day passed a . . . brig from Salem for Boston

Mar. 10, 1777 Passed for Salem the brig called the Horse brig, lumber.

Mar. 15, 1777 This day the Cabot sailed for Salem.

Apr. 4, 1777 Sailed a ship from Salem for sea.

Apr. 20, 1777 Passed a . . . brig from Salem for Boston.

May 10, 1777 Passed two sloops from sea for Salem and passed three brigs from Salem for Boston.

Jun. 6, 1777 Passed a snow for Salem.

Aug. 11, 1777 [After a long trip from Falmouth in the company of 20 vessels] . . . Batchelder and Darcy got to Salem [with wood].⁹⁶

For the months of this period between October 1776 and September 1777, the records kept by Salem auctioneer, Joseph Grafton, show that not one of the more than thirty sales were made from merchant vessel cargos; the entire lot came from prizes.⁹⁷ He made no sales at all between August 25, 1777 and March 14, 1778. Not until December 22, 1778 did he conduct a sale of goods not in some way associated with privateering.⁹⁸ A search of the ledger of so prominent an entrepreneur as John Gardner for this period reveals only a single investment in the cargo of an armed merchantman among many shares owned of privateers.⁹⁹

96. Bowen himself departed at this time on a cruise to the West Indies, and did not return to Marblehead until half of 1779 had passed. Journals of Ashley Bowen, Day Book and Journal 1775-1777, American Antiquarian Society.

97. "Auction Sales in Salem, of Shipping and Merchandise, During the Revolution," The Essex Institute Historical Collections XLIX (1913), pp. 99-105.

98. Ibid., p. 109. Sugar, coffee, tobacco, and chocolate totaling £6078. 15. 6 made up the South Carolina Packet's cargo.

99. John Gardner's Book, account of Elias Hasket Derby, May 1778, Gardner Family MSS, Essex Institute. For 1/8 the Congress' cargo.

One of the houses having nerve enough to float a voyage at this time was that of Stephen and Benjamin Goodhue. Already engaged in privateering, Benjamin and a number of owners dispatched Capt. R. Cook with a cargo to Bilbao, Spain, in 1777 aboard the ship Three Friends. Cook's letter of instructions speaks for itself as to the conditions of trade then prevailing:

. . . I would have you imbrace the first favrouable wind and proceed . . . to Bilboa [common spelling of that day] or any other Port in the Bay of Biscay you may happen to fall in with first, and as soon as you arrive I would have you go by land to Bilboa with your Letters for Messrs. Gardoquis, and follow their directions in everything in respect to our interest-on your passage from here, I would have you give Bermuda a good birth and when you are to the Eastward as far as the Bay of Biscay would have you give Cape Finisterre a good birth for fear of cruisers-I would have you make the first harbour in your power near Bilboa-

We have order.d Messrs. Gardoquis to sell the Ship and purchase a smaller vessel of less value-but if that cannot be done then you must take passage for yourself and people on board some other vessel as soon as possible and give each of them an order to receive their Wages of the Owners, Six weeks from the time of their discharge from the Ship-would have you keep a good look our for to avoid cruisers while at sea. . . .¹⁰⁰

Though the cargo is not given, it was probably rice, as the voyage originated in Charleston, S. C., and that commodity would be well received in northern Spain. Bilbao itself, one of Spain's principal seaports and the greatest of the Basque towns,

100. B. Goodhue to Capt. R. Cook, May 11, 1777, Stephen and Benj. Goodhue Papers, "Legal Papers, Family Papers, Bills 1729-1832," Essex Institute.

received many American ships during this period. Famous for ages owing to the quality of the steel blades manufactured there (bilbo means "a sword"), it had become by the time of the American Revolution an important center of iron and steel production as well as wool and shipbuilding. Although no return cargo was to be provided, the credits built up with Gardoqui and Co., a banking house specializing in the American trade and involved in clandestine supply of war materiel, justified such a voyage.

When this venture was only just beginning, daredevil Joshua Burnham was already ending the third of a series of successful voyages to the West Indies. In addition to the one already described above, he and John Choate in May 1776 had taken a cargo of fish, boards, molasses, potatoes, flaxseed, tools, and cloth to Dominica again. Then, in December 1776 he launched a protracted trading voyage to St. Lucia. His vessel, with a crew of two masters, one cooper, and two seamen, this time loaded fish, boards, and bricks. Then in French possession, St. Lucia, a volcanic island immediately below Martinique among the Windward Islands and dangerously close to the English base at Barbadoes, offered to navigators the spectacular landmark spires Gros Piton and Petit Piton, rising 2000 feet straight from the sea on the leeward coast. To Burnham the island meant rum, molasses, coffee, cotton, cocoa, and nails, quantities of which his little vessel returned at the conclusion of the voyage.¹⁰¹ Between March 9, 1777 and March 20 they traded from Gros Islet to Estate Longueville before coming off with their booty.

Having been burned in the West Indian trade, Elias Hasket Derby turned vigorously in 1777, when the last prospects of peace vanished, to privateering. With an exception to be examined later, he contented himself commercially in that year with a coastal venture, put into the hands of that budding factotum, later great merchant and lt. governor of Massachusetts, William Gray. This highly speculative undertaking is described in Gray's instructions:

101. Joshua Burnham Shipping Papers and Accounts 1758-1791, Essex Institute.

The Three Thousand Pounds of mine I think to have lay^d Out in Tobacco at the Head of James River unless on your arrivall there you are Satisfyed it will not Answer on Account of the Enemy in that Case you must Carry the Money to So Carolina & there Purchase me all the Skins you Can & Ship them to me to Salem in any good Vessel. the Remainder of the Money You must lay Out in Rice-& have it Stored for my Account near to some good landing-the Tobacco I should to have Stored in Company with my Brothers at Virginia the Bill of Exchange of 86 1/4 Dollars you will Receive at Philadelphia if you Cannot you must get it of the Drawer-at N^o Carolina-if any thing should turn up different from what wee now Expekt-I shall be glad you would do with my Interest as you may. Judg for the best.¹⁰²

The tendency of most merchants to shy away from the West Indian islands is perhaps reflected in that other great Salem trading family's engaging in trade with the South American mainland in 1778. The Ward family in a nervous letter of instructions to the master of their recently acquired vessel, directed him to Surinam, or the Dutch Guiana of recent history:

You being Master of the Brig Success and now Ready for Sea our desire and Orders are that you imbrace the first fair wind and proceed for the Port of Cican on the Continent, and on your arrival there if you find it will answer to trade sell your Cargo and lay out your Money in so much Moll[asse]^s if to be got as will put you in a good set of

102. Elias Hasket Derby to William Gray, Sept. 24, 1777, Derby Family MSS, Commercial Papers, folio 4, Essex Institute. According to Bezanson (op. cit., p. 247) ". . . the safest ports for shipping to the West Indies were in Virginia and along the Pimlico Sound in the Carolinas . . . [consequently] shipments from 1776 until 1778 were made directly to West India ports."

Ballast and the remainder lay out in Cocoa & Coffee
Make what dispatch you possibly can if you should
fall to leward of the port or dont find a good
Market for your Cargo push away for Surrenam touch-
ing at any Port between Cican & Surenam if you are
forced to go Surenam Load your Brig with Moll if
you can however we leve the whole management of
affairs to your prudence. . . .103

103. Ward Family to Thomas Valentine, Dec. 18, 1778, Ward
Family MSS, Commercial Papers 1709-1780, folio 82, Essex
Institute. They purchased the brig in Boston earlier in
the year. Small account book 1778, *ibid.*, folio 72.

VI. Revival of Shipping, 1779-1783

Though the seeds were sown for the revival of shipping in Salem during 1777 and 1778, it was not until 1779 that improvement became evident. Convoying under Congress' auspices was limited to the shipping of the middle and southern states; to get the money crops of flour, tobacco, and indigo to island markets and there receive in exchange the supplies critical to carrying on the war.¹⁰⁴ As the new frigates began to take to

104. "I expect the Hornet and Fly will be in readiness to go down with you [the Randolph]. . . . Several merchantmen will go down with you [Delaware Bay], and you are to convoy them fairly off to sea. . . . You'll observe that many merchant Vessels are expected in with valuable Stores to this port [Philadelphia], therefore you'll afford them all possible protection and had best keep in their tract as long as you can." Robert Morris (Marine Committee) to Capt. Nicholas Biddle, Jan. 7, 1777. Paullin, op. cit., I, pp. 63-65. Biddle, as stated elsewhere in his letters of instructions commanded the "first American frigate that has got out to sea. . . ." "There are now at Baltimore lying loaded with Tobacco on the public account a Ship and a Snow which the Commercial Committee intend sending to France, and would wish them to proceed down the Bay under Convoy of the Virginia." To the Commissioners of the Navy Board of the Middle Department, Dec. 12, 1777, *ibid.*, p. 185. ". . . as the Raleigh Warren or Deane and the Brig Resistance may soon be wanted to answer the purpose of Convoy, they are so to manage their Cruise as that they may be ready to receive the future orders of this Committee and for this purpose they are once a Week to put into Chesapeake Bay. . . ." To the Commissioners of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department, Sept. 14, 1778, *ibid.*, II, p. 2. "Congress . . . sympathize with you, in your losses, and are anxiously disposed to give you all the protection that can be expected from the Continental ships of war. . . ." Marine Committee to . . . [merchants of Baltimore], Feb. 23, 1779, *ibid.*, p. 47.

sea in 1779 for sweeping operations, their activities were confined to these same coasts and the West Indian islands.¹⁰⁵

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105. "The Marine Committee now at Baltimore have instructed Commodore Hopkins to fit out the two Continental Frigates Warren and Providence with all possible expedition, and to order them forthwith to proceed on a Cruise upon the enemies ships of war that are interrupting the commerce of the Unites States from the Harbour of Newport to the Capes of Virginia. . . ." Marine Committee to Capt. Nicholas Biddle, Jan. 30, 1777, *ibid.*, I, p. 105.
- ". . . soon as you clear the land schape your Course for the Island of Martinico. . . . When you arrive . . . Mr. Bingham [Marine agent] will inform you what british ships of war are amongst the Windward Islands also what other of the enemies Cruizers are there, and whether the Inhabitants of the British West India Islands continue the practice of fitting our ships in a Piratical manner without commissions and if upon a view of these things Mr. Bingham and you should be of opinion that it will be useful to our Commerce for you to make a short Cruise amongst the Islands for the purpose of protecting our Trade and distressing the enemy by all means let it be done."
- Marine Committee to Capt. James Nicholson (Frigate Virginia), April 8, 1777, *ibid.*, I, pp. 93-94. "The Fly under your command being now ready for service you are to proceed down the Cape Channel until you join the Andrea Doria, Surprize and two Gallies of this State [Pennsylvania] all of which with the Fly are now directed down that Channel for the purpose of securing a Communication & Passage between this City and the Sea and to protect and assist all American Vessels inward and outward bound as well as to oppose the enemy all in their power . . . we now direct that you embrace the first opportunity to push out and proceed for Cape Francois delivering the Letters . . . proceed from the Cape soon as possible on a Cruise . . . we expect Captain Biddle to proceed to the Cape and he is directed to Convoy from thence the Brig Anne . . . and the

While their presence encouraged trading ventures in these areas, large stretches of ocean and northern coastal waters remained to be traversed under less than ideal conditions by Salem vessels bound for centers of commerce. With the arrival early in 1780 of twelve French ships of the line in the West Indies, those seas were finally pried open to shipping, and the rush began.¹⁰⁶

Sloop Phoebe. . . . Should the Randolph not arrive you must convoy those two Vessels off the Coast of Hispaniola as they will take in stores intended for you." Marine Committee to Capt. Elisha Warner, April 18, 1777, *ibid.*, I, pp. 97-99. ". . . the Deane has sailed and ought now to be on the Coast of Chesapeake. . . . The Queen of France we expect has sailed. . . . The Ranger, Confederacy & Providence will soon follow. . . . The Baltimore of 12 Guns in this Port is ordered to be fitted out . . . for the same purposes. They have very Special Instructions and the main Object of their Cruise is the protection of the Southern Trade particularly that of the Delaware and Chesapeake." Marine Committee to . . . [merchants of Baltimore], Feb. 23, 1779, *ibid.*, II, p. 48. "The detachment of four ships to guard the harbour of Charles Town [South Carolina] has subjected our Coasts to the depredations of the enemys armed Vessels from New York who of late have frequently appeared in our bays and made many Captures. For these reasons the Board think it will be necessary that the frigate Alliance should be . . . Ordered to proceed for this port [Philadelphia from France]. Francis Lewis (for the Board of Admiralty) to Benjamin Franklin, Mar. 28, 1780, *ibid.*, II, p. 174.

106. "While they cover and protect their trade and our trade in that quarter - the Board means to do the same along our Coast." John Brown, Secty. of the Board of Admiralty to the Commissioners of the Navy Board of the Eastern Department, April 18, 1780, *ibid.*, II, p. 188.

But at no time were Salem merchants in a position again to send unarmed vessels freely on long trading voyages. There were simply too many hazards, even employing fast-sailing schooners manned by the hemisphere's most skilled and resourceful mariners. Great care, judgment, and planning had to go into such undertakings, more than could be extended widely within the limits of their means, especially at a time when privateers were king and claimed an altogether inordinate share of resources.

But the temptation to return to her trading ways was always a consideration in the port of Salem. Inducements galore further whetted her traders' appetites. Provisions of the new commercial treaty with France gave an already established trade additional impetus. Spain's joining the contest on France's side in 1779 opened yet more West Indian ports as well as those on the Spanish mainland. The Dutch islands had been hospitable from the start of the war, and even after the taking of St. Eustatius in 1781, the Danish islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix filled in for them. After a slow start, Sweden in 1780 established direct trade relations with the United States and through Swedish ports a trade began to develop with Russia.

Nevertheless, the promise of 1779 faded considerably in subsequent years. Continental naval vessels of the larger type were lost to shipwreck and enemy action until by 1781 only three remained in commission. And too, their cruises often were plotted along courses that would provide protection first and foremost for vessels loaded with strategic cargo or to transport diplomatic agents and dispatches. The French squadrons after a respectable early showing were worsted by Rodney in 1782 and their influence was thereupon largely dissipated. Clearly, successful trading still demanded that protection should come in the first instance from the trader.

The answer was found in the armed merchant vessel. Also referred to as "letters of marque," they were not as heavily armed and manned as privateers nor were they as capable cargo carriers as merchantmen. Except for a few later designs, they were converted vessels, that had served earlier as one or the other. Although the line separating privateer from "letter of

marque" was thin indeed, the simple distinction would have been the absence or presence on sailing of cargo. The latter both traded and preyed on enemy commerce.

Adapting vessels and crews to this new enterprise posed no great problems. A few more guns - nine and twelve pounders instead of four and six - and munitions took care of the one, while the other required no preparations other than a little practice:

This race of seafarers had been drilled to handle cannon and muskets. Every merchantman that sailed for Europe or the West Indies carried her battery of six pounders, and hundreds of Salem men and boys could tell you stories of running fights and escapes from French and Spanish freebooters and pirates. Commerce on the high seas was not a peaceful pursuit. . . . The conditions of the times which had made these seamen able to fight as shrewdly as they traded may be perceived from the . . . "Seaman's Vade-Mecum," as they appear in . . . 1744 and 1780: "Showing how to prepare a Merchant Ship for a close fight by disposing their Bulk-heads, Leaves, Coamings, Lock-holes, etc." . . . "How to Make a Sally"¹⁰⁷

107. Ralph D. Paine, The Ships and Sailors of Old Salem (New York, 1909), p. 62. ". . . such desperate engagements as are outlined in this ancient 'Seaman's Vade-Mecum' [were not] at all infrequent. 'Round-houses' and 'great cabbins' were defended with 'musquets,' 'javalins,' 'Half-pikes' and 'cutlasses,' and 'hand-granados' in many a hand-to-hand conflict with sea raiders before the crew of the bluff-blown, high-popped Yankee West India-man had to 'beat off the boarders' or make a dashing 'Sally' or 'capitulate for Good Quarter at the last Extremity.'" Ibid., p. 65.

While the day of the armed merchantmen was 1779 and later, some of that description appear to have sailed in 1777 and 1778. Three that answer the description - large vessels, lightly armed and scantily manned - sailed in January 1778 under the house colors of Mark Lafitte, "a native of France resident in Salem."¹⁰⁸ But honors for first sailing seem to go to Derby's vessel, dispatched to Haiti in August 1777 with guns and cargo and instructions to take prizes as well as avoid trouble:

The Sloop Patty - of which you are Master being in all Respects ready to Sail wee do advise & Order you to Come to Sail & make the Best of your way for Cape Francis - on Your Arivall there dispose of your Cargo after fixing the Sloop in good Order & Purchasing the few goods that you have a list of - we would have you leave in the Hands of Mr John Dupea taking his Receipt for the Same to be paid to Your Owners - or their Order - & after you have settled all Your Affairs & got the Sloop Clear & in good Order make the Best of your way down the W side Jamaica & there wee expectt you will take as much Interest Out of Some of the Drogars [West Indian coasting vessels] as will load your Sloop, wich having done if you Can take no large Vesel at Sea wee would have you Proceede into some of the Harbours the W side & Cut One Out.- You must be verry Carefull of the Vessels you take first that they do not get Information of Your being on the Coast - the Success of this Voiage depends intirely on its being Conducted rite & wee leave the Affair wholly to you if you are Chased on you Passage Out by a Frigate & the Chase is near Equal you have leave to heave Over part of Our Cargo if you think best - in Case you Should get taken on Your Passage Out wee think it best You heave these Orders & y^r Commission & all

108. Phillips, op. cit., p. 407.

such Papers Over & tell them you are going to purchase a Vessel & load her for Salem with Molasses-- of Interest that have at the Mole - is the Reason of your having so many Hands - but after you have fitted the Sloope & have taken any thing you will then for your Own Safety take Care of y^r Commission not having to ad wee Commit you to the All-mightys Protection. . . .109

With the "discovery" of the armed merchantman, Salem wartime shipping reached the turning point. Now that the arrival of French fleet units in the West Indies had altered the balance of strength in that quarter, the prospect of sending cargo there in well-armed "letters of marque" had more appeal than before, and the results from 1779 on reinforced these opinions. "A much better cruise than privateering," was the verdict of the General Pickering's principal owner after that vessel's successful return in April 1780 from the West Indies with a full cargo of sugar, cotton, coffee, cocoa, and rum.¹¹⁰ So brimming with confidence were the owners that they turned her right around with the sugar for Bilbao. What must have appeared at first to be an experiment, now claimed priority over other uses of bottoms, even to include privateering. Salem merchants began to turn every suitable vessel into "letters of marque," and some of the most famous privateers suddenly acquired a new identity. It took large and strong vessels to carry great quantities of cargo, upwards of 100 men, and enough heavy guns to outduel the largest British privateers and patrol vessels. Reaching out to approximate the ideal, Elias Hasket Derby, finally built according to need. His biggest privateer, the Grand Turk, at 300 tons enjoyed great prestige among

109. Letter of Instructions to Capt. Nathaniel Nichols, Aug.--, 1777, Derby Family MSS, XXVII, Commercial Papers, folio 4. The tentative terms in which this is couched suggests strongly the doubts and uncertainties that plagued the voyage.

110. Quoted in Phillips, op. cit., p. 421.

seafarers, who sought to be selected for her crew.¹¹¹ His biggest "letter of marque" ship, the Astrea, given into command of his brother John in December 1782, topped this by 50 tons, and set records crossing the Atlantic, taking a prize along the way.¹¹² The Derbys by war's end had four vessels of 300 to 350 tons burden, the same vessels that later found their way to the far corners of the globe.¹¹³

Much as has been made of the Derbys' privateers, the figures show that only four of nineteen vessels fitted out by them after August 1779 belonged in this category; the rest were "letters of marque."¹¹⁴

The other element needed to make a success of the new mode in shipping, that of bold and resourceful masters and seamen to match, was supplied in the desired quantity from the bridges and forecastles of Salem's raiders. Head and shoulders above them, the inspiring leader and ferocious battler, Jonathan Haraden, whose scores of captures yielded one thousand cannons, by 1780 was master of the 180 ton "letter of marque" ship, General Pickering, loaded with sugar, and engaged in typically heroic action off Bilbao.¹¹⁵ Many others, though not his equal, made enviable records for themselves.

111. Peabody, op. cit., p. 48.

112. Ibid., pp. 49-50.

113. Paine, op. cit., p. 113.

114. From Massachusetts Archives, tabulated for Peabody, op. cit., p. 46.

115. Paine, op. cit., pp. 80-87. All Haraden's qualities of greatness availed him naught when he was caught by Admiral Rodney's fleet with several prizes in the harbor of St. Eustatius in February 1781. With them was lost the General Pickering, that famous ship. Phillips, op. cit., p. 428.

The scattered nature of the records and their incompleteness prevents putting together sums of these achievements in round figures. Where letters of instructions can be found, accounts may be fragmentary or altogether missing. Passing reference gives clues that often are unsupported by concrete data. Yet specific cases of merit can be cited to demonstrate the type of voyages that revived wartime Salem shipping.

Coastal watcher Ashley Bowen, continuing his vigil in 1779, noted only three vessels clearly engaged in a trading voyage.¹¹⁶ Apparently discouraged at this point, he discontinued his count, a victim in its way of the slowing of commerce.

Salem's Joshua Ward offers an example of the town's active and successful merchant of many parts, up to the times, and thus involved in the new line. In 1779 he had been engaged in the privateer, Montgomery, his eighth share yielded a tidy £3495. 1. 10.¹¹⁷ Following correspondence that year with Mathieu & Co. of Port au Prince, Haiti, this rising magnate in the company of Robert Leech, William Orne, Nathaniel Felt, Jr., Peter Landers, Jerathiel Pierce, Ichabod Nichols and his brother, Josiah Orne, and Joseph Moses undertook the ambitious project of sending the armed ship, Friendship, Thomas Fitzsimmons,

116. "Passed a brig for Salem, Captain White, from Guadaloupe. [July 26, 1779]. ". . . this morning sailed Captain Thomas Boyles for the West Indies [Aug. 13, 1779]." "Passed a ship for Salem said to be a Frenchman from the West Indies [Aug. 17, 1779]." Journals of Ashley Bowen, Daybook and Journal 1775-1777, American Antiquarian Society.

117. Ward Family MSS, I, Commercial Papers 1709-1780, folio 73, "Sundries and Sales," Apr. 14, 1779; folio 77.

master, to that port.¹¹⁸ Loaded with 100,000 foot of boards, 124,800 shingles, 9,253 foot of planks, 1,000 hoops, and 6 hogsheads of codfish on the outbound trip, the Friendship returned fully freighted, according to instructions, with molasses.¹¹⁹ Encouraged by the results of the first voyage, the owners sent the Friendship out again on a venture to the same destination that concluded in October 1780. This time they sent out 73, 272 foot of boards, 17,500 shingles, 3,875 hoops, and various other wood products. In return they received 144 hogsheads of molasses, 3 of brown sugar, 1250 pounds of coffee, and 458 1/3 pounds of cocoa.¹²⁰ The accounts for the first voyage are complete down to crews wages, owners profits (including Simmons' 1/16 share), incidental expenses in cargo handling, charges, and processing, and even items for the crew's larder.

Meanwhile, Ward's interest had spread to Portsmouth, N. H., where he engaged in a venture to Grenada. Nearer to home, he took out 1/4 share in the voyage of the brig, Success, Thomas Valentine, master, to the West Indies with a cargo of codfish, salmon, boards, hoops, staves, bricks, and tobacco in return

118. Ward Family MSS, I, Commercial Papers 1709-1780, Folio 76. "Our orders is that you . . . proceede for Port au Prince and their dispose of-your Cargo to the best Advantage, and purchase a Cargo - of the Best Brown Sugar, (if you have Stock Enough), if not Gett moll^s and as much Sugar as you Can beside-to Bring her full-Freighted, Likewise Would Advise-You to make all the dispatch you can, so as to Come on the Coast Early, as the danger Will be Less. . . ." Robert and Peter Lander to Capt. Thomas Simmons, Nov. 9, 1779, *ibid.*, folio 60.

119. *Ibid.*, folio 60, "Accounts of Sales and Returns of the Friendships Cargo and Cash," Nov. 27, 1779.

120. *Ibid.*, folio 69, Oct. 20, 1780.

for which they received rum, cloth, and clothing.¹²¹ During that year he also held an interest in the fourth privateering voyage of the Pilgrim, in the amount of £12,107. 0. 0.¹²² The following years he fitted up and sailed the ship Royall Lewis, the brigantine, Alfred, and the Brig. Ann. Among the products appearing in his accounts for the year were beef, salt, molasses, Bordeaux wine, Grenada rum, Brazilian tobacco, bales of sailor's clothing, Hyson tea, bolted cloth, port wine, sugar, Caracas hides, indigo, Madeira wine, and barreled peas.¹²³

During 1782 Ward entered into a relationship with Capt. Haraden, back from captivity, and master of Ward's ship, the Julius Caesar. Trying yet a new field, Ward and his Boston correspondents, the firm of Eaton and Benson, had sent Haraden first to Hispaniola with a cargo that he traded for another and sailed for Nantes, France. Arriving there in October 1782, he found no ready market (on the heels of two West Indian convoys), but following instructions shipped a very full load of dry goods, intended to make an early arrival at a peacetime market. Unable to sell the West Indian goods shipped at such

121. Ward Family MSS, I, Commercial Papers 1709-1780, folio 80. "Invoice of Sundry Goods & Merch^e shipt on Board the Brig Success," Dec. 25, 1779, *ibid.*, folio 82. See also folios, 89, 90, and 91-99.

122. *Ibid.*, folio 87, Spt. 28, 1780.

123. *Ibid.*, folios 3 and 7. "In Hard Money Account with Eaton & Benson," July-Dec. 1781, *ibid.*, folio 9. "In a/c with Eaton & Benson," Jan.-June, 1782, *ibid.*, folio 21.

risk to Nantes, Ward was left with a deficit in his accounts of 3,415 Louis d'or.¹²⁴

During the last months before the Preliminary Peace Treaty restored trade relations, Ward was back at Port au Prince through the services of Capt. Gideon Henfield. By then uncertainty over the timing of the great event had come to influence trade, and no ready market was to be had for products that had enjoyed great demand not so long before: "I am sorry to Inform you that, I have been gratly disappointed about my Cargo . . . Captⁿ Rice that Sold to the Same Merchant, is disapinted the same as my self."¹²⁵ While bids for American products settled, the prices

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124. Watson and Cossoul to Joshua Ward, Nov. 12, 1782, *ibid.*, folio 24. "In case you can send us a few rice, & Indigo consignments, immediately upon Charlestown being open'd we are persuaded, we can command immediate, advantageous sales - Good North Carolina pipe staves, will also answer Very well - i's necessary that they should be 6 feet long & 2 i/2 Inches thick - & ba[rre]ll staves 4 feet long & 6 Inches wide - & 3/4 thick." Watson and Cossoul to Joshua Ward, Jan. 9, 1783, *ibid.*
125. Gideon Henfield to Joshua Ward and associates, Jan. 20, 1783, *ibid.*, folio 27. The prevailing situation put a premium on intelligence of all sorts. It paid to get close to officials of the various powers, and the smallest advantage could be decisive in reaching markets at the right time. Boston correspondents and shareholders, Eaton and Benson, according to their own acknowledgement, made a fine art of cultivating fleet officers: ". . . we and many others have for a good while been trying to find out when the french fleet will Sail, but can get no Certain information respecting the matter for they endeavour to keep their affairs as Secret as possible we are Acquainted with some of the principal Officers & have daily Business with them, & Whatever probable discoveries we may make, we shall Inform you immediately, Our opinion from many Circumstances is that they will not sail much under 3 Weeks. . . ." Eaton & Benson to Joshua Ward, Nov. 14, 1782, *ibid.*, folio 22.

of West Indian staples rose. After obtaining molasses for Henfield to some extent at the agreed on price, the merchant suddenly could get no more and offered unwanted cash.

Another Salem merchant who left his mark on the times, William Gray, found trade with Haiti to his liking during 1782. Gray, who appeared briefly above, directed his trade to Cap Francois in the north rather than Port au Prince. In fact, Cap Francois seems to have benefitted for its more favorable approaches from the ocean and for being on the side away from Jamaica and the unkind attentions of the British bases thereon.¹²⁶ Gray's instructions to Capt. James, master of the sloop, Ceres, upon departure in August 1782, mirror again the uncertainty over conditions in the West Indies following British naval victories and the flexible arrangements that such considerations and questions about marketing brought into play:

. . . upon your arival sell the Cargo . . . for the most it will fetch, & layout the Proceeds thereof, in good Molasses & Coffe, as soon as you have completed your Business in the W. Indies, Proceed directly for this State get into the first safe Harbour, you can make, & if their is little or no risque, you will Proceed for Salem. . . . Should you find Molasses & Coffee Dear, & not to be had

126. Haiti, the westernmost segment of Hispaniola, as Santo Domingo, today's Dominican Republic, was the easternmost, was in an extremely mountainous island, almost at the center of the West Indies chain, Cuba to the west, Puerto Rico to the east, and Jamaica south and west, set off Hispaniola. Port au Prince has a harbor two hundred square miles in extent, with two excellent channels but coral reefs along its coast. The island is one of the world's most fertile, producing from extensive acreage quantities of coffee, cocoa, cotton, and sugar.

soon, & can Purchase Salt or any Other Goods, that you suppose will answer better than Molasses & Coffee then you will take whatever you suppose will make most Proffit, . . . should you have a good opportunity to go from Cape Francois under Convoy to Virginia, Baltimore, or Philadel. then you will Proceed with, the Sloop & Cargo for that Place you think best, . . . as soon as you have informd yourself Sell your cargo for the most it will fetch & take onboard a Cargo of Flour & Proceed to that part of the W. Indies which you think best, leavg in the hands of M^r Collins [Philadelphia], the overplus, which you may have . . . after Paying for your Cargo of Flour & Charges.¹²⁷

James' cargo consisted of 6,468 bunches of onions, 12 masts of 15 to 22 inches, 11 booms, 10 top masts, 108 yards and spars, a "parcell" of square timber, 7,507 foot of boards and planks, 30,000 shingles, and a small quantity of mackerel, pork, beef, bread, and candles.¹²⁸

At almost the same time, old acquaintance, Joshua Burnham, master of the sloop, Phoenix, took a similar cargo to Martinique for Gloucester merchants Daniel Rogers and John Badson for 5% of gross sales and 2 1/2% of "neat returns."¹²⁹ Such instances of letting out Salem vessels for the carriage of cargo of neighboring ports appear to have been few and infrequent.

127. William Gray, Jr., to Capt. Ambrose James, Aug. 28, 1782, Joseph Felt Coll., Massachusetts Archives, CCXCII, folio 181.

128. "Invoice of the Cargo on board the Sloop Ceres. . . ." Ibid., folio 182.

129. "Invoice of Sundry Goods and Merchandize shipped on board the Sloop Phoenix Cap^t Joshua Burnahm Master. . . ." Box Shipping Papers & Accounts, Joshua Burnham Papers Feb. 26, 1782, Shipping Papers & Accounts 1758-1791, Joshua Burnham Papers, Essex Institute.

One of the most popular ports for Salem shippers was Havana. With its unlimited market for flour and meat and its equally unlimited supplies of sugar and sugar products, fruit, and other tropical produce. it offered rich rewards though it lay at the end of a dangerous passage off the British Bahamas. A complete set of papers pertaining to the methods employed in this trade, the cargos, vessels, and the traders themselves during the 1781-1783 period is to be found in the papers of Joseph Waters at Salem's Peabody Museum. Waters in the former year was on the verge of a distinguished career, master of the seventy ton brigantine, Romulus, nine guns and a crew of 25, and as described in the Philadelphia naval office: ". . . of the Age of Twenty three Years of Stature five feet Six Inches dark brown hair and fresh Complexion."¹³⁰ He and mate, John Pittman: ". . . of the Age of Twenty-six Years of Stature Five feet five Inches light hair and fair complexion," sailed from Salem on August 1, 1781 under orders from the firm of Joseph and Joshua Grafton:

. . . your orders are to proceed to Havana, & deliver M^{rs} Joseph and Joshua Grafton Your Letters & wait & receive their orders, so far as to proceed to Europe from Havana & from thence to Havana or any other Port or Ports in the West Indies. On Your arrival at Havana from Europe You are to have it at Your Option, should s^d Graftons incline to keep the Brig^t any longer from home to leave her & be at all Expence for Your Passage, or to obey their further Orders.-We expect to allow you 6 P. C^t on the Sales & 2 1/2 on the returns of Your Cargo from this to Havana, & from Havana to Europe Custom must determine.-In consideration of Your having no Monthly Wages, You

130. Certificate of Clearance, State of Pennsylvania; Nov. 6, 1781, Papers of Joseph Waters, No. 4, folder 1, Peabody Museum. Certificate of Clearance, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Jan. 29, 1781, *ibid*.

are to be entitled to Your part of one half of all Prizes.-You must be strictly attentive to the Am^t of the Adventures on board, & see that Your Officers nor Men do not intrude on their fix'd Privilege, which is first Mate Eighteen hundred weight, Second fifteen & each Seaman Eight-Should You on Your arrival at any Port of discharge, during Your Voyage, find they have intruded You have our positive orders to deduct fifty P. C^t Freight & charge them all the profits that has risen on the sale of their over plus Articles.-You, Your Officers & People must render unto Mess.^{rs} Joseph & Joshua Grafton at Havana an exact Account of Your Adventures & pay your Proportion of Duty.-We submit Chasing & Cruising to Your prudent management-recommending always the utmost caution-Shou'd the fate of War place a Prize in Your hands, we wish you to put out the best Officer You have on board & order her for this state. . . . Shou'd you take a Prize to the Northward of Bermuda worth 7000 £ Stlg. You have our Consent to Convoy her to some safe Port on the Continent, provided Your Men will agree to immediately proceed on their Voyage again. . . . As Your number of Men is Large & your Brig^t small, much of the profits of Your Voyage will depend on your frugality & dispatch in Port . . . shoud you take a Prize with a Cargo on Board suitable for the West India market you have our Consent to send her into any Port in the West Indies-(if its for Cape Francois Order her to omit Pierce & Rave & write them its by our Orders) Order them to Load her with molasses & send her for this State-& shoud they find any slow Stocks in their Hands, tell them to let it wait Our Orders.¹³¹

131. Joseph and Joshua Grafton to Capt. Joseph Waters, July 27, 1781, *ibid.*

On August 12 they took the ship Joshua, bound from Barbadoes to Newfoundland, prize and sent it back to Salem. There followed another capture of a brigantine loaded with sugar, and arrived at Havana on September 1. By the 4th, they had "Open'd Hatches & found Fish in toreable good Order," and the next day they unloaded and sold them. On the 10th they loaded 30 hogshead of wine at some unspecified point on the Cuban coast and the following day landed them and sold them. On the 22nd they noted the sailing of Capt. Plainfield and the Dolphin for Salem. On November 14, they celebrated news of Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown with "French & Irish officers in Spanish Service," drinking 13 toasts while an American vessel fired 13 cannon. On November 17 they noted the arrival from Salem of the brigantine, Hound, Capt. Emerton, and ship, Washington, Capt. Lewis. These logbook entries omit reference to other facets of the voyage.¹³² The Graftons did not send the Romulus to Europe. On September 27th Joseph Grafton, who had accompanied Waters to Havana, for his health as well as to set up in business, gave the details of trading arrangements to date, as well as prospects ahead:

. . . we . . . have sold our Cargo nearly as follows
 1/2 Wine @ 70 Doll^rs the other half @ 60 Doll^rs Hog^d-
 400 boards 15/ ea, Tracy's Pitch (590 lb) @ 6/ lb,
 Porter in Bottles 8 Doll^rs Dozⁿ, chees (damg'd)
 2/6 lb, Butter 3/6 lb, Paint Oil 25 Doll^rs Hund^d &
 weight, Saws 16 Doll^s each Fish 25 Doll^rs Box, &
 Mustard 4/ Bottle;-the Candles will command by the
 quantity only 8/ lb but . . . have not sold them.-
 The Nails, Draught Porter, saddles, & Dry Goods,
 will am^t to very little.-In short the Prospect of
 a Cadiz voyage is in a great measure (& with us
 totally) frustrated.-I think it was 5th July that
 the Fleet left this place for Cadiz with upwards
 80,000 Chest Sugar on board; which had induc'd me

132. Log of Brig^e Romulus, "Voyage to Havana 1781," Essex Institute.

on our Part, & Captⁿ Waters on the other Owners part, to alter the Voyage.-The Romulus is now loading Salt for Philadelphia @ 8/ Bush^l & will be ready to sail in about 8 days.-The Vessel that Arriv'd from that place the last but one, sold her salt @ 3⁴/ & the very last at 40/ that Currency Bush^l & it was still rising.-Flour was only 15/ Hund so that a Load Salt, by this calculation, will much more than give her load flour-In this calculation shall not put too much dependance. . . . [will take the rest in freight] This will not be playing a desperate game, but will leave me here, at least . . . 5000 Doll^rs for which, you may draw on me at you're occation-I doubt not but a Bill of this kind cou'd be negotiated at Cape Francois as there is considerable Trade between them and this place. [goes on to suggest shares in several vessels be taken for Havana and to express the desire to have 3 or 4 well-constructed ones of 100 to 200 tons engaged in it]. . . . Captⁿ Waters is to return with the Romulus to this Port & in case he shou'd not be impeded will leave with me an additional sum of 6000 Dol^rs [besides hides]¹³³

Waters arrived back in Havana from Philadelphia with 600 barrels of flour on December 17, 1781.¹³⁴ By early 1782 Waters was in Salem with a cargo of brown sugar and some flour saved out for the Salem shareholders. Early the next year he returned to Havana with a shipment of mackerel, salmon, codfish, boards, shingles, and flour.¹³⁵ On his return trip he brought back

133. Joseph Grafton to Joshua Grafton, Sept. 27, 1781, Papers of Joseph Waters, No. 4, folder No. 1, MSS Coll., Peabody Museum.

134. Joseph Grafton to Joshua Grafton, Dec. 18, 1781, *ibid*.

135. Accounts of Joseph Waters, Account Book 1781-1786, pp. 5, 8, Peabody Museum.

2,000 Spanish milled dollars for James Jarvis of Boston and other owners of the Romulus.¹³⁶ To that point the trade with Havana had met all of Grafton's expectations. And here Waters drops from sight.

Kingpins as well as initiators of this trade, the Derbys sought always to improve their methods and broaden their thrust. This last period of the shipping war saw them group their resources, rendezvousing at well-chosen assembly points their fast and heavily armed vessels, and in other ways creating conditions favorable to their lines of trade. They frequented no one port although they returned to some. The islands, the American continent - north and south - as well as the European mainland received their cargos as they varied the destination in answer to market demands. Often the concentration of force of two or more armed merchantmen and a number of prizes gave them small squadrons in strange waters, with protective advantages and trading flexibility of major proportions. These methods stood them in good stead in Asian waters later in the century.

No one ship under the Derby colors met with greater success in joint trading-prize-taking operations between 1779 and 1782 than the brigantine, Lexington, while skippered by Captains Lamperell and Smith. During the course of a tightly run voyage to Haiti late in 1779, before the sea lanes had been pried open, the former sold a cargo for cash at the north shore port of Cap Francois, proceeded in the company of the fast ship, Salem Packet, after ballasting, to the protected port on that French island of Port au Prince to pick up 40,000 lbs. of sugar, 10,000 of coffee, and the rest in cotton. There the second rendezvous, this time with Capt. Nathaniel West and the ship Three Sisters, took place, and they settled the question which vessels would return with purchases or freight, and which if

136. Papers of Joseph Waters, No. 4, folder 2, May 24, 1782, MSS Coll., Peabody Museum. On returns of £ 8513 on cotton, Tobacco, coffee, and sugar he received £ 438. 15. 7.

any be sold.¹³⁷ The Three Sisters, with orders to pick up 80 hogsheads of molasses and the rest in brown sugar, a few hundred weight of powder excepted, had been accompanied all the way by Capt. French in the brigantine, Hasket and John.¹³⁸ But he had orders if a lucrative freight was in view to complete his cargo instead with coffee and cotton, light loading that would not offset heavy freight. To squeeze the last shilling out of the voyage, West was to "sell all the Provisions [he could] . . . spare allowing 50 Days to bring [him] . . . Home."¹³⁹ This concentration of three heavily armed vessels and one very fast packet vessel, gave the well-instructed captains a number of trading alternatives, suitable for those uncertain times.

By May of 1780 the Lexington was in command of Capt. David Smith, to whose care she was entrusted for the remainder of the war. This time the brigantine sailed for Cap Francois with a cargo of 1204 gallons of oil in 14 casks, 100 barrels of beef, 4 of pork, 19,000 shingles, and a quantity of hoops (for barrel-ing cargo). After acquiring a load of sugar, salt, and coffee, the Derbys owed 6004. 2. 6 livres, to be repaid out of the voyage's proceeds and those of others.¹⁴⁰ Smith was off again

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137. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. Lamperell, Nov. 1779, Derby Family MSS, I, Commercial Papers, folio 53, Essex Institute.
138. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. Nathaniel West, Nov. 1779, Derby Family MSS, XXVII, Commercial Papers, folio 4, *ibid*.
139. *Ibid*. Derby too warned his masters: ". . . you will likewise see that your Crew has not more Privaledg on board than the Agreement as I shall not choose to have the Ship too deep."
140. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. David Smith, May 4, 1780, *ibid*., folio 5. "Invoice of goods Shipt by Elias Hasket Derby on Board the Lexington David Smith Master. . . ." May 1780, *ibid*., XXIII. "Act of Sale of Brig Lexington Cargoe. . . ." July 30, 1790, *ibid*., I, folio 54. Brassier and Bermond represented the Derbys in Cap Francois.

the following year for Virginia, with a shipment guaranteed to appeal to gentlemen planters: 44 casks of Grenada rum, 2 of brandy, 17 pipes of wine, 2 pipes of "Bourdox" claret, as well as 300 bunches of onions.¹⁴¹ In return for this Smith was instructed to receive "Hard Money," and to

. . . load the Brig^t for Salem with Flour or part Tobacco-but if you cannot obtain leave to load Flour then take wholly Tobacco . . . if you can have such a Convoy as to take off all the Risk then you may bring the Money with you-but if not then you must purchase me a good Horse & Sulkey & let your Mate or a Hand that you can depend on bring the money Home by land - unless you can purchase a Bill of Exchange on this State. . . .¹⁴²

By December 1781 Smith was again at sea with a cargo of fish, flour, wine, rum, turpentine, gin, soap, butter, and assorted goods, bound for the Venezuelan coast on a voyage described by Derby as "quite new to me."¹⁴³ He hoped Smith could

141. "Invoice of Goods Shipt by Elias Hasket Derby on his Own Account & Risk on board the Brig^t Lexington. . . ." Sept. 20, 1781, *ibid.*, XXIII. Apparently, the Lexington made a voyage to Curacao later in 1780. In the Derby Papers is a 1780 list of fees and duties, supplies and food expenses totaling 1682 livres, 12 sous, under the heading "Accomp^t of Expences made for Brig Lexington During her Stay at Leguiry and Curacao and at the Ocays." *Ibid.*, XXIII. No further materials relating to this voyage were found.

142. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. David Smith, Sept. 20, 1781, *ibid.*, XXVII, folio 7.

143. "Invoice of goods Shipt by Elias Hasket Derby in his own Account & Risk on board the Brig^t Lexington. . . ." Nov. 23, 1781, *ibid.*, XXIII. At the last minute he added three boxes of "Sope Neet," weighing 144 pounds, 50 casks of butter "from Boston marked AD," 431 cheeses weighing 5742 lbs., and other articles in 5 cases and 24 casks. These were probably freight and not Derby's own "Account & Risk."

exchange these for three or four thousand hides, and that these in turn could be sold in Curacao or St. Thomas for cash. If that number could not be obtained, Smith was to take on salt, cocoa, and "best hides" for Salem, and during the voyage ". . . stow them in 5 or Six Bults so that they may be taken up & beat 3 or 4 times on the Passage to Clear the worms."¹⁴⁴ Smith eventually returned with 55 hogsheads of sugar, 2575 lbs. of cocoa, and 1819 lbs. of cotton, sparing the crew an obnoxious cargo. This loading he received at Aux Cayes, Haiti.¹⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Capt. Joseph Cook in the Salem Packet performed useful functions at sea where fleetness served the Derby's interest. In May 1779 he took a cargo of 1500 lbs. "Sassaparilla" and the same amount of coffee, along with odd amounts of Barbadoes tar, indigo, fish, and 13 "setts of bills [of exchange]" in the amount of 315 livres, 67 sous for delivery to Gardoqui and Son at Bilbao, Spain.¹⁴⁶ In June 1780, he delivered bills or cash in the amount of 355⁴ livres, 10 sous to correspondents Brassier and Bermond at Cap Francois. He delivered at the same time 80 barrels of beef that sold slowly.¹⁴⁷ Lugar, Hispaniola,

144. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. David Smith, Dec. 22, 1781, *ibid.*, XXVII, folio 7.

145. This invoice, dated Feb. 25, 1782 is in *ibid.*, XXIII.

146. "Invoice of Goods Shipt by Elias Hasket Derby on his Own Account & Risk on board the Schoon^r Salem Packet-Joseph Cook Master. . . ." May 5, 1779, *ibid.*, XXVI.

147. Receipt of Brassier & Bermond, June 19, 1780, *ibid.*, I, folio 54. "Ac^t of Sale of Brig Lexington Cargoe. . . ." July 30, 1780, *ibid.*, Other materials suggest that Cook picked up 75 barrels and 200 bags of coffee that he hauled to Bilbao, Spain and sold. There is no indication of a return loading. "Account Sales of . . . Coffee Rec^d p the Salem Packet. . . ." Aug. 16, 1781 (docketed on the reverse "Bilbao August 16th 1780"), *ibid.*, XXVI.

became his next port of call during a voyage begun in November 1780 with a cargo of 245 quintals of cod and "scale" fish, 5 casks of oil, 1500 foot of oars, 3000 hoops, 1500 shingles, 32 boxes of soap, and two boxes of starch, in addition to an assortment of other goods totalling 47,755 livres.¹⁴⁸ Cook was ordered to ship on the return voyage 35 tons of "first quality White Sugar," and the balance in cotton.¹⁴⁹ With this voyage the Derby Haitian operations went very definitely into the black by deposit at the banker, Mathieu's house in Port au Prince of the sum of 17,782 livres, 16 sous, on April 1, 1781.¹⁵⁰

Cook's success to date brought about even bolder enterprises. As advertised in the Salem Gazette for May 1, 1781, openly and unflinchingly, another Atlantic crossing was to follow:

For Bilboa-That new constructed fast sailing ship
Salem Packet, Mounting 12 Carriage Guns, Joseph Cook,
Commander. Will sail in about 10 Days. For Freight
out or home, apply to Elias Hasket Derby. Salem,
April 30, 1781.

And as Derby wrote to correspondent Gardoqui of that city, while forwarding an itemization of cargo to be returned, ". . . this ship of Cap^t Cooks Sails so exceeding fast I shall Choose to have about three Thousand Pounds sterling amount shipt in her on my own Account."¹⁵¹ Included in the order were

148. "Invoice of Goods Shipt by Elias Hasket Derby . . . on board the Ship Salem Packet. . . ." Nov. 26, 1780, *ibid.*, XXVI.

149. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. Joseph Cook, Nov. 1780, *ibid.*, XXVI.

150. Receipt of Mathieu, Apr. 1, 1781, *ibid.*

151. Elias Hasket Derby to Gardoqui & Son, June 1781, *ibid.*, XXVI, folio 6.

cordage, tea, Ravens duck, Rowshe duck, wire, osnabrig, nails, cannon, and shot. With business as good as it was, he also indulged his family, as did a number of his friends, their's through his agency, with an order paid for by a bill of exchange of 2478 livres for "best Black lace," crimson damask, muslins, cambric, pink, "Lustring," a barrel of almonds, leather mounted fans, boys hats, "Brossets" lace, "Best Black silk," broadcloth, glassware, "Waving Fethers," lemons, and citron.¹⁵² He also asked Gardoqui to purchase and send to him a pair of sheep "such as have the longest tails of any . . . for Breeders for my Farm." The voyage went off successfully; Derby admonished Cook that he might take prizes on the voyage out, but not on the way back (" . . . the Ship will be so valluable I would not have you run so great a risk.").

The Salem Packet was fated not to repeat this grand voyage. She was taken by the Mowhawk in 1782, her daring commander aboard and her speed intact.

Another of the Derby ships to be taken, was the vessel bearing the proud title, Hasket and John. Since its commissioning in 1780, it had sailed far and wide from Spain to the Windward Islands. That ship's first voyage under Captain John Collins entailed a quick run to the island of Guadeloupe to pick up 75 hogsheads of molasses and the balance of cargo in cotton.¹⁵³ Derby ordered Collins to Port Louis on the west coast of the Grand-terre, or upper island, the flat and fertile agricultural area. The voyage was undertaken with the expectation of catching prizes, and the return cargo's weight factor was adjusted accordingly. In picking a French island in the arc of the Lesser Antilles, Derby assured his master of maximum opportunity.

152. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. Joseph Cook, June 1781, *ibid.*, XXVI. Undated invoice *ibid.*, XXVII, folio 6.

153. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. John Collins, Mar. 23, 1780, *ibid.*, XXVII, folio 5.

By the year's end Captain Adam Wellman had replaced Collins as skipper of the Hasket and John. Ordered with cargo to Martinique in December, he was to cruise seven or eight days "to the Windward of Antego" on the way out, if accompanied by the sloop Morning Star. But the orders also were encumbered by this injunction:

. . . do not Cruise unless You & the Whole Crew is determin^d to fight to the last extremity if there is any Occation for it-as I shall look on the loss of the Brig^t more than any Vessel I own on Account of her fast sailing. . . .¹⁵⁴

After disposing of his cargo at Martinique, Wellman was to try for a "good Freight for St. Eustatius," and from there to Hispaniola with whatever fresh foodstuffs might be purchased cheap from oncoming vessels. With surplus funds at St. Eustatius Wellman was to ship duck and powder to Salem. Once in Hispaniola, things became complicated:

. . . load the Brig with White Sugar such as Costs 30 to 32/ & Proceede with about one Hundred & Thirty Sous and wait for Bilboa-& on Your arivall there deliver it to Mess^{rs}. Gardoqui-where I shall have directions for you-but if not put the Brig^t in her best sailing trim with one Half Iron Mostly flat Bars & the other half Cordage of all Sizes-& leave the Remainder of the stock in M^r Gardoqui's Hands-so that you need not be in Bilboa more than 15 Days. . . .

From the foregoing it can be seen that conditions on the seas had by now reached the stage where such free roving voyages could be undertaken with impunity. Before Wellman reached Bilbao, the principal cargo had become coffee, which apparently sold well.¹⁵⁵ At this point the record ends, and the

154. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. Adam Wellman, Dec. 1780, *ibid*.

155. Elias Hasket Derby to Gardoqui & Son, June 1781, *ibid.*, folio 6.

Hasket and John next turns up a captive of the British.

The Morning Star itself, captained by Francis Rock, took part in this voyage, carrying a cargo of 9000 hoops, 1750 shingles, 110 "Shaken Cask," 3375 foot of joist timbers, 600 lbs. of pork, and 450 lbs. of beef.¹⁵⁶ Rock had orders to sell her on arrival in St. Eustatius and apply the proceeds to the cordage and powder mentioned above. Derby expected the market for vessels of the type to be good, for, as he acknowledged, "I hear they have lost many of their traders." This was, of course, only two months before February 13, 1781, when Admiral Rodney's expedition swooped down on St. Eustatius and took them all.

A strong trade established with the Spanish mainland, Derby also tried Dutch ports. Doubtless his contacts in the Dutch islands helped to open the door. But little seems to have resulted, a single voyage remaining a matter of record. This was undertaken by Captain Lamperell, now master of the brigantine Fame, sent to Holland with an unspecified cargo early in 1780 to trade for cordage, duck, sheeting, junk iron, and nails to the limit of half the load, the rest in assorted goods for the Salem market.¹⁵⁷ The records may be complete so far as Derby is concerned, as the Fame was only partly owned by him, and this voyage may have been the only one in which he held a substantial interest. The same may be said for the ship Three Sisters, of which he was part owner, consigning goods for overseas markets now and again only, as occasion allowed. For these ships the writer was unable to find letters of instruction, and these were doubtless written by other owners with a more substantial share. The workings of this system did

156. "Invoice of goods shipt by Elias Hasket Derby . . . on Board the Sloop the Morning Star Francis Rock Master. . . ." Dec. 17, 1780, *ibid.*, folio 5. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. Francis Rock, Dec. 17, 1780, *ibid.*

157. Elias Hasket Derby to [I.] White, Apr. 26, 1780, *ibid.*

not prevent Derby shipping one of his largest and most diversified cargoes on the Three Sisters in 1781: 73,000 foot of boards, 28500 shingles, 3100 staves, 4200 hoops, 19 hogsheads, 25 barrels of mackerel, 5 of herring, 116 bunches of onions, 34 bushels of potatoes, 8 bushels of peas, 25 boxes of spermaceti candles, 50 boxes of tallow candles, 60 boxes of soap, 10 casks of oil, 52 hogsheads of fish, and hard and paper money.¹⁵⁸

Yet another vessel of this description, the ship Patty, registered as only in part ownership by Elias Hasket and John Derby, Capt. Simon Forrester, master, carried large quantities of specialized Salem goods to Martinique and Haiti in 1781 and 1782, but it is not known to what extent these cargoes were subscribed to by the Derby family.¹⁵⁹

Ultimately, business became so good that Derby had to resort to other vessels in conveying his shipments, as all his own were at sea. Thus, in November 1781, he engaged Capt. Henry Phelps of Beverly, Massachusetts, and the brigantine, Revolt, to undertake a two phase trading venture. From Salem in the vessel's hold went 25 casks of rum, totalling 2567 gallons, 20 barrels of coffee, weighing 3909 lbs., 5020 bunches of onions, and some 40 masts and spars.¹⁶⁰ Conforming to his orders he sailed to Virginia, where he disposed of his cargo at Williamsburg and Hampton, and took on a load of tobacco.¹⁶¹

158. "Invoice of Goods Shipt^t by Elias Hasket Derby . . . on Board the ship three Sisters Nath^l West Master. . . ." 1781, *ibid.*, XXVI.

159. "Account of Seals the Ship Pattys Cargo and Return," Nov. 7, 1781, *ibid.*, XXX, folio 15. ". . . the Owners of the Ship Patty in Acc^t with John Derby," 1782, *ibid.*, VII, folio 9.

160. "Invoice of Goods Shipt by Elias H. Derby . . . on Board the Brig^e Revolt, Henry Phelps Master. . . ." Nov. 5, 1781, *ibid.*, XXX, folio 14.

161. *Ibid.*, "Bills 1780-1789," folios 17, 19.

The spars he sold to the French fleet, still in those waters following the victorious Yorktown campaign. At this point his orders pick up the story:

. . . load the Brig^t with Tobacco of the first Quality & before that you see to every Caske that you take on Board--all the brakage in the lower Hole I mean to have fill^d up with loose tobacco & . . . take the first good tide with a Convoy, if any, to be got-& make the best of your way for Bilboa. . . . You must deliver the Cargo to M^r Gardoqui-& take on Board three thousand Bushels of the Corsest Salt that can be got & Proceede to Salem.¹⁶²

This was the state of Salem's fortunes when the Marquis de Chastellux arrived on the scene and noted: "It is . . . in the most critical times that great fortunes are acquired and increased." He included Massachusetts Bay as among the localities benefitted by the turn of events of that year:

This flourishing state of trade, at Philadelphia, as well as in Massachusetts Bay is entirely owing to the arrival of the French squadron. The English have abandoned all their cruises in order to block up the French at Newport, and in that they have succeeded ill, for they have not taken a single sloop.¹⁶³

162. Elias Hasket Derby to Capt. Henry Phelps, Nov. 1781, *ibid.*, folio 15, Derby on the subject of the spars, wrote: "I make no doubt if they are there [French fleet] you will get a great price for them. . . ."

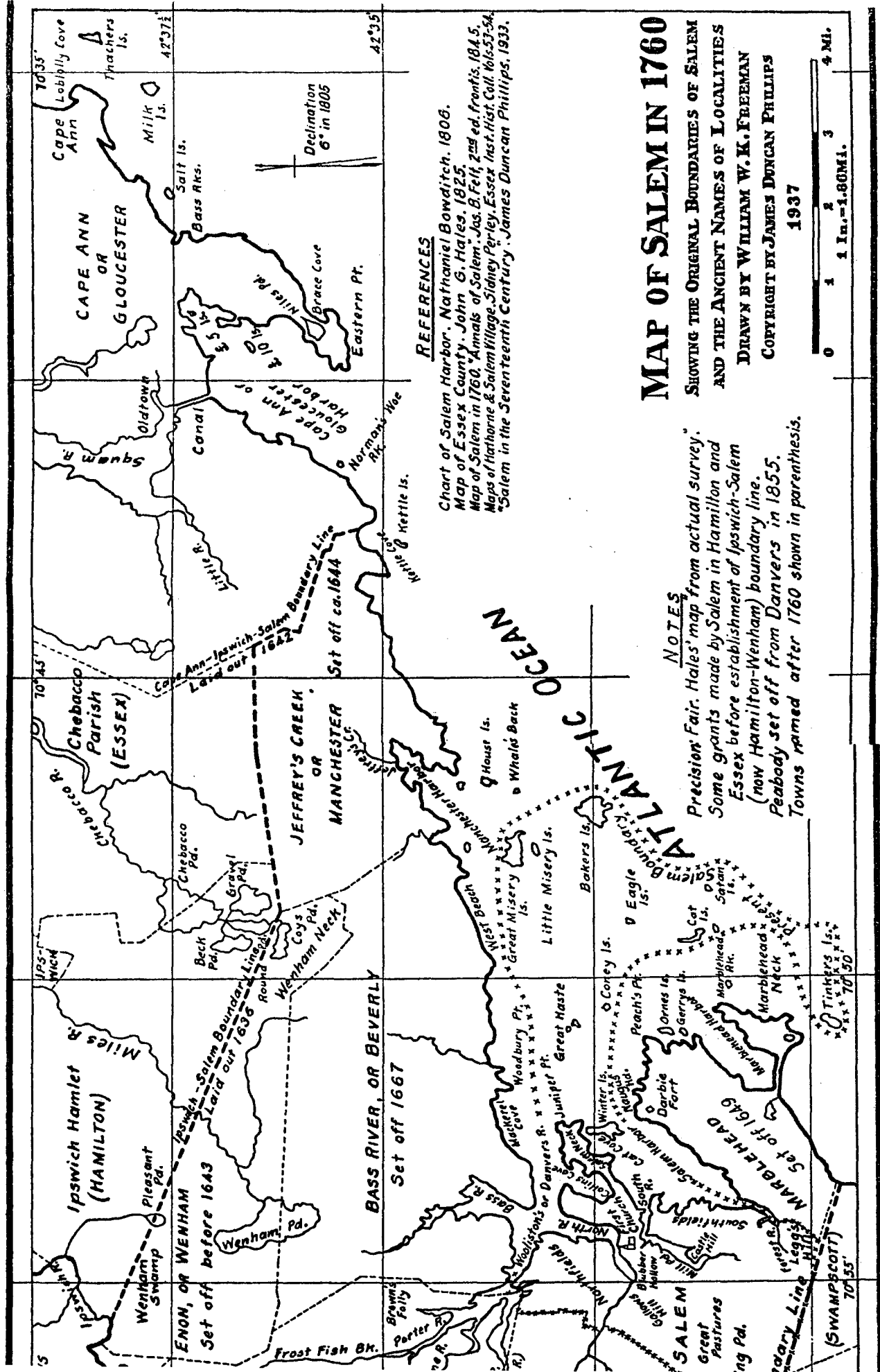
163. Howard C. Rice, ed. and transl., Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782 by the Marquis de Chastellux (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1963), I, p. 136.

This failed to endure; British fleet successes tightened the situation again in 1781 and 1782.¹⁶⁴ By the end of the latter year, the watchword was out for peace, and there existed little inducement to take chances while the peace commission was at work. By then Salem had goods aplenty but money had become scarce. To all practical purposes the era of wartime shipping had already ended before the war was officially declared over. And Salem's strong and resourceful leaders, tested and not found wanting, turned to an even more lustrous period of global commerce.

164. Howard C. Rice, ed. and transl., Travels in North America in the Years 1780, 1781 and 1782 by the Marquis de Chastellux (Chapel Hill, N. C. 1963), I, p. 300. "Very large fortunes were made from nothing during this period, but this state of prosperity was not of long duration; in 1781 and 1782, so numerous were the King's cruisers, and privateers, that frequently not one vessel out of seven that left the Delaware escaped their vigilance."

Illustration

Map of Salem and the north shore of
Massachusetts Bay from James Duncan
Phillips, Salem in the Eighteenth
Century (Boston & N. Y., 1937).



SOURCES

This is a new subject for which no previously developed materials exist. It has been necessary to find them in manuscript sources. That enough on the subject could be located is owing to the richness of the collections at Salem's Essex Institute, and to the availability of much valuable material scattered among the local historical societies of Essex County, Massachusetts. Salem's Peabody Museum yielded much useful materials from large collections. Once these distantly related pieces were in hand, began the struggle to organize them. As is so often the case, the period's larger history proved to be the framework needed, and a mixture of printed primary and secondary sources provided that.

As has been the writer's custom, a multi-paged bibliography has been dispensed with in the interest of time and space.