

International Journal of Naval History

April 2009

ISSN 1932-6556

Volume 8 Number 1

Fishermen, Fish Merchants, and the Origins of the American Navy

Christopher P. Magra, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor of Early American/Atlantic History
Director of the Center for Atlantic History
California State University at Northridge, History Department

Despite its singular importance to the American war effort during the Revolution, there remains no scholarly consensus with regard to the genesis of the American Navy. There are historians who credit Massachusetts with the birth of organized naval resistance to British authority.¹ Other academics maintain Rhode Island drew up “the first formal movement in behalf of a Continental Navy.”² Some of the foremost historians to study the origins of the American Navy, including William Bell Clark and Samuel Eliot Morison, believe George Washington first developed the concept of arming vessels for war.³ Morison goes so far as to refer to Washington as the “‘Founder’ of the United States Navy.” Clark unequivocally states: “General Washington provided the idea.” Others have argued that Washington was only part of a group of individuals who collectively developed arguments for a navy.⁴ Credit for the formation of the first American Navy has also been given to the Continental Congress’ Naval Committee and Marine Committee, established between 1775 and 1776.⁵ Some scholars are willing to consider the fishing schooners Washington ordered armed for war at Beverly,

Massachusetts in the fall of 1775 to be the first American warships.⁶ Others dismiss the idea that these fishing vessels could be considered warships at all.⁷

I doubt that I will be able to resolve these disputes in the time I have today. What I will do is offer new evidence to reinforce the position that fishing vessels did, indeed, constitute a crucial part of America's first Navy. Moreover, I intend to provide you with some social history of the fishermen responsible for the military conversion of fishing vessels during the American Revolution, which has never been done before. This paper is part of a chapter in a book I am finishing entitled *Fish and War: Commercial Fishing and Maritime Dimensions of the American Revolution*.

Commercial fishing vessels were converted into warships at the start of the Revolutionary War in 1775. These warships constitute an important part of the first American Navy for several reasons. First, the mobilization of commercial vessels for war represented part of the American naval strategy developed at the start of conflict. Second, these vessels were leased directly to the Continental Congress, making them the temporary property of the United Colonies. Third, they operated on a basis that defies classification as privateers. But, these vessels were only a part of the process by which American sea power was organized and focused. The naval strategy that was first developed in 1775, the fishing vessels that were armed for war, the men who manned and commanded those vessels, and the administrative support surrounding them, can collectively be seen as the first American Navy if properly viewed in the context of an eighteenth-century revolutionary society that lacked any pre-existing professional military force.

At the start of the Revolutionary War in 1775, colonial Americans fiercely debated the need for a navy. Some Revolutionary leaders felt the costs outweighed the benefits, while others hoped for reconciliation with the mother country. Those that supported the formation of an American Navy included that ubiquitous firebrand, Thomas Paine. Paine wrote:

we never can be more capable to begin on maritime matters than now, while our timber is standing, our fisheries blocked up, and our sailors and shipwrights out of employ....To unite the sinews of commerce and defense is sound policy.⁸

Another supporter, Christopher Gadsden, a former purser in the British Navy and a member of the Continental Congress from South Carolina, met John Adams, then acting as Massachusetts' representative, at the Congress in Philadelphia. As Adams reported, Gadsden was "confident that We may get a Fleet of our own, at a cheap Rate." Gadsden believed that smaller commercial vessels, such as fishing vessels, could be converted into warships, and that the expense of building an entirely new naval fleet could be largely avoided. Such a "cheap" navy could "easily take their Sloops, schooners and Cutters [smaller vessels], on board of whom are all their best Seamen, and with these We can easily take their large Ships, on board of whom are all their impressed and discontented Men."⁹ Gadsden maintained that such pressed men would not put up much of a fight, especially when pitted against fellow colonists.

John Adams then transmitted Gadsden's plans to Elbridge Gerry, a fish merchant from Marblehead, Massachusetts, and a member of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, which controlled the resistance to British forces throughout much of 1775. The Provincial Congress then debated the issue of arming vessels for war. On June 20,

1775, the Provincial Congress resolved “that a number of armed Vessels, not less than six, to mount from eight to fourteen carriage guns, and a proportionable number of swivels, &c. &c. be with all possible dispatch provided, fixed, and properly manned, to cruise as the Committee of Safety, or any other person or persons who shall be appointed by this Congress for that purpose, shall from time to time order and direct, for the protection of our trade and sea-coasts against the depredations and piracies of our enemies, and for their annoyance, capture, or destruction.” The matter was “ordered to subside *for the present*.”¹⁰ This program of arming vessels would resume in Massachusetts later in August.

The first colonial naval strategy, then, was worked-out between June and July, 1775, and transmitted to the seat of war in Massachusetts. The plan at this time involved arming and manning smaller commercial vessels that could be fitted out quickly and at low cost. These vessels were to capture successively larger warships, protect colonial shipping, and cut British military supply lines.

Such a scheme should not be conflated with the eighteenth-century way of war known as *guerre de course*, or cruiser warfare, in which merchant vessels were targeted in hit-and-run tactics to bring economic and political pressure to bear on a government through increased maritime insurance rates, price inflation, and shipping losses.¹¹ The colonist’s strategy involved these goals, to be sure. But, there were three additional war aims that differentiated colonial naval strategy from a *guerre de course*. First, colonists hoped to weaken British sea power through the capture of successively larger warships and the capture of manpower. Second, colonists hoped that cutting British supply lines would cause British forces in Boston to run out of food and evacuate the port city. Third,

colonists believed they could carve a path through the British naval blockade in order to allow trade to continue unmolested. As a result of these strategic purposes, the fishing fleet that was converted into warships at the end of 1775 must be considered an important part of the first American Navy. These fishing vessels were part of the initial naval strategy worked out in the Continental Congress.

In addition, these fishing vessels were leased directly to the Continental Congress, making them the temporary property of the United Colonies. These leases underscore the vessels' status as the first American warships. On July 18, 1775, the Continental Congress officially sanctioned the conversion of commercial shipping into armed vessels in order to meet the before-mentioned strategic objectives. The members resolved "that each colony, at their own expense, make such provision by armed vessels or otherwise, as their respective assemblies, conventions, or committees of safety shall judge expedient and suitable to their circumstances and situation for the protection of their harbors and navigation on their sea coasts, against all unlawful invasions, attacks, and depredations, from cutters and ships of war."¹² Marching orders were sent to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, which assigned John Glover the task of finding vessels to arm. Glover was a fish merchant from Marblehead involved in the fishing industry and the Colonel of the port town's regiment.¹³

In August, 1775, Glover succeeded in assembling five of the six vessels the Provincial Congress had resolved back in June to arm. The vessels were all fishing schooners; they all belonged to fish merchants in Marblehead; and they were all converted into warships in Beverly's harbor. The schooners were the *Hannah*, *Franklin*, *Hancock*, *Lee*, and *Warren*.¹⁴

Glover leased his schooner *Hannah* of “78 tons” burden to the Continental Congress on August 24.¹⁵ The schooner was built in 1765. Glover purchased her in 1769, and, in typical fashion, the *Hannnah* and her crew transported fish and lumber to Barbados in the winter months between 1770 and June 1775, probably having worked the offshore banks on fishing expeditions in the spring, summer, and fall. She returned bearing muscovado sugar and West Indian rum in her hold.¹⁶ Glover leased the fishing vessel to “the United Colonies of America,” or, in other words, the Continental Congress. The Marblehead fish merchant did not lease the schooner to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, nor did he lease her to General Washington. Such a lease underscores the *Hannah’s* role as the first “American,” as opposed to state, naval vessel. And she was not given away freely. Glover charged the Continental Congress a rate of “one Dollar p[e]r Ton p[e]r Month,” or “6” shillings, which, “for two Months & 21 days” amounted to “208 dollars,” or £32.8.0.¹⁷ He further charged £151.4.0 to “the United Colonies of America” for provisioning and manning the *Hannah*.¹⁸ Four days later, Glover billed the Continental Congress £11.9.1 for blacksmith work on the schooner.¹⁹ George Washington then reminded Nicholson Broughton, the *Hannah’s* captain, that it was Congress that had paid his salary, not Glover, in his official sailing orders.²⁰ Once she had been armed and manned, the *Hannah* set sail for fame and fortune on September 5.²¹

In addition to the aforementioned naval strategy and these lease agreements, the fishing vessels operated on a basis that cannot be classified as privateers. William Falconer, the author of a maritime dictionary in 1769, defined a privateer as a privately-owned vessel, fitted out and armed in wartime, “to cruise against and among the enemy, taking, sinking or burning their shipping” in exchange for shares of any captured prizes.²²

And there is evidence that contemporaries regarded the fleet of armed schooners fitted out at Beverly as a collection of privateers. For example, “Manly, A Favorite New Song in the American Fleet,” composed in Salem, Massachusetts in March 1776, referred to the armed schooner *Lee*, John Manley, Captain, as a “Privateer.”²³ Out of exasperation, Washington even went so far as to refer to the men on the schooners as “our rascally privateersmen” in a letter to his secretary Colonel Joseph Reed.²⁴ Such evidence, combined with the facts that the fishing schooners remained privately owned and the crews (at least) earned some prize shares, has led several naval historians to consider the vessels armed at Beverly to be mere privateers.²⁵ Following this line of reasoning, the refitted ships were profit-driven business ventures, and nothing more.

Having said this, there are several reasons the fishing schooners that were armed for war in late 1775 were not mere privateers. First and foremost, the Continental Congress’s naval strategy was not one of *guerre de course*, as has been mentioned. Such a strategy *would* have typically involved privateers. Moreover, most of the prize money earned from the sale of prizes these schooners took went not to the vessel owners, as it would have done with privateers, but rather to the government to recoup outfitting costs.²⁶ Additionally, the crews on the armed schooners were given wages in addition to prize shares, and these wages were paid by the Continental Congress. The standard practice for privateers in the late eighteenth century, by contrast, involved giving crews food but not wages.²⁷ All of this evidence supports the claim that the collection of fishing vessels armed at Beverly represents the first American warships. This fact should not be overly surprising. There was an established naval tradition of arming fishing

vessels for war in the Atlantic World.²⁸ Moreover, most of the vessels engaged in combat at sea with the British during the Revolution were of smaller design.²⁹

As for the men who manned these fishing vessels-turned-warships, they were commercial fishermen. A significant portion of New England's population had worked in the cod fishing industry prior to the war. Of the 581,100 people living in New England in 1770, 10,000 – or 8% of the adult male working population - found employment in this sector of the economy.³⁰ In 1765, there were 4,405 workers employed in the Massachusetts cod fisheries alone, 8% of the adult working population among the 245,698 people counted in the colony's census.³¹

Fishermen played a variety of important roles in the Revolutionary War. At sea, these maritime laborers armed and manned the first American warships, transported troops across hazardous waters, and manned privateers. Fishermen evacuated George Washington and the Continental Army from Long Island, and they transported those same land forces across the Delaware River prior to the Battle of Trenton. On land, fishermen built seacoast defenses, served in a supporting role at the Battle of Bunker Hill; fought on Long Island, and at Pell's Point during the White Plain's retreat; they fought at Trenton; it was their reconnaissance work that led to the capture of British General John Burgoyne at Saratoga; and later they fought to retake Rhode Island from the British.³²

Fishermen were also exceptionally willing participants in the Revolution. While it was typical for 22-35% of the adult male population among in-land farming towns to take up arms and resist British authority,³³ the foremost fishing port in British mainland North America, Marblehead, Massachusetts, sent 39%.³⁴ In addition, of those men who were positively identified in my recent study as having worked in the commercial cod

fishing industry prior to the Revolution, 82% could be documented as having fought in the war in some capacity.³⁵ Thus, those involved in commercial fishing may have been more likely to participate in the Revolutionary War than any other occupational group in colonial America.

Fishermen were motivated to fight against British authority in large measure due to the Restraining Act that was passed in Parliament in March 1775.³⁶ The Act aimed at restricting New England maritime commerce. It prohibited Yankees from trading with any other part of the world except the British Isles and British West Indies. These restrictions further empowered the British Navy to impress the ships, men, and goods of merchants who violated the legislation. The Restraining Act also posed a total moratorium on New Englanders' access to known fishing grounds after July 20, 1775, but it was published in newspapers throughout the colonies as early as May.³⁷ These restrictions meant unemployment for workers in this vital colonial maritime industry. Charles Watson-Wentworth, better known as Lord Rockingham, a Whig leader during the imperial crisis, believed the Act to be one of the foremost causes of the American Revolution. In a speech in the House of Lords on November 5, 1776, he explained the situation to MPs such as Lord North who were shocked at the level of colonial resistance to that point. Rockingham stated that Yankee “seamen and fishermen being indiscriminately prohibited from the peaceable exercise of their occupations, and declared open enemies, must be *expected*, with a *certain assurance*, to betake themselves to *plunder*, and to *wreak* their *revenge* on the commerce of Great-Britain.”³⁸

Fishermen from Marblehead, Massachusetts, the foremost fishing port in the thirteen British North American colonies on the eve of the Revolution, made the

transition to fighting men during the war.³⁹ The port town employed more men, more vessels, and larger amounts of capital than any other port in the region. If fishermen were going to join the Revolution anywhere in colonial America, they would do so in Marblehead. Indeed, Ashley Bowen, that ubiquitous observer of town events in the fishing port, recorded in his diary on Monday, May 22, 1775, “the fishermen are enlisting quite quick.”⁴⁰ Such a port community therefore represents the best case study for determining fishermen’s military service.

For my dissertation, I compiled a database of fishermen and their participation in the Revolutionary War. I triangulated data from vital records, probate records, merchant ledgers, and military service records in order to isolate and identify individual fishermen and their war records. This process yielded a short list (N=55).⁴¹ However, this is the most reliable list possible. The list also fully details the different types of military service fishermen from Marblehead performed, or did not perform, in the Revolution.

It is possible to gain a fairly exact portrait of the fishermen who fought in the war. They tended to be younger men in their early-to-mid twenties, with little taxable income or property and an average height of 5’7.” Such men commonly re-enlisted for at least one more tour of duty after their initial experience in the war.⁴²

Of the Marblehead fishermen who did military service in the war (N=45), 78% performed some service at sea, including work in local coast guard units, the Massachusetts Navy, the Continental Navy, and privateers. Berths on Continental Naval vessels held out to maritime laborers potential for increased earnings, partly in the form of inflated war-time wages.⁴³ Such war-time inflation of maritime wages was typical

throughout the eighteenth century Atlantic world in those labor markets in which naval authorities and merchants competed for manpower.⁴⁴

Marblehead fishermen such as Richard Tutt, Jr. signed-on for cruises in the American Navy during the Revolution. Tutt was the son of a fisherman. He was born on February 11, 1759, and while records of his fishing exploits have not survived, he is listed in probate records as having lived his life as a fisherman.⁴⁵ Tutt enlisted in the Marblehead regiment at the start of the Revolution, and fought on land until March 20, 1776. At some point after that, he signed-on as seaman on board the “U.S.” brigantine *General Gates*, John Skimmer, captain.⁴⁶

While it might be expected that fishermen would fight at sea, it is perhaps less obvious that such maritime laborers would also fight on land. Yet, 76% of those Marblehead fishermen who fought in the war participated on one occasion or another in some military service on *terra firma*. The local militia regiments that were formed at the start of the conflict provided the first means by which Massachusetts fishermen could supplement or replace the earnings they had lost as a result of the Restraining Act. Such local regiments then became part of the first American Army once Washington assumed command. Some members of the Marblehead regiment left the ranks to board Washington’s schooner fleet at the end of 1775, but others re-enlisted in the regiment when the commander-in-chief re-organized the Continental Army in January, 1776.

Not every fisherman in Marblehead participated in the Revolution. There are several reasons why 18% of Marblehead’s fishermen did not fight in the war. Age played a significant role in these maritime laborers’ decision to not fight. Of those who did not serve (N=10), the average age was 32. This was higher than the average age of those

who did serve (N=45), which was 26. Significantly, cod fishermen were the most physically productive in catching fish, and thereby reached their peak earning potential, between the ages of 25-30.⁴⁷ In other words, those Marblehead fishermen who decided to fight against British authority lost more as a result of the Restraining Act. Those over the age of thirty, by contrast, were usually realizing fewer and fewer profits from the fishing industry. There were also minors such as thirteen-year-old Thomas Ingalls, and fifteen-year-old Thomas Dolliber, whose parents or legal guardians may have prevented them from serving. Sixteen was the standard age young lads were allowed into militias, although necessity ensured that there were boys under sixteen in the armed forces during the war.⁴⁸ Regardless of their reasons, those who chose to publicly support the Crown and Parliament were persecuted and ridden out of fishing ports very early in 1775.⁴⁹

So, what can we conclude from this evidence? Was the military conversion of fishing vessels and fishermen part of a distinctive American way of war? Does the mobilization of the fishing industry represent the roots of an American military-industrial complex? Can we consider the American Revolution to be a total war because of this industrial/commercial mobilization? I would say that the answer to each of these questions is “no.” Other civilizations mobilized fishing vessels and fishermen for war. A government agency was not established to regulate the mobilization of the fishing industry the way agencies were created during the build-up to WWII. And there were civilians who did not participate in the Revolution. What I would say is that the strategy that was conceived in 1775, the pay system and lease agreements that were established, the fishing vessels that were armed and manned, and the officers that were commissioned

collectively constitute the first American Navy. Moreover, the military conversion of the fishing industry during the Revolution underscores the important and necessary relationship between commerce and war. Without the mobilization of the fishing industry, American sea power would have been limited and manpower would have been diminished. These maritime dimensions of the American Revolution represent the major theme of my first book, *Fish and War*.



The Editors
International Journal of Naval History
editors@ijnhonline.org

© Copyright 2009, International Journal of Naval History, All Rights Reserved

¹ William M. Fowler, Jr., *Rebels Under Sail: The American Navy During the Revolution* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 25-43.

² Nathan Miller, *Sea of Glory: A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Charleston, South Carolina: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1974), 41. Also, see Raymond G. O'Connor, *Origins of the American Navy: Sea Power in the Colonies and the New Nation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 15; and Frank C. Mevers, "Naval Policy of the Continental Congress," in *Maritime Dimensions of the American Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: Naval History Division, Department of the Navy, 1977), 3.

³ O'Connor, *Origins of the American Navy*, 14; Fowler, Jr., *Rebels Under Sail*, 29; Miller, *Sea of Glory*, 60-61; George Athan Billias, *General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960), 73; William Bell Clark, *George Washington's Navy: Being An Account of his Excellency's Fleet in New England* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 3; Samuel Eliot Morison, *John Paul Jones, A Sailor's Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959), 35; and Dudley W. Knox, *Naval Genius of George Washington* (Boston: Printed by the Riverside Press for Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932), 8.

⁴ Chester Hearn credits Washington and John Glover, a Marblehead fish merchant, with the idea. Chester G. Hearn, *George Washington's Schooners: The First American Navy* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 10. For his part, Vincent Dowdell, Jr., claims Marblehead merchants in general helped the commander-in-chief develop the idea. Vincent Dowdell, Jr., "The Birth of the American Navy," *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, LXXXI (November, 1955), 1251-1257.

⁵ Mevers, "Naval Policy of the Continental Congress." Also, see John B. Hattendorf, "Americans and Warfare at Sea, 1775-1783," unpublished manuscript, 12-14. I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy of this paper.

⁶ Hearn, *George Washington's Schooners*.

⁷ Mevers' dismissive view is typical on this score: "It is doubtful that Washington intended the squadron to do any more than harass, and it is probably that by this direct action he was demonstrating to Congress his belief in the possibilities of action at sea through a larger maritime force." Mevers, "Naval Policy of the Continental Congress," 3.

⁸ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (New York: Penguin Books, reprint, 1986, orig. pub. 1776), 104-106.

⁹ "John Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Marblehead," Philadelphia, June 7, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 628-629.

¹⁰ "Journal of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts," Watertown, June 20, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 724. Emphasis my own. O'Connor contends "this proposal was never implemented." O'Connor, *Origins of the American Navy*, 14. But, he has not considered the conversion of fishing vessels.

¹¹ *Guerre de course* is customarily equated with privateering. See, Gardiner, ed., *Navies and the American Revolution, 1775-1783*, 66-69; Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 22-23; and Albion and Pope, *Sea Lanes In Wartime*, 25-26. Mevers argues that the first American naval strategy "relied heavily on privateers to harass British vessels," rather than to capture or destroy British seapower. Mevers, "Naval Policy of the Continental Congress," 5. For a discussion of *guerre de escadre*, using large warships to fight fleet engagements against enemy fleets, see Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power* (New York: Free Press, 1991), xi. Hagan counters Alfred T. Mahan's argument that American sea power was built on a strategy of *guerre de escadre*. For Hagan, American sea power has been predicated upon *guerre de course*, prosecuted first in the Revolutionary War. I agree with Hagan that smaller vessels have played an important, even formative, role in the history of American sea power. We part ways in defining the naval strategy Americans pursued in the Revolution as *guerre de course*. Commerce-raiding was only part of the strategy.

¹² *JCC*, Vol. 2, 189.

¹³ "Journal of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts," Watertown, June 20, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 724. Glover had been assigned to guard Washington's headquarters and the Provincial Congress at Watertown early in 1775. For more on Glover, see Billias, *General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners*. Also, see the biographical information compiled in Smith, ed., *The Journals of Ashley Bowen (1728-1813)*, Vol. 2, 657. At some point he became involved in the search for vessels to convert into warships, although no official document has survived to date Glover's assignment. The Provincial Congress was certainly aware very early on of Glover and his position of authority in the foremost commercial fishing port in New England, and they had relied on him in the past. See, for example, "Minutes of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety," Cambridge, April 27, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 229. The Committee, which was affiliated with the Provincial Congress, ordered "That Colonel John Glover" use his authority in Marblehead "for the prevention of Intelligence" leaking to the British patrol vessels in the port's harbor.

¹⁴ The *Hannah* is described in subsequent sections. The *Franklin*, *Hancock*, *Lee*, and *Warren* were owned by, respectively, Archibald Selman, Thomas Grant, Thomas Stevens, and John Twisden, all Marblehead fish merchants. The *Hancock* was described during the Revolution as "Seventy two Tuns; Taken up for the Service of the united Colonies of America...worth Three Hundred Thirty one pounds Six Shillings & Eight pence." "Appraisal of the *Speedwell* [renamed *Hancock*]," Beverly, October 10, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 2, 387. At the same time, the *Franklin* was described as "Sixty Tuns; Taken up for the Service of the united Colonies of America...worth three Hundred pounds three Shillings and Eight pence." "Appraisal of the *Eliza* [renamed *Franklin*]," Beverly, October 10, 1775, in *ibid.* The *Lee* was described as "Seventy four Tuns; taken up for the Service of the united Colonies of America...worth three Hundred and fifteen pounds Eight Shillings." "Appraisal of the *Two Brothers* [renamed *Lee*]," Beverly, October 12, 1775, in *ibid.*, 412. The *Warren* was described as "Sixty four Tuns; taken up for the Service of the united Colonies in America...worth three Hundred & forty pounds ten Shillings." "Appraisal of the *Hawk* [renamed *Warren*]," Beverly, October 12, 1775, in *ibid.*, 412-413. According to the later testimony of a Revolutionary War pensioner, the *Franklin* and the *Hancock* "were Fishing Schooners & had no Bulwarks more than common vessels except Nettings with which they were accustomed to put their clothes in time of Action." Cited in Smith and Knight, "In Troubled Waters," 27. All except the *Hannah* were re-named, in patriotic fervor, after revolutionary leaders. Washington and his military secretary, Colonel Joseph Reed, mistakenly referred to the *Hancock* as *Lynch* in late 1775. For a discussion of these clerical errors, see Billias, *General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners*, 216, footnote #19. Such errors led later historians to make the same mistake. See, Howe, *Beverly Privateers In The American Revolution*, 325.

It is not known precisely when the *Franklin*, *Hancock*, *Lee*, and *Warren* were armed and officially taken under Washington's command through Glover. Most scholars assume that the appraisal dates of October 10 and 12 represent the commission dates. See, Billias, *General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners*, 78, 82. However, Reed's letter described below in footnote #143 disputes these October dates. It is probable that the October appraisals were ordered after the vessels had already been secured in Beverly's harbor. Such was the case when the British Navy captured the ship *Charming Peggy* on July 15, 1775 and sent her into Boston, where the "Two Thousand one hundred & seventy three Barrels of Flour" could be confiscated for the Army. British General Thomas Gage then hired four local merchants to appraise the flour on August 19, in order to reimburse the flour's owners. The four merchants submitted their appraisal two days later, more than a month after the ship's capture. "General Thomas Gage to Four Boston Merchants," Boston, August 19, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 1180.

¹⁵ John Glover's Colony Ledger, MDHS, item #729½. There has been a disagreement about the schooner's size. Fowler describes the *Hannah* as "a typical New England fishing schooner of about seventy tons." Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 29. Hearn, Billias, and Clark follow Glover's Colony Ledger in listing her at "seventy-eight tons." Hearn, *George Washington's Schooners*, 10; Billias, *General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners*, 74; and Clark, *George Washington's Navy*, 3. Philip C. F. Smith and Russell W. Knight have questioned the use of seventy-eight tons, preferring the much smaller figure of forty-five tons. Philip C. F. Smith and Russell W. Knight, "In Troubled Waters: The Elusive Schooner *Hannah*," *The American Neptune*, Vol. 30, No. 2, (April, 1970), 15, 22, Appendix II, 41. They base their argument for forty-five tons chiefly on the fact that the terms of Glover's lease add up to around £63, rather than his account of £32.8.0. Here, Glover's words pertaining to his own vessel in his own ledger are taken at face value, and his math skills are discounted.

¹⁶ Smith and Knight, "In Troubled Waters," Appendix II, 41-43.

¹⁷ John Glover's Colony Ledger, MDHS, item #729½. While the amount and the form of payment varied from vessel to vessel, and colony to colony, the rate "per ton per month" was standard. See, for example, "Minutes of the Connecticut Council of Safety," Lebanon, August 3, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 1054; and "Stephen Moylan and Colonel John Glover to George Washington," Salem, October 9, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 2, 368.

¹⁸ John Glover's Colony Ledger, MDHS, item #729½.

¹⁹ Ebenezer Foster's blacksmith bill, MDHS, item #5786. According to revolutionary leaders in Connecticut, the materials used to convert a trade ship to a warship in 1775 included "sails, rigging, and furniture, and also all proper and necessary ship-stores and provisions, and...the necessary cannon, swivels, small arms, pistols, shot, powder, &c." "Minutes of the Connecticut Council of Safety," Lebanon, August 3, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 1053.

²⁰ Washington took the occasion to remind Captain Nicholson Broughton that, as "a Captain in the Army of the United Colonies of North America," Broughton personally fell under the commander-in-chief's authority. Moreover, as "the schooner *Hannah*" had been "fitted out & equipped with Arms, Ammunition and Provisions at the *Continental Expense*," Broughton was doubly beholden to Washington. See "George Washington's Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton," September 2, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 1287, emphasis my own. Broughton had been commissioned a captain in Colonel John Glover's regiment on May 19, 1775. *Ibid.*, 1289n.

On October 4, 1775, Washington assigned Stephen Moylan, the Muster Master General, to assist Glover in arming vessels for war. Both men were to report either to Colonel Joseph Reed, Washington's military secretary, or to the commander-in-chief directly. "Colonel Joseph Reed to Colonel John Glover," Head Quarters, Cambridge, October 4, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 2, 289-290; and "Colonel Joseph Reed to Colonel John Glover and Stephen Moylan," Camp at Cambridge, October 4, 1775, in *ibid.*, 290. The two men reported to Washington on October 9, 1775 that the terms of the contracts they had negotiated with vessel-owning merchants included the contentious fact that merchants were required "they shall put their vessels in the same good order & Condition which they would be obliged to do, were they hired to take in a Cargo for the West Indies or elsewhere." For their part, Glover and Moylan agreed "that what extra expense may accrue from the nature of their present employment must be a public Charge." The vessel owners wanted any extra sails, over and above "three sails, Mainsail, foresail, & jib...sufficient for the Voyages they usually Make," to be "a public Charge." "Stephen Moylan and Colonel John Glover to George Washington," Salem, October 9, 1775, in *ibid.*, 368.

²¹ The *Hannah* is widely touted as the first armed vessel fitted out in the service of the United States. See, Hearn, *George Washington's Schooners*, 10; Billias, *General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners*, 73; Clark, *George Washington's Navy*, 3; *The American Navies of the Revolutionary War*, 22; Smith and Knight, "In Troubled Waters," 29-30; and Knox, *The Naval Genius of George Washington*, 8. Fowler points to earlier "naval actions" off Cape Cod in Buzzards Bay as the genesis of America's naval history. Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*, 26. The owners of Washington's schooners do not seem to have received prize shares. One-third of the value of the captured vessel and its cargo, whether it was a commercial or a military prize, went to the crew, while two-thirds went to the Continental Congress in order to repay the cost of outfitting and manning the schooners. Washington did not make the distinction between commercial and military prizes that the Continental Congress later did. "George Washington's Instructions to Captain Nicholson Broughton," September 2, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 1, 1288.

²² William Falconer, *A New Universal Dictionary of the Marine* (London, 1769), 353. Gardiner defines privateers as "free-enterprise warships, armed, crewed and paid for by merchants who gambled on the dividend of a valuable capture." Gardiner, ed., *Navies and the American Revolution, 1775-1783*, 66. According to Albion and Pope: "profits were the *raison d'être* of privateers." Albion and Pope, *Sea Lanes In Wartime*, 23-24. Beverly merchants printed and made public the following handbill on September 7, 1776: "Now fitting for a Privateer, In the harbor of Beverly, the Brigantine *Washington*.... Any Seaman or Landsman that has an inclination to make their Fortunes in a few months may have an opportunity by applying to John Dyson." Cited in Howe, *Beverly Privateers in the American Revolution*, 338, footnote #2. Boston merchants printed a similar advertisement in the local newspaper on November 13, 1780. "An Invitation to all brave Seamen and Marines, who have an inclination to serve their country and make their Fortunes" was the title of the ad. The Boston merchants shrewdly added that those who signed on for a cruise with the privateer would receive "that excellent Liquor called Grog, which is allowed by all true seamen to be the Liquor of Life." *Boston Gazette*, November 13, 1780.

²³ *Manly. A favorite new song, in the American fleet. Most humbly addressed to all the jolly tars who are fighting for the rights and liberties of America. By a sailor.* (Salem, MA: Printed and sold by E. Russell, upper end of Main-Street, 1776), Early American Imprints, 1st Series, Evans #43057. Captain Manley's surname may have been deliberately misspelled in the song-title in order to rally men for war.

²⁴ "George Washington to Colonel Joseph Reed," Camp at Cambridge, November 20, 1775, *NDAR*, Vol. 2, 1082.

²⁵ Gardiner references the "handful of Marblehead fishing schooners, armed with four or six tine 4pdrs and 2 pdrs," in his discussion of "the privateering war," or *guerre de course*. He argues that these schooners do not represent "the beginnings of a national navy," as "it was conceived with a specific raiding purpose in mind." Gardiner, ed., *Navies and the American Revolution, 1775-1783*, 66-67. Thus, the schooners were nothing more than commerce raiders. Syrett similarly refers to Washington's schooner fleet as "the American cruiser offensive." Syrett, "Defeat at Sea," 16. Also, see Howe, *Beverly Privateers In The American Revolution*.

²⁶ On November 25, 1775, the Continental Congress established formal rules regarding prize shares for privateers, colony/state naval vessels, and Continental Naval vessels. The owners of privateers were to get all of the prize money associated with their captures, military or commercial. The colony/state was to get two-thirds of the prize money, and the crew the remainder, for their vessels. This same distribution applied to Continental Naval vessels, with the Continental Congress getting two-thirds of the prize shares. If, on the other hand, "the Capture be a Vessel of War," then in the case of the colony/state or the Congress, the captors received one-half of the prizes. *NDAR*, Vol. 2, 1133.

²⁷ Albion and Pope, *Sea Lanes In Wartime*, 23.

²⁸ The Spanish Armada, which remains one of the most famous flotillas in all of recorded history, included Basque, Portuguese, and Spanish fishing vessels. Michael Barkham, "Spanish Ships and Shipping," in M.J. Rodríguez-Salgedo, ed., *Armada, 1588-1988* (London: Penguin Books in association with the National Maritime Museum, 1988), 151-163. England's Rump Parliament relied upon "shallops and ketches," vessels primarily used to catch fish, in addition to ships of the line, to defend its newfound sovereignty from Royalists at home and abroad. Bernard Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet and the English Revolution, 1648-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 4.

²⁹ See, Hearn, *Washington's Schooners*; and Fowler, *Rebels Under Sail*.

³⁰ For the number of workers, see Robert G. Albion, William A. Baker and Benjamin W. Labaree, *New England and the Sea* (Mystic, Connecticut: Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., 1972), 29-30. One

contemporary estimate placed the number of workers “employ’d in the Cod fishery” as high as 13,000. *Boston Evening Post*, January 20, 1766. For the population figure, see McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*, 103, Table 5.1. The 8% calculation was made following Vicker’s method of first factoring a 55% male population and then factoring a 40% demographic of men aged 15-45: “the male working population.” Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 194n.

³¹ For the size of the workforce, see Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, Report on the State of the Cod Fisheries, 1791, *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation*, I:13, Table 2. For the population figure, see Robert V. Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776: A Survey of Census Data* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1975), 79.

³² For more on these military accomplishments, see George Athan Billias, *General John Glover and His Marblehead Mariners* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1960); and Christopher P. Magra, “Soldiers...Bred to the Sea’: Maritime Marblehead, Massachusetts and the Origins and Progress of the American Revolution,” *New England Quarterly*, Vol. LXXVIII, No. 4, (December 2004), 531-562. Billias presents a traditional regimental history that focuses on Glover’s leadership. Billias notes that many of the Marbleheaders may have been fishermen, but he neither verifies this assertion nor does he provide a comprehensive analysis of the commercial fishing industry’s military conversion.

³³ Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 389-390.

³⁴ Walter Leslie Sargent, “Answering the Call to Arms: The Social Composition of the Revolutionary Soldiers of Massachusetts, 1775-1783.” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2004), 226, Table 6.5, 228, Table 6.8, 229, Figure 6.9, Table 6.10, 232, Table 6.12; and William Arthur Baller, “Military mobilization during the American Revolution in Marblehead and Worcester, Massachusetts.” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark University, 1994), 20, 27-28, 366, Figure 4, 367, Figure 5. Neither Sargent nor Baller examine the occupational identities of Revolutionary soldiers. Nor do they look at how the nature of work in the commercial fishing industry shaped military experience. And they do not fully probe the wartime mobilization of labor and capital in the fishing industry.

³⁵ Christopher Paul Magra, “The New England Cod Fishing Industry and Maritime Dimensions of the American Revolution,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2006), 271.

³⁶ R.C. Simmons and P.D.G. Thomas, eds., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments respecting North America, 1754-1783*, Vol. 5, (Millwood, NY: Kraus International Publications, 1985), 584. The twenty-one dissenters included four dukes, a marquess, seven earls, three viscounts, and six barons. *Ibid.*, 589. The Act was previously approved by the Commons on February 28, 1775, by a vote of 97 to 24. *Ibid.*, 480.

³⁷ *The Newport Mercury*, 5-8-1775; and *Virginia Gazette*, 18 May 1775.

³⁸ *The Norwich Packet and the Connecticut, Massachusetts, New-Hampshire, and Rhode-Island Weekly Advertiser*, April 7-14, 1776. Emphasis in the original.

³⁹ See, Magra, “Soldiers...Bred to the Sea’,” 538-539.

⁴⁰ Smith, ed., *The Journals of Ashley Bowen (1728-1813)*, Vol. 2, 440.

⁴¹ To date, the most comprehensive study of Revolutionary soldier’s pre-war occupational identities relies on a data set of 43 men. Edward C. Papenfuse and Gregory A. Stiverson, “General Smallwood’s Recruits: The Peacetime Career of the Revolutionary War Private,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 30, No. 1 (January, 1973), 117-132.

⁴² Sargent, “Answering the Call to Arms,” 226, Table 6.5, 228, Table 6.8, 229, Figure 6.9, Table 6.10, 232, Table 6.12; and Baller, “Military mobilization during the American Revolution in Marblehead and Worcester, Massachusetts,” 20, 27-28, 366, Figure 4, 367, Figure 5. For the typical town mobilization percentages outside Marblehead, see Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 389-390.

⁴³ Compare the peacetime wages listed in Schooner *Molly*, 1751-57, Box 7, Folder 10, Timothy Orne Shipping Papers, JDPL; and Schooner *Polly*, 1771-1776, Box 1, Folder 4, Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758-1817, JDPL, with the wartime wages listed in “Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies,” Philadelphia, November 28, 1775, in *NDAR*, Vol. 2, 1178.

⁴⁴ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 121-124. Vickers maintains that prior to the Revolution merchant mariners in Salem were not given higher wages during wartimes, as opposed to their counterparts in England. This contrast, he believes, was due principally to the fact that the British Navy sailed out of England each year and frequently pressed workers from the merchant marine in local, not colonial, ports. Daniel Vickers, *Young*

Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers In the Age of Sail (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 81-82.

⁴⁵ *EVREC*, Vol. 1, 527; and *MPR*.

⁴⁶ *MSSRW*, Vol. 16, 201.

⁴⁷ Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 178-180, esp. Figure 2.

⁴⁸ Soldiers were also supposed to be taller than 5'2." Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence*, 391.

⁴⁹ See the first-hand accounts described in "Journal of Rev. Joshua Wingate Weeks, Loyalist Rector of St. Michael's Church, Marblehead, 1778-1779," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, Vol. 52, (Salem, MA: Essex Institute Press, 1916), 1-16, 161-176, 197-208, 345-356; and "Essex County Loyalists," *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, Vol. 43, (Salem, MA: Essex Institute Press, 1907), 289-316.