Who Was Jack Tar?: Aspects of the Social History of Boston, Massachusetts Seamen, 1700-1770

Clark Joseph Strickland
College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd

Part of the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation
https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-v75p-nz66

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
WHO WAS JACK TAR?
ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY
OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS SEAMEN,
1700 - 1770

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Clark J. Strickland
1972
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Clark J. Strickland
Author

Approved, July 1972

Richard Maxwell Brown
Philip J. Funigiello
John E. Selby
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I. NO MAN WILL BE A SAILOR</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. JACK TAR AS LABORER</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. DANGERS OF A LIFE AT SEA</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV. THE SAILOR ASHORE</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Jack Tar, the merchant seaman, played an important part in the social and economic life of all of the English colonies, especially in Massachusetts. But though they were a vital part of the work force, seamen were not thought well of in the eighteenth century.

Seamen were considered to be wards of the Admiralty Court. They had few rights while at sea; they were expected to obey unquestioningly the commands of the ship's officers. Wages were somewhat higher than those in land-based occupations, but not high enough to offset the dangers of a life at sea.

Ocean travel in the eighteenth century was very unsafe. Deaths from drowning, fire, freezing, famine, and shipwreck were common; disease was rampant; attacks from pirates and privateers could be expected in southern waters. Except for positions of command, the merchant service was not a desirable occupation.

Workers in an undesirable industry generally form the lower ranks of society. This was true in the case of merchant seamen, and their behavior ashore convinced contemporaries that sailors were the dregs of society. Jack Tar was involved in large numbers of paternity suits, larcenies, brawls, and riots.

Sailors, who formed a permanent class of propertyless laborers in colonial America, were on the bottom of the social scale, and they often indicated by their social behavior that they belonged there. Advancement to command was unlikely unless the sailor had connections with a shipowner and was literate. The merchant sailor was valued as an important labor resource, but he was not respected as a man.
WHO WAS JACK TAR?
ASPECTS OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY
OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS SEAMEN,
1700 - 1770
CHAPTER I

NO MAN WILL BE A SAILOR...

No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail: for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned. A man in a jail has more room, better food and commonly better company.

- Dr. Johnson

Sea life in the eighteenth century was far from being easy. In general, the floating population consisted of people who for one reason or another were unable or unwilling to live the more comfortable and quiet shore life. Seafaring men throughout the colonial period comprised the lower echelons of the labor force and held down the bottom of the social scale as well. Boston, as the entrepôt of New England and much of North America, was a stopping place for many of the Atlantic's sailors.

Boston, the largest town in America until the middle of the eighteenth century, probably had the largest number of sailors of any of the colonial ports. One estimate of the number of sailors in all of the colonies at the middle of the century is thirty-three thousand. Any estimate of the numbers of
seamen must border on the realm of "educated guessing" since the maritime population was so fluid. The Council of Trade and Plantations reported that an average of 3,493 seamen aboard 492 ships cleared Boston and Salem during the three years ending in June 1717. Most of these men were not residents of Boston, but they did play an important part in the social and economic life of the town when they were in port. The indigenous seagoing population may be gauged from a report of 1721 which counted 190 ships of Massachusetts registry manned by eleven hundred seamen, a large proportion of which must have been Boston people. Fifteen years later, Governor Jonathan Belcher estimated that there were three thousand seafaring men in the whole province.

Boston's seagoing population, then, included more than those who called Boston home port. Foreigners were common. And since voyages in the eighteenth century were such protracted affairs, a large proportion of Boston's seamen at any given time was at sea. "Boston's seamen" must therefore refer to seamen who came ashore and participated in the life of the town if only for a few days or a week. There is virtually no way to distinguish between a local man and one who was simply in the area on a lay-over. But in any case, this distinction is an artificial one since
the maritime population was fluid, geographically mobile, and international in character.

Carl Bridenbaugh speaks of a nautical proletariat: "Although they belonged to a depressed and often very badly treated class, which spent most of its time out of town, this group extended a profound influence on the life of every city." 7 Seamen were very visible in colonial society because many of them were loud and boisterous. It may well have been that Boston at the opening of the eighteenth century "had a homogeneous population, a unified code of ethics, a simple government and simple manners characteristic of a large town rather than of a city." 8 But seamen did not fit into this neat little package; their aberrant manners and morals placed them at odds with righteous landmen.

The common seaman seems not to have changed much in the three-quarters of a century under consideration. In 1709, Cotton Mather wrote a pamphlet entitled The Sailour's Companion & Counsellor. 9 In it, he exhorted the master to maintain piety aboard his ship and to demand strict obedience. 10 He suggested that most sailors were in great danger of being shipwrecked on that "great voyage for the Heavenly World." Drunkenness was one of the most common scourges of seamen: "Everytime the Sailor makes himself drunk,
the devil keel-hauls him." His advice to seamen addicted to swearing is also in nautical terms. "My brother, let thy Tongue be Well hung as with the Strongest Rudder-Irons." Sodomites caused God to sink ships and whores made sailors become (or remain) fools and their bones to rot. All in all, seamen appear to be rather unsavory characters. And while it must be admitted that Mather was a rather jaundiced judge of men, there was certainly a core of fact and reality in his appraisal.

The position of sailors in society did not improve during the eighteenth century, for at the end of that period the seaman is shown to have some of the same anti-social and undesirable traits. In the October 1789 procession honoring George Washington, the Marine Society and sea captains then in Boston marched at the head of the line in company with the clergy and local functionaries. Then came forty-six groups of tradesmen arranged alphabetically, each marching under its own standard. Finally, as an afterthought, were included seamen. It was noted that the Marine Society was expected to appoint some of its members to maintain some semblance of order among the boisterous tars. Clearly, the deckhand or topman was not a well-respected citizen in 1789; his position had not improved from the time of Mather's comments in 1709.
Little attention has been paid to the social history of the eighteenth century seaman. The shoals of local histories of New England towns often mention some of the more prominent captains, but one must use imagination to people their ships. Samuel Eliot Morison describes the top strata of Massachusetts as having been composed for the most part of merchants and successful sea captains. Rising merchant commanders and mates are placed in the middle class. But it is not at all clear that, as Morison claims, the common seamen were young boys from the farming regions gone to sea for romance, adventure, and financial reward. Jesse Lemisch focuses on the rank and file sailor in New York. He is concerned with the seaman as a revolutionary agitator and sees Jack Tar and his grievances as one of the factors which led to rebellion. Save for this one exception, writing on the sea service has been popular or polite, or both.

A definition of terms is in order before the discussion proceeds further. "Sailor" and "seaman" are used interchangeably here. Often, when it is necessary to differentiate between merchant and military personnel, other writers have used "sailor" to connote the latter. However, since this investigation is confined for the most part to the merchant marine,
sailor and seaman are equivalent; differentiation is explicit as the occasion warrants. "Mariner" in the eighteenth century often, but not always referred to the master of a vessel. That is, the "mariner" was one who possessed the knowledge of navigation and seamanship necessary to bring a ship safely to port. "Mariner" in this paper will refer to masters of vessels, those called "captain" when addressed individually. The adjective "seafaring" and Jack Tar are not used in connection with master. The crew is the non-officer portion of those being paid for working the ship. The "foremast hands" are the crew. The "ship's company" consists of all employees of the owners aboard the vessel. "Deckhand" and "topman" are terms denoting specific duties aboard the vessel. "Able" and "common" describe two paygrades and levels of expertise of seamen. "Ship" is used as a generic term interchangeably with "vessel" and does not suggest square rigging.
CHAPTER II
JACK TAR AS LABORER

Perhaps the most important reason for the low status of seamen as a group was the nature of their relationship to the whole of the economic structure of Massachusetts. As an uncertain, dangerous, and seasonal occupation, sailing as a crewman aboard a merchant vessel was less desirable than almost any other civilian occupation. Therefore, certain types of people were more likely to be found in merchant crews rather than in regular land-based occupations. Town ordinances and provincial statutes recognized that the sailor on shore leave was likely to be a problem for the town; it was thought that seamen were a special class of laborers, men requiring explicit guidelines as to what was acceptable behavior.

Colonial America was afflicted by a shortage of laborers. Consequently, wages were high in all occupations, at least when compared with European pay scales. John Oxenford, a customs official, in writing a treatise on the advantages to English merchants of buying American-built ships went so far as to suggest that rather than
hiring an American crew, it would be more economical to pay a full crew of men hired in England at the English pay scale two months' wages for a non-working passage to America. There they would man the new ship and sail her to the West Indies and then to England.¹

Expansion of the colonial merchant fleet ate up much of the merchants' already scanty capital.² The wages of the ship's company represented the largest single operating expense of a sailing vessel. The continuing lack of capital in the colonies placed a ceiling on the amount of money which owners would be able to pay as wages. This factor, which had the effect of holding wages down, was countered by a large demand for labor in the colonies which could be met only incompletely by the available supply, an imbalance which forced wages up. The net outcome of this dynamic, the conditions of which remained relatively static throughout the eighteenth century, was to maintain a stable, although rather high, level of wages.

English wages for officers and masters did not vary much throughout the period. Masters' wages were stable at £6 per month on all but the largest and smallest ships.³ The mates' wages ranged from about fifty to fifty-five shillings per month if the ship had but one mate, seventy to one hundred shillings per month for the chief mate of larger ships, and forty
to sixty shillings for junior officers on these ships. The differentiation in wages of mates over the eighteenth century was due to the relative tranquility or turmoil of Europe as well as to the size of the vessel. John Oxenford expected that with an English crew the cost per month of manning a ship of three hundred tons would be £40 6s. That is, £6 for the captain, £9 to be divided among three mates, and twenty-three shillings for each of twenty-two sailors.  

The twenty-three shilling wage was approximately that which Ralph Davis in The Rise of the English Shipping Industry has found to be the common peacetime rate. Seamen's wages showed far more fluctuation in times of war than did those of masters and mates. During the War of Spanish Succession, wages rose from about twenty-four shillings to forty-five and fifty shillings per month by 1708. In 1712, they fell to the peacetime level again. Naval mobilization in the 1740s pushed wages up to the fifty shilling mark. An attempt to stabilize wages by law at thirty-five shillings per month was unsuccessful. By the beginning of the Seven Years' War, wages had increased to seventy shillings per month. These fluctuations were due to a number of factors connected with eighteenth century warfare. Certainly, contraction of the labor supply by a vigorous impressment program accounted for much of the rise. But not least
important was the fear of attack from privateers. Seafaring was hazardous enough in peacetime; in time of war it became even less desirable a profession, and wages reflected the increased inducements necessary to entice men to risk capture and death.

The colonial wage structure, governed by a different set of factors, was not so greatly affected by the conditions of war or peace. Throughout the eighteenth century, the merchant seaman signing on for a voyage originating in Boston could expect to be paid something above £2 per month. Although pirates or enemy privateers might sometimes make voyages to the West Indies rather unsafe, there was no threat comparable to the commerce raiders of the English Channel or the Mediterranean corsairs. The shortage of labor was the operative factor in keeping wages at a high level. In times of war, colonial wages might be pushed to impossible heights for a short period of time. The arrival of a squadron of His Majesty's warships was the cause of this problem, for the fear of being pressed into service aboard a warship drove most seamen out of the town or into hiding, lowering the short supply of labor still more. In 1746, Boston applied for a rebate of provincial taxes since the profits from trade had been sharply curtailed by a rise in crew costs due to the presence of a number of warships in the harbor.
The differential between English and American pay scales shows up clearly in the records of the Boston Vice-Admiralty Court. Seamen who sued to obtain unpaid wages for voyages originating in London received almost 50 per cent less than those who signed on in the province. American captains often were paid less than the usual $6 English master's wage; the captain's pay was generally a function of the size of his vessel, and colonial ships were smaller on the average than the English ships which entered Boston.

While wages were quite high, the nature of the industry made work seasonal in northern ports. When Boston Harbor was closed because of ice, as it sometimes was, seamen who were not under contract could find no work aboard ships. Sailors were then on the street and they found that their funds sometimes ran low before they could find another berth.

Wage agreements were often made on printed forms called "ship's articles." The articles would contain the name, date of employment, and wage of each hand signed on. Also included were the destination of the ship and each intermediate port. Some agreements were made for work till the third or fourth port of lading. When a sailor signed the ship's articles, he had bound himself in a legal contract, with a whole body of law
relating to the various rights and duties of the parties involved. If the contract were verbal, as it sometimes was, seamen could generally get the highest wages offered during the past three months at the port of shipment. Seamen were not entitled to more than half of their wages before the ship reached the final destination. The crew was often paid of in depreciated colonial currency, an arrangement most advantageous to the master who, as disbursing agent for the owners, had generally received his funds in pounds sterling. But Jack Tar was happy to have any cash at all, though he may have grumbled on the way to the nearest tavern.

Americans have proudly incorporated into their store of national myths the daring and ability of their men of the sea. Generally, only the masters of some of the more famous vessels are considered. Actually, one researcher maintains that the crews of American ships were more efficient than their European counterparts. He offers as proof the fact that American crews were smaller than European ship's companies on vessels of similar size. In the middle of the eighteenth century, five or six men were needed to reef the topsails of a square riged ship, making a total of nine to twelve men before the mast. At this time, there was no man-driving policy such as would be found later when crews
on American ships were not native. However, facts
other than efficiency can account for the smaller crew
size. The first is that American ships had superior
rigging and spars which were lighter and stronger and
therefore required fewer men to handle them.\(^\text{19}\)
Also, with the shortage of manpower, captains might be more
inclined to sail an undermanned ship than to delay in
port while trying to complete the crew. Vessels in the
trade between New England and the West Indies generally
had ship's companies numbering from nine to twelve men.\(^\text{20}\)
Most of the ships in this trade were sloops or schooners,
whose fore-and-aft rig could be worked from the deck
and required fewer hands. The crew was expected to
assist in unloading and loading the ship while in the
West Indies. The crew had the privilege of shipping a
limited amount of cargo on their own accounts free of
charge. Mate's wages on these voyages were not much
higher than those of the foremast hands, but he was
given much greater cargo privileges.\(^\text{21}\) This was another
means whereby the hard pressed owners could minimize
expenditures for manning their ships.

Political considerations also helped determine
the amount of money available to be paid as wages.
The middle of the eighteenth century was a difficult
time for the New England maritime population. The
Molasses Act of 1734 cut into the trade of most Boston
merchants. When the business community experienced problems, tremors were felt all through the town. Ship construction orders dropped from forty per year in the Boston area to about twenty per year. One historian estimates that business connected with the sea was down by two-thirds after the passage of this act. A petition of the inhabitants of Boston to Governor Belcher in 1735 sought an end to the impost and other taxes since the trade of the town was so depressed. The Molasses Act had crippled trade with the West Indies and the price of Boston's export to that area, cod, had dropped drastically. By the 1740s, orders for new ships from Boston numbered only two per year. Boston asked for a lowering of taxes again in 1742. The cod trade had moved to Salem, Marblehead, and other outports. Molasses trade vessels were laid up and idle since the raw materials of rum were being distilled in the islands. The London trade of Boston was said to be worse than during the hard times five years before, and the city had lost population. By 1750, a traveller would note, "The trade of Boston Seems to be upon the decline in my Opinion, for I do not see Any Thing they can call a Staple amongst them Save Ship Building...." On occasion, British policy was felt directly by seamen. Besides the general damper put on trade by the Navigation Acts, certain provisions affected the
personal rights of sailors. The privilege of carrying free cargo was nowhere recognized by law. Consequently, these items and, of course, the personal effects of seamen were not included in the manifest of cargo carried. Since the customs officials received a share of the goods confiscated, they were rather careful about discovering items not included in the manifests. Even if no contraband could be found, the seamen's private stores and small lots of cargo were liable to be seized. Since the sailor could not afford the costly litigation to recover his goods, confiscation was tantamount to the loss of those goods, investment as well as anticipated profit. 27

Admiralty Court proceedings in which seamen instituted suits were concerned mostly with wage disputes. There were, however, just grounds for refusal to pay wages. Failure to work, or to do one's job properly, might result in a cut in wages. Desertion was treated as a breach of a contract to complete the whole voyage. 28 If a ship sank, no wages could be claimed since according to the Law of Oléron, the international maritime code, the freight was mother to the wages. 29 It was reasoned that Jack Tar would be more likely to lend one hand for the safety of the ship if he had a financial stake in seeing her through a crisis. But a fundamental lack of respect for services rendered and
an insensitivity to the seaman's plight are evidenced by this principle.

Another ground for non-payment of wages was that seamen on a vessel trading with an enemy were guilty of a criminal act and should not receive financial reward for illegal activity.\textsuperscript{30} Seamen were very cautious about trading illegally, for they might have little to gain and some months' wages to lose. On the other hand, the means of seamen's preventing such illegal commerce were limited to persuasion, for the essence of maritime law as it related to common seamen was obedience, and a strike at sea was mutiny. The captain was empowered to use whatever force he considered necessary to suppress it. Still, there are some cases of reluctance to perform duties on a vessel which was not sailing according to the plans formalized in the ship's articles.\textsuperscript{31} During the Boston smallpox epidemic of 1721, the crews of wood sloops which supplied the city refused to sail to the wharves in town. The selectmen, realizing that the lack of wood for cooking and heating posed a serious problem, offered to have the sloops sailed by townsmen from Castle Island to the town, unloaded, and returned to Castle Island.\textsuperscript{32}

Massachusetts passed a number of laws which dealt specifically with seamen. For example, an act of 1761, reprinted in the public press, released military
It is clear that in this case the threat to the province's security from a lack of sailors led to action to relieve them in some measure from responsibility for indebtedness. The law required full payment upon completion of the enlistment period; this was safe to do since being at sea was being in the custody of the captain. A similar statute passed two years later applied to merchant vessels. The inevitable result of such actions was a reluctance to extend credit to the seaman out of fear that he might be "on articles." Remaining ashore to escape sailing by use of this ruse or others must have been common practice before the passage of these laws. Another means of avoiding sailing was closed off by a 1695 law which declared that seamen could no longer appeal their convictions on charges of dereliction of duty. It would be unprofitable for a ship to remain in port pending the outcome of numerous legal battles. Hence, the use of this delaying tactic was shut off for the benefit of the master and owners.

Colonial laws were aimed at insuring an available labor force for the shipping so vital to the financial interests of Boston.

A province statute to punish cursing and swearing also had differential penalties for landsmen and sailors.
The fine was the same for both groups: four to eight shillings for the first offense and one or two shillings for each additional consecutive offense depending upon the severity or originality of the imprecation. Failure to pay resulted in a five to ten day jail sentence for the general offender. This, however, would certainly have been a hardship on shipowners and masters, since they might find the whole of a rough-talking crew behind bars after a drunken donnybrook. Consequently, the first offense and failure to pay meant three hours in the stocks, and lest a great number of these sentences should cause a sailor to spend part of each day in the stocks and away from shipboard labors, subsequent convictions resulted in ten to twenty stripes. That legislation of this nature should be passed is not surprising, since the merchants' interests were those of much of the population of Boston. Certainly, the welfare of the floating population was not the prime consideration of the lawmakers.

Government and the courts held the seaman in a special kind of contempt. Sailors were considered to be wards of the Admiralty Court. While some seamen brought suit in common law courts, Admiralty was favored in most cases. The reasons for this are quite simple. Admiralty had the responsibility of seeing
that corporal punishment was kept within reasonable limits, that bad food was not served, and that the conditions under which the men worked were safe. In addition, sailors were not to be left unprovided for in case of sickness or injury while on articles. And unlike civil court practice, Admiralty procedures allowed in rem actions, satisfaction against a cargo or vessel rather than a person. Settlements were much more easily made in such situations. And while Admiralty Court cases were relatively more expensive, this could be overcome by several seamen uniting in one libel. In addition, adjudication occurred swiftly, unlike the common law courts which met less frequently.

How, then, given the working conditions and employment uncertainties aboard ships, were crews assembled and welded into a whole? The key to a successful voyage rested with the captain, a figure with almost total control over the lives and activities of his men while the ship was at sea. Despite the ruggedness of life at sea in the eighteenth century, command of a merchant ship could be a desirable position. Merchants and shipmasters sometimes sent their sons to sea despite the risks involved. And,

the boy going to sea with such a background could be sure that his early years afloat were only a brief prelude to command of a ship. He was not only better treated in his first
years than his fellow seamen, but his prospects were very different, embarking on a career that was likely to bring him to the sort of modest wealth in which he had grown up in his father's household.\textsuperscript{42}

The writer might have added, "If he lived to settle on land." This explains how a small percentage of seafarers found themselves aboard ships. But the story of the foremast hands was radically different. Given the dangers, poor food, discomfort, and strict regimentation of sea life, a calling which was not adequately compensated monetarily, only certain types of men would be tempted to go to sea.

The career of the common seaman was not, therefore, one which the son of the even moderately prosperous tradesman or skilled artisan would be encouraged to enter; recruitment was mainly from the lowest ranks of society, from the children of laborers, farmhands, seamen themselves and from young men who were dissatisfied with, or could obtain no employment in, the lowest shore occupations.\textsuperscript{43}

Nor were all of the seamen of English stock. The navigation laws were amended in 1708 to allow three-quarters of the crew to be foreigners; the measure was re-enacted in 1741.\textsuperscript{44}

Still another source of labor was open to the master who, as the owners' agent, was in charge of manning the ship. A class of pauper apprentices had arisen in Old England. The watermen to whom they were bound out were often happy to surrender their charges
to captains in dire need of a hand. The arrangement was beneficial to all save the youth. The master got his hand, and the waterman received the young man's wages, but the boy was bound to a hard life at sea with little or no compensation for a period of some years.\textsuperscript{45}

Massachusetts, stricken by a chronic shortage of labor, provided many places to be filled by pauper minors. The age of the boys bound out to Boston mariners ranged from fourteen to seventeen.\textsuperscript{46} Some were bound out by parents as in the case of Nicholass Bourguess, who was placed under the care of William English of Salem for four years until his twenty-first birthday. In return for faithful service, William English was to teach Nicholass to read the Bible "if he may be capable." The indentured lad was to receive two suits of clothes -- one good one for Sabbath and one for everyday.\textsuperscript{47} At least thirty-eight pauper children were bound out to sea from the Boston poorhouse between 1734 and 1769, thirty-one of these in the decade and a half after 1755.\textsuperscript{48} A typical arrangement in the case of one of Boston's poor was Francis Nesbatt's indenture to Nick Cussens on April 6, 1748. Nesbatt was to obey his master in all things, to care for his master's property faithfully, and to abstain from marriage. Cussens, on his part, was to see that the boy was clothed and furnished with sufficient food and drink.
Also, he was to teach "the art and mistery of a marriner also to Read Write Cypher & the Art of Navigation." Nesbatt would receive two suits of clothes upon attaining his majority. 49

In a few cases the indentured people were to receive a cash stipend at their time of severance. Joseph Osborn was to obtain from Edward Bacon of Barnstable £6 16s. 4d. after a term of eight years. 50 Charles Callahan was to pay Thomas Burps £13 6s. 8d. after thirteen years of service. 51 Occasionally, a boy would be given the tools of his trade. The indentured boys of Marblehead were to receive fishing gear upon separation. 52 James Ginn of Dorchester County, Maryland, bound out by his father to Soloman Allen of Cape Ann for five years and seven months, was to have the advantage of two winters of schooling. Allen would further his education by teaching him "the calling of a Marriner and the art of Navigation," and give James a suit of clothes, a quadrant, dividers and scale, and a "Marriner's Kallendar & Compass." 53 Such cases as these are exceptional, as were excessively long terms of service.

A further source was available to the enterprising master short a hand. This was the pool of runaway servants and slaves. A law passed in March 1694/95 called "An Act for the Prevention of Men's Sons
Absenting Themselves or Leaving their Parent's or Master's Service without Leave," provided for a £5 per week fine for captains if servants or minors were "harboured, concealed or detained on board" without the written permission of parent or master. But the problem continued to plague Bostonians, for their advertisements seeking runaways invariably included the warning, "All masters of Vessels and others, are caution'd against concealing, harbouring, employing or carrying off said Negro, as they would avoid the Penalty of the Law." These advertisements suggest, too, the possibility that the sea was a refuge for numbers of blacks, escaped slaves.

Crews of ships engaged in merchant activity seem to have been peopled by misfits, landsmen on the run, and lower class laborers in general. But some qualification should be made. Many small sloops, especially those belonging to the outports, were manned wholly by local crews. Even some of the larger vessels of Barnstable and Nantucket, for example, appear to have had foremast hands recruited from the surrounding areas. This seems to have been especially true in the case of Nantucket's whaling industry. Before 1830, whaling crews were provincial and homogeneous. They consisted of Yankees, local Gay Head Indians and a few blacks. It was not until the 1750s that Nantucket
whaleships recruited hands from nearby Cape Cod. Indeed, a peculiar social structure developed on the island and aboard ship. There appears to have been social pressure on the local maidens to marry killers of the whale. Indians were allowed to be boatsteerers and they had a virtual monopoly on the harpooner's spot, but they seldom seem to have made mate.\footnote{56}

The local character of the ship's company caused the usual callousness toward injury and sickness to be replaced by care and social responsibility. Captain Micajah Coffin, master of a whaling sloop bound for the Sandwich Islands, ran into a storm near Bermuda in 1762. The gooseneck of the boom was carried away, and a crewman, Paul Swain, was injured. Coffin was forced to put back to Nantucket.\footnote{57} Perhaps the need for repairs was the reason for the sloop's return. Or if Swain were a harpooner or boatsteerer, his presence might have been integral to the success of the voyage. But there is a strong possibility that Swain's welfare was a matter of concern for both the captain and the crew on a more personal level.

The return of a whaleship to its home port caused the whole town to turn out in welcome. A far different greeting awaited the merchant seaman as he stepped ashore on the docks of Boston.
CHAPTER III
DANGERS OF A LIFE AT SEA

Conditions at sea were so bad that a man would hesitate before sending a son to serve on a merchant ship. What made the maritime service a lower class occupation? Labor arrangements which compromised the dignity of a man were considered above. But there were other factors which persuaded men that the wages of sea service were not worth the risks. Perhaps Benjamin Franklin's father was the typical parent in this regard. Young Benjamin, at age ten, was employed in a Boston candle ship. He later wrote, "I dislik'd the Trade and had a strong Inclination for the Sea; but my Father declar'd against it." The vitriolic Edward Ward gave us his impressions of life aboard a vessel in the late seventeenth century. The seamen were a pack of hounds, "Drones who make more T__d than Honey." Their souls were brandy and tobacco. At sea, far from land, the captain was Noah and the crew his beasts. The captain was a deity in his wooden world, and like all gods, wanted to seem the wisest being in his universe. Consequently, "Facetious Ignorance is
an excellent Tallent to win the Captains Favour." But beyond the unpleasant association with beasts and petty deities, there was real danger in sea travel. As Ward put it, on board ship there was rope with which to hang; outside, there was water for drowning. The traveller was "tost about by the Waves like a Dog in a Blanket."²

Bad weather was frequently the curse of seamen. Its onset meant a period of feverish activity, an uncomfortable pitching or rolling motion of the ship, and perhaps days of lying "hove-to," making no progress until the storm should pass. Captain Love of Betsy noted on January 20, 1767, "Strong Gales with Rain Thunder and Lightning. Poor Musick for Sailors."³ Captain Love's sloop safely made port, but hundreds of other ships did not. The following news item from the Boston Gazette of December 22, 1747 is of a type often found, especially in winter.

One Day the beginning of last Week, a fine Privateer Ship call'd the Dreadnaught, Capt. Mayberry Commander, sail'd from this Port for the West Indies, and the Night following, the Snow-Storm, was cast away and lost upon Cape Cod, but the People are all saved.⁴

The treacherous back side of the Cape claimed many Boston ships and sent her seamen to watery graves. A single storm in late December 1740 sent nine or ten ships ashore there.⁵ Many vessels were lost in the
vicinity of Boston itself in this storm.6

Mishaps were common, even without violent storms. "Last Saturday about Ten o'Clock in the Forenoon, a large Fishing Boat coming in from Sea with a good Fare of Mackrel, was overset in Nantasket Gut by a hard Cale of Wind."7 Three men drowned on this occasion. Another danger at sea was lightning, which took its toll of ships and men. A sloop of Boston, Edward Sunderland, master, was bound on a voyage from Philadelphia to Newfoundland when the vessel was struck. One man was injured and the sloop sank in ten minutes, but the crew escaped with their lives.8 These disasters, an inevitable result of the powerful forces of nature operating on small ships, were attributed by some of Boston's more pious folk to God's vengeance upon the sinful men of the sea. Cotton Mather reminded himself in 1716 that "God speaks to the Sea-faring part of the Flock, in many late Shipwrecks: Lett me mightily urge upon them their harkening to the Voice of God."9

But storms were not the only causes for fear aboard ship. The sea has accounted for many mysteries and sea-lore is full of stories of ghost ships. The fate of the company of a Boston vessel loaded with corn and flour will never be known. She was on a voyage to Newfoundland when discovered abandoned with all sails set and only three feet of water in the hold.10
Occurrences of this nature, though rare, caused no little uneasiness about what might be found far out at sea.

Fire at sea was a most terrifying possibility. Such a blaze could destroy the wooden world of a ship's company in a few minutes. The decks and rigging were tarred, and most ships carried a store of gunpowder. A fire aboard a sloop at Long Wharf came near to being a tragedy. A candle in the forecastle burned low, but fortunately one of the crew awoke before the fire reached twenty pounds of powder lying nearby. A cabins, being small enclosed spaces, were dangerous places in which to have a fire. In December, 1747, two men on a sloop in Boston Harbor made a charcoal fire in the steerage. They went to sleep with the hatches closed, and in the morning they were found speechless and almost dead of asphyxiation. One recovered in a few days, but the other remained unconscious for two days and then died.

At the other end of the spectrum of disaster was freezing. It was reported in Boston that the crew of a ship landing in Rhode Island was all more or less frozen with the exception of the captain. Word also came of a sloop, one of whose sailors had frozen to death. A brig from Portsmouth, New Hampshire was within sight of the town, but was unable to get into port since her
people were frozen; she was never heard from again.\textsuperscript{14}

Added to all of these ever-present dangers was the chance accident, such as that which occurred to Paul Swain.\textsuperscript{15} Even in port, the seafaring man faced danger in his calling. "On Friday last Mr. Mills, Mate of a Sloop lying at the Long Wharf, being at work upon the Top of the Mast, had the misfortune to fall from thence upon the Deck, by which he was kill'd upon the Spot."\textsuperscript{16} And the seaman could sympathize and shudder when he read in the \textit{Boston Gazette} that the body of an unidentified sailor, forty or fifty years old and dressed in a blue sea coat, had washed ashore at Salisbury.\textsuperscript{17}

The conditions on board ships made for further problems. A sheep was slaughtered for food aboard the schooner \textit{Desiré}. But provisions of a low grade were generally the rule, and these were scanty enough, especially when the captain was given a certain sum to use in stocking the vessel. If he could get food for less than the amount allotted, he might turn a profit. At any rate, cases of famine aboard ship were sometimes reported in the colonial press. A schooner voyaging from Halifax to Boston, Daniel Smith, master, with fourteen people aboard was blown so far off course that provisions gave out. The ship's company subsisted for more than a week on the flesh of a cat and then
began to eat leather breeches. When these were ex-
hausted, the crew drew lots to see who would die to
feed his companions. Providentially, land was sighted
just at that time.\textsuperscript{19} Cannibalism was the only
alternative in extreme cases such as this, and a number
of instances have come to light.\textsuperscript{20}

The quality of the provisions had another nefar-
iouis effect. Disease was endemic to ships of the
eighteenth century. Contagion in the confines of a
ship at sea was often deadly. The problem of impor-
tation of disease was so great that the Boston town
meeting on May 15, 1717 voted that,

\texttt{The Select men be impowered to Lease
out a peice of Land on Dere Island
not Exceeding one Acre, for a Term, not
Exceeding Ninety Years to be im-
proved for the Erecting an Hospitall
or Pest House there for the reception
and entertainment of Sick Persons
comeing from beyond the Sea, and in
Order to prevent the Spreading of
Infection.}\textsuperscript{21}

A law passed three months earlier by the Assembly
had made Spectacle Island a quarantine station.
This law required that the master obey the light-
house keeper who was to hail each entering vessel.
If the ship did not report to quarantine, the master
was liable to a fine of £50 or six months in prison.
Seamen or passengers who disobeyed were fined £10
or jailed for two months. These exceptionally
stiff penalties illustrate the fear of shipborne
contagion. The brigantine *brittania*, Thatcher, master, wharfed at James Otis' store in 1768. When it was discovered that smallpox had caused the death of a seaman, the ship and her crew were immediately ordered to Rainsford Island, the quarantine station at that time. The Keeper of the Hospital caused the ship to be well smoked, the contemporary measure for combatting smallpox, and notified the selectmen four days later that it was safe for *brittania* to return to the wharf.  

Natural disasters were not the only dangers to be feared, however. Violence from fellow men -- enemy seamen, privateers, pirates, and mutineers -- posed a grave threat to the well-being of Jack Tar throughout the eighteenth century. England was in conflict with either Spain, the Netherlands, or France at almost any given time. This meant that English ships were often liable to capture; pirates, of course, needed no declaration of war to prey on shipping.  

Slave ships had an additional problem. Their cargoes were dangerous by sheer force of numbers if aroused. The *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1730 reported that a Captain Jump of Boston had been killed with his crew off the coast of Guinea by his cargo of Negroes.  

A Rhode Island skipper in the following year experienced
a mutiny among his ninety-six slave cargo. The slaves forced him and the surviving crewmen to retreat into the cabin. The whites held them off with the arms in the cabin until the ship was run aground, and the Negroes took to the woods and escaped.25

Piracy was another scourge of the New England seaman. Many of these outlaws had begun their careers by seizing the ship on which they were lawfully employed. The pirates then stopped ships which were not heavily armed and took what provisions and stores they needed as well as valuable cargo. A threat to the seamen beyond the gunplay before capture was the conduct of the pirates once they had overcome resistance. If they needed hands to replace those killed in the fight, they would simply pick the number needed from the subject vessel. The ship Hopewell, taken near Hispaniola, was relieved of the services of James Logan of Charlestown. He was taken by the pirates "as they had no artist."26 That is, they lacked a crew member who knew how to navigate the ship to a port. William Pitman, master, and Edward Richards, mate of the sloop Paradox of Boston testified that on a passage from there to Surrinam, Paradox was taken by two pirate vessels. Benjamin Howes and Thomas Symmons, lads of nineteen, were forced to join the pirates' crew against their wills.27 This deposition would
serve as evidence if Howes or Symmes were accused of being pirates by their own choice. The cases of Jonathan Barlow and Nicholas Simmons a few years later were similar. They were forced to sign articles and spend some time as members of a pirate crew.28

The punishment of pirates was an occasion for a general gathering. On June 30, 1704, when six pirates were to be executed on an island in Boston Harbor, more than 150 boats and canoes crowded close to watch. The screech of women as the culprits were hung could be heard a mile upwind.29 The problem had reached serious proportions by 1724, and a day of fast was proclaimed by Lieutenant Governor Dummer, "that the Trade and Fishery of this Province may be prospered, and our Coasts defended from the merciless Pirates; That our Captives may be set at Liberty."30 Local pirates were not the only problem. Spanish marauders were active in the 1730s in the Caribbean area.31 A few years earlier, Indians in league with the French along the coast of Canada had wrought havoc among fishermen put in for repairs and fresh water.32 The French, sailing out of Louisburg, proved to be especially troublesome to the Halifax and London trade.33 The French operated in the Caribbean as well.34 Privateers were not the threat in America that they
were to ships in the English Channel and the Mediterranean, but wartime did increase the likelihood of capture. Therefore, ships were armed for defense against pirates and privateers throughout the eighteenth century.

As a result, eighteenth century seamen seem to have been a particularly violent lot. The sailor had to be willing and able to fight at any time for his own personal liberty as well as for the safety of the ship. This belligerency was inevitably carried over into his inter-personal relationships. The mate and helmsman on a ship bound from Jamaica to Boston argued and began to fight. They fell overboard, and, still fighting, did not seize the rope thrown to them. Both drowned.\(^{35}\) Josiah Challenge, an Indian, was found guilty of the death of Isaac Monokuit, a fellow seaman.\(^{36}\) It was quite easy to commit a murder on the darkened deck of a ship at sea.

Masters of vessels seem to have been particularly prone to violence, perhaps because law and custom recognized that force was necessary to maintain order among seamen. Murder, however, was beyond the limits of acceptable force. Nathaniel Darby, master of the sloop Mary was taken into custody in June 1738 for murdering his mate, Edward Holbrook, a year and a half earlier.\(^{37}\) John Barnes of Boston was mate on a slavership when the master died. Barnes assumed command
and beat to death William Marshall, also of Boston. Marshall's father, going to collect his son's wages, discovered the circumstances of his death from the crew. Seven of the foremost hands swore depositions against Barnes, an occasion which perhaps allowed the crew to retaliate for what might have been ill usage. That masters had the benefit of special favors is illustrated by the case of Captain Hewes of Rhode Island who had been condemned in 1756 for the murder of his cooper. He got a reprieve for twelve months to allow for appeal to England. The King's pardon arrived in May of 1757, two months before his scheduled execution.

While corporal punishment was sanctioned by civil and maritime law, it was restricted to moderate correction. But as this journal entry suggests, at times justice might be rather arbitrarily applied:

"the first part of these 24 hours Moderate and Clear. The Latter Part Squally with flying Clouds and Rain.... The Cook got flog'd for letting the Beef get washed over Board." Perhaps correction was more moderate on ships locally owned and manned. It has been suggested that the cat o' nine tails was not used on the crew since the captain would have to face unfavorable opinion at home if he were overly brutal. But the law was definitely on the side of the officers. In
1718, Samuel Sewall imprisoned a sailor for reproachful words to a captain on a vessel near Long Wharf.\textsuperscript{42}

Given the danger and brutality of maritime employment, it is not surprising to find that Boston had a large number of widows, twelve hundred in the early 1740s.\textsuperscript{43} Salem's female population of 1710 in 1754 was said to include 205 widows.\textsuperscript{44} A large number of these women must have been widowed by the deaths of their men at sea. The nature of the risks attendant upon sea travel is suggested by two entries in Cotton Mather's diary. The first is dated February 25, 1712.

Some very Pious, Generous, Liberal People in my neighborhood, have lately received a Mercy in their Family, by the Safe Return of an only Son from Sea. I would put them upon doing some Special Service for Christ, as an expression of their Gratitude for Such a Mercy.\textsuperscript{45}

The dangers to which this man had been exposed were enough to move Mather to call his safe return from a voyage "a Mercy." In October of the following year, he remarked:

Some very remarkable Deliverances at Sea, have been lately granted to this place; May not I do well to collect & publish them; and from thence also take Occasion to address the Sea-faring Part of my Auditory, with new Admonitions, to make a right Use of the divine Dealings with them?\textsuperscript{46}

Under these conditions, it was to be expected that the rate of desertion from merchant ships would
be high. Other factors besides the danger of seafaring life probably contributed to the numbers of deserters. Not the least of these was the high wage a workman with any skill at all might make in the labor-starved province. Coopers were in high demand on land as well as for ship-board work. Sailing from England with the hope of deserting to a land of opportunity may well have been a common source of immigrants. The wages of seamen shipped from American ports were considerably higher than those paid in England. Running from an English ship, though it meant the loss of some wages, might have been a low price to pay for a comparable but better paying berth aboard an American ship.

Captains were at something of a disadvantage in New England. The smallness of the labor pool made each of his men a valuable asset. Consequently, the master often allowed deserters a period of grace after running. Robert Blacklock of Mary and Jane of Londonderry lost his mate, boatswain, cooper, and a seaman in November 1740. He offered fifteen days for them to return, during which he would impose no penalties for their absences. Captain Blacklock doubtless hoped that a short spree ashore was all that was needed to make the seamen return to their positions. If, however, they remained ashore beyond this period,
they could expect "to be treated with the utmost Severity of the Law," which was extension of the contract for another voyage. 48 Defiance, Captain John Comrin, lost two seamen, Smith and James, and White, the ship's cook. They were offered amnesty for an immediate return. 49 Charles Ball's Mercury lost a gunner, seven sailors, and two boys. All were given two days before being declared deserters. 50

On June 7, 1761, John Cheesman, master of Bayard, advertised for three seamen and a gunner who had been gone for forty-eight hours. He gave them twenty-four more to complete their binge and return to duty. 51 Perhaps this was wishful thinking on Cheesman's part, for a news item in the Boston Evening Post two weeks earlier described the voyage of Bayard. She was a large ship of five hundred tons, bound from Virginia to Hull with naval stores. On May 6, 7, and 8 she met with heavy gales of wind and sprang a leak so that water gained two feet per half hour in the hold despite constant pumping. The crew was obliged to jettison four or five hundred barrels of tar and turpentine, and Bayard bore away for Boston for repairs. 52 It would seem likely that the three sailors and the gunner felt much relieved to be ashore again and free of the ship which had very nearly sunk under them.

One branch of maritime service was suited to the
bold and daring Tar who sought the excitement of battle and a chance to grow rich. The privateer fleet, private warships commissioned to attack the merchant shipping of an enemy, provided action for the restless. Monthly wages were paid, but the real money was made in shares of the profit from the sale of captured ships, in which each crewman shared. The privateers carried large complements of men, usually about 150, since skeleton crews had to be dispatched with each prize ship to sail her to a friendly port.

A good many advertisements calling for recruits appeared in the Boston papers. Next to a small woodcut of a ship it was announced that a privateer was bound on a cruise against "His Majesty's Enemies." Typical of these is one for the snow Boston, William Ellery commanding. The notice assured prospective recruits that Ellery was an experienced officer and that Boston was a "fine Vessel and a prime sailer" of 470 tons burthen, mounting "18 Carriage and 24 Swivel Guns, with a sufficiency of small Arms, Ammunition, and Provision for 150 Men.... All Gentlemen Seamen and able bodied Landsmen, that have an Inclination to enter on board said SNOW," were invited to rendezvous at the King's Head Tavern at the head of Clarke's Wharf. The choice of the adjective "Gentlemen" to describe seamen is curious. It did not mean that high class
people were sought; it was a form common to all recruiting advertisements of this nature. On one ship, Hertford, a pint of rum or wine was to be given to each man daily.\(^5^4\) King of Prussia advertised that her cruise in 1757 was to be of only six months duration.\(^5^5\) Wages in 1760 on the province ship King George under Benjamin Hallowell were set at a phenomenally high rate, £15 old tenor per month in addition to a share in the prize money.\(^5^6\) The following year, Hallowell was paying ten dollars bounty for signing on and advancing one month's wages. In this particular case he planned to pursue a French privateer which had been harrying the coast of Massachusetts. An engagement with a similarly armed ship promised to be hard and dangerous, requiring a higher wage to induce men to undertake such a voyage.\(^5^7\) A certain amount of competition for hands is seen in an advertisement for Tartar which claimed to have articles "which are more advantageous, to the Mariner than any yet offered."\(^5^8\)

Seamen were particularly vulnerable to one of the more inhumane features of the eighteenth century: the press gang. Naval service was to be avoided by the common seaman as much as possible. If the merchant fleet was bad, the royal navy was hell. As British
naval historian Michael Lewis has put it,

It was unwise to expect free-born and self-respecting men voluntarily to forego the relative comfort, the higher remuneration, and the comparatively free life of one service, to accept in exchange an existence of virtual imprisonment, at once more dangerous, worse paid, and worse fed, in more overcrowded, and therefore less healthy quarters, and for a term of unknown duration.\(^5\)

The press gang ranged throughout the ports, searching brothels, taverns, and incoming merchant ships. Apprentices were supposed to be exempt, but they were sometimes taken. The hapless victims were placed under guard and conveyed at once to an embarkation point to secure the catch from the possibility of escape. During times of intense naval conflict and impressment, seamen took to the hinterland to avoid forced service on the king's ships.

News of impressment activities in England was carefully circulated in the colonies since at any time a warship might appear which needed to complete her crew. The July 13, 1738 edition of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* mentions that a half-manned squadron of fifteen ships had sailed against the Spanish in the Caribbean.\(^6\) The only place to obtain the remainder of the complement was in America. Word was received in Boston in March of 1740 that ships in English ports were not being given "protections," or assurances that
they would be allowed to sail. It was expected that an embargo would be laid on all outgoing commerce since the transports and men-of-war for the West Indies could not be filled without using available merchant seamen. In 1755, a bounty was offered for every hand enlisting in the royal navy: £4 sterling for able bodied seamen, 40s. for ordinary seamen, and 20s. for each landsman. But more revealing is the fact that the sum of 40s. would be paid to each person who revealed to the press gangs where seamen were hiding. The plight of the common man, so often reflected in song, appears clearly in this eighteenth century ballad called "The Sailor Laddie:"

Here has been so much disturbance,
Cur Sailor Lads dare not look out,
For to drink with their own Lasses,
Or to have a single rout.

This sort of abstinence was uncommonly difficult for seamen, and it points up the nature of their apprehension.

Boston, Massachusetts was often the scene of the impressment activities of the royal navy in America. As early as July 1692, the governor and council issued a broadside in response to a hot press. They assured people engaged in the maritime trades that only a particular warrant would provide legality for the press gang. The perpetrators of an illegal press were liable for damages and were subject to the laws
of the province. It was also noted that this sort of atrocity would be punished in the hereafter.\textsuperscript{64} The outports were involved in the pressing activities as well. William Gedney in 1710 sent fifty-seven Salem men to Boston under guard to serve on ships of the expedition against Nova Scotia. Pilots and captains served of their own free will.\textsuperscript{65}

In 1739, the arrival of \textit{HMS Tartar} caused some apprehension in Boston with good reason, for within three days, Tartar's officers were pressing seamen from incoming vessels. Rumor had it that she had left Spithead in such haste that she was seriously undermanned. The navy no doubt felt that shortages might easily be remedied in New England, for although laborers were not in surplus in the colonies, force could be used in the manning of American station ships. But if the press gangs were active, labor costs to colonial merchants became nearly prohibitive. Also frightening and galling was the intelligence that Tartar's station was to be South Carolina, not off the coast of New England where seamen would have had an easier time deserting. \textit{Squirrel}, the Boston station ship, was simultaneously fitting out to sail to South Carolina.\textsuperscript{66} Tartar was in Boston only a week before she and Squirrel sailed south. The press gangs must have worked overtime, for the \textit{Boston Evening Post} reported that the departure
of these vessels was "to the great Joy of our Sailors, many of whom had retired into the Country, and Others hid themselves in Town, to prevent their being impress'd to serve on board those ships." 

Strict navy discipline sometimes worked to the benefit of Boston's seamen. In 1740, when HMS Portland fifty guns under Captain Hawks, arrived from Barbadoes to refit and avoid the fierce Caribbean hurricane season, there was said to be "not the least Danger of any Man's being impressed for his Majesty's Service aboard her." This forecast was based on the fact that "this Ship has her full Complement of Men, who are not suffered to go on Shore, lest they should abscond or desert." Boston seamen may have felt relieved that Portland was not pressing, but a hapless New England seaman aboard her must have been nearly mad with frustration and a desire to get ashore. This lack of shore liberty was one factor which made naval service so onerous.

If New England sailors had nothing to fear from Portland, Boston was still not a safe place for Jack Tar. Astrea, a naval mast ship, had been pressing for some time. An item in the Evening Post in May of 1740 reported that "Last Thursday a Sailor belonging to His Majesty's Ship Astrea, attempting to swim from said ship in order to desert from the Service, was
drowned." Not until a year later did Astrea finally sail from Boston, an event recorded by the newspaper with relish: "The beginning of Last Week the Astrea Mast Ship sail'd for Jamaica with Naval Stores, to the great Joy of this Town, which has suffer'd a great many Thousands of Pounds Damage, by the Interruption given to its Trade and Business, since the arrival of that unlucky Ship in our Harbour." It is significant that loss of trade in Boston was considered worthy of mention while the plight of Jack Tar was not.

The treatment of the common seaman was taken up in 1745 at the Boston town meeting. At the March 10 town meeting, Jeremiah Allen read a petition that a committee be appointed to tell the House of Representatives of the grievances suffered by Boston due to impressment. He mentioned the arbitrary and illegal nature of the press as well as the bad conduct of the naval officers involved. The committee was formed and the next day submitted a statement of grievance which was to be presented to the House. The report called the press illegal since three separate warrants had been issued. The conduct of the naval officers was censured. Then, what was probably the seat of the causes for complaint was reached. The committee complained that three thousand men had fled or were in the naval service engaged in an expedition against Cape Breton. Other
towns were able to send out privateers against the French. But Boston, suffering from a crippling shortage of seamen, could neither commission a fleet of lucrative privateers nor man her merchant vessels. It would seem that the problems of maritime laborers were important only insofar as they affected mercantile interests, although, as Bailyn has shown, this may have included a rather large proportion of Boston's residents.

Governor Shirley informed the Duke of Newcastle that inhabitants of the province, fishermen and seamen on coastal and outward bound vessels were always exempt from the press. Nevertheless, sailors had left Boston, causing impressment to be less selective and driving wages up. Shirley noted that the West Indies were favored by the home government by not being subject to the press at all.

The seamen were angry enough about the press to riot. In November 1747, Captain Knowles of the British squadron sought to fill the places left vacant by deserters by sweeping the wharves and taking every male. A mob formed, caused the governor to retreat to Castle William, and did some damage in the town. After some further tension during which British naval officers were seized and the ships in the harbor threatened to retaliate by bombarding Boston,
the House of Representatives opened to call for the release of the naval personnel and tempers cooled.\textsuperscript{75} The Boston town meeting dissociated itself from the rioters by explaining, "the Unanimous opinion of the Town in this large Meeting of the Inhabitants, that the said Riotous Tumultuous Assembly consisted of Foreign Seamen, Servants, Negroes, and other persons of mean and Vile Condition."\textsuperscript{76} But while censuring the rioters, or at least declaring that the "better" people had no part in the trouble, the meeting went on to condemn the press and to suggest that the disturbance had been provoked by the commission of a grave injustice. Governor Shirley, however, explained that the disorder did not spring from grievous wrongs. He claimed that only three townspeople, carpenters apprentices, had been among the forty-eight men netted by the press gang. He complained that his main problems had been with the merchants who were suffering from the high wages needed to lure seamen to towns in which the press was hot.\textsuperscript{77} Sailors fought back at Marblehead as well. On June 14, 1769, four Marblehead seamen shot and killed a lieutenant who had come aboard their ship in search of hands for his Majesty's service.\textsuperscript{78}

Anticipating a Canadian expedition, the Council on May 16, 1757 issued a proclamation which prohibited sailings from the province with the exception of fish-
ing vessels and ships going to Nova Scotia. A year later, even the fishing fleet was tapped. No fishing vessel could leave the province until she had yielded some men to the navy. Salem felt pressure from this sort of device. On December 5, 1757, five Salem seamen deserted from King George; a few months later, twenty men from that town were said to be on board that ship.

Why were Americans willing to riot to oppose the press? One historian has suggested that American seamen were unused to long voyages. An English sailor was trading one long voyage for another, although in much less bearable circumstances. But the long and indeterminate service in the royal navy must have been even more fearful to American seamen. Certainly, there are records of extremely long terms of service. Benjamin Bush and Warwick Palfrey of Salem had been in His Majesty's navy when, nine years before, a companion and townsman, Jonathan Ropes, had died at sea.

But much of the resentment to be found in Massachusetts, above and beyond the fear of the seamen who were in actual danger, seems to have come from the merchants. Impressment was important in the business equation insofar as it destroyed the maritime labor force and crippled Boston's trade. More than 150
merchants signed an address to Governor Pownall in 1760 which thanked him for supplying the needs of the royal navy without having to resort to a press. Clearly, these men were not primarily concerned with the welfare of Jack Tar.
CHAPTER IV

THE SAILOR ASHORE

Merchant seamen played an important part in the life of Massachusetts. They and their commanders delineated the upper and lower strata of colonial society. The seamen, as an unorganized lower class, a labor pool for which the merchants and royal navy sometimes competed, were nothing more than pawns in the race for expansion, both of the empire and of the colonial economy. They formed the neglected if somewhat boisterous and unstable "bottom of the barrel" in the province.

The captains of Massachusetts' merchant vessels, used to the exercise of command and the power to effect their decisions, were united in spirit as a forceful ruling elite in Boston. Their social status was correspondingly high. Samuel Eliot Morison describes their position this way:

The shipmaster's calling has always been of high repute in Massachusetts. Only the clergy, the magistracy, and the shipowning merchants, most of whom were retired master mariners, enjoyed a higher standing in colonial days.
Cotton Mather eloquently portrayed the other end of the spectrum:

I begin with the Sea-faring. Oh! What an horrible Spectacle have I before me! A wicked, stupid, abominable Generation: every Year growing rather worse and worse, under the Judgements of Heaven; drowned in all Impiety and Perdition. All the Prayers, and all the Pains I have employ'd in a distinguishing Manner for their Good, they requite with making me above any Man Living the Object of their Malignity. But yet, I must continue crying to GOD for them, and I must watch all occasion to drop suitable Admonitions upon them and I must scatter Books of Piety among them."

Mather, an uncommonly long-suffering soul, expended far more thought and energy on these dregs than any other resident of Boston.

But both masters and their crews worked on the sea in the same industry. Was not the master merely a far more refined and successful ordinary seaman? In England, the difference was one of kind as well as of degree. Advancement to captaincy of men who came in "through the hawse hole," movement from service before the mast to command, with no outside help, "always demanded either exceptional ability or exceptional good fortune." This sort of progress was almost impossible without an outside interest playing a part. The master, agent of the owners, had to be well-versed in matters of trade as well as possessed
of command ability and navigational expertise. Consequently, advancement to command was a major quantum leap which entailed an automatic change in social status. Even if a mate were to succeed to the command of a ship at sea upon the death of the captain, he was likely to be replaced by someone with experience in commanding ships.

Samuel Eliot Morison suggests that the middle class made up the backbone of Massachusetts society. He includes masters and mates of vessels in this broad category in which are found shipbuilders, ropemakers, sailmakers, and others who contributed to the success of maritime trade. This middle class may well have been the upper limit to which the men who rose to command through the hawse hole could ascend. But there was another group of sea captains who could be called middle class only by the broadest of definitions. These were the sons of great merchants who had been given positions of command as a matter of course in their training in the family business.

Captain Goelet's diary described one master's position in Boston society. Goelet put into Boston on September 20, 1750 to have repairs made on his ship. He went ashore and stayed at Captain Wendell's house. Goelet dined on turtle with forty others at the house of Mr. Sheppard and went to taverns until almost dawn;
maidens fled on seeing them approach. On October 20, he accompanied Wendell's daughter on a "turtle frolic" with twenty other couples, "ladies of the best fashion." On other occasions, he escorted the governor's daughter, played cards with the ladies, or resorted to the Bunch of Grapes Tavern which served the best punch in town to gentlemen merchants and masters of vessels. He seldom checked on the ship, but after eighteen days, repairs were completed and he sailed.\(^5\) Clearly, this man was of the upper echelon.

Many New Englanders took great pride in their connections with the higher ranks in the maritime trade. Lieutenant Governor John Wentworth's obituary noted that he had gone to sea and become a commander of note. He even managed to run a God-fearing ship. After he left the sea, he became a successful merchant.\(^6\)

One historian has suggested that captains formed a middle group of property owners in Boston. They advanced rapidly when they quit the sea.\(^7\) Perhaps the career of Benjamin Marston is an example of the prevailing pattern. Benjamin, an eldest son and Harvard graduate, took to sea in his father's ships immediately after graduation. He remained at sea five years, until his father died and left him one-quarter of a substantial estate. Captain Marston quit the sea and became a wealthy merchant.\(^8\)
Morison writes that merchants' sons often went to sea on parental ships or to Harvard if they cared not for business. But the sea was still a dangerous enemy in the eighteenth century as well as the highway of commerce. The risks involved in embarking on an ocean voyage were great. Why, then, did merchants feel that it was acceptable to send their sons on such unsafe errands? Forty-six Harvard students or graduates went to sea between the years 1702 and 1760. Nineteen of these were dead before they reached the age of thirty, eleven before twenty-five, and three before the age of twenty.

College students of this period were quite riotous and unruly. But the people who went to sea seem to have been especially prone to disruption and disturbance. Most had been fined for breaking window glass, drinking, and gambling. A number of them had been caught in lies, found guilty of burglary, or were lavish spenders of parents' money. Indeed, some of these Harvard men had been expelled or left school before they had taken their first degrees. Only a few seem to have been orderly and serious. Perhaps these wild young men were sent to sea because they were refractory and not likely to be a credit to the family until their restlessness and high spirits could be curbed. The hard life of the sea was calculated to make all but the
most incorrigible wanderer appreciate the benefits of a safe and sane land life.

Twelve of the forty-six Harvard men were sons of captains. Only eight seafaring men who had been at Harvard achieved real financial success. And one of these depended upon his wife's fortune, one gained prominence through an inheritance, another declined to the status of a lower middle-class shopkeeper by the end of his life. Five others were moderately successful. Almost all of those who succeeded had retired from the sea before they really tasted success.

These college men had to spend some time learning the trade before they could assume command. Navigation was not too difficult for one trained in mathematics. But the habit of command and the art of seamanship were another matter. Benjamin Hobbs, class of 1759, shipped as supercargo aboard a New Hampshire brig immediately after graduation. Another plan was to teach the trade to a young man by setting him before the mast. John Wainwright, class of 1734, seems to have been one of this number. He was washed overboard while working in the rigging of Captain Jersey's Newbury vessel on April 15, 1736. John Gore took an unusual route to command. He went to sea as a chaplain in 1706, and by 1711 was commanding Harvard Galley. Only one of the people from college seems to have had the benefit of
formal training in business. Joseph Henshaw spent two years after graduation studying commerce in Europe. By 1752, when he received his Master of Arts degree, he had completed a highly successful voyage to Italian ports. A contemporary of Henshaw's, Robert Treat Paine, was the other side of the coin. He taught school for a short time after graduation and then sailed as master of a rented vessel to North Carolina for naval stores. The venture failed, as did a subsequent trip to Philadelphia. Treat retired from his brief career as mariner and made a successful adjustment to law.

It would seem that the risks of marine commerce and travel were such that a merchant would not send his son to sea lightly. It was necessary for a commercial establishment to have trusted men in command of its vessels. But the secrets and techniques of trade could be learned ashore in safety and comfort. Perhaps the merchant marine functioned as a limbo to which recalcitrant sons could be sent until they learned the value of propriety, stability, and fortune. The sea service had the double virtues of removing a black sheep from the midst of the upper social stratum without disgrace, and of providing a chance that the offending youth might actually learn trade, return to the fold, and make a fortune.
Descriptions of seamen abound in English literature. In drama, from 1660 to about 1760, Jack Tar was seen as being brave at sea and an object of ridicule ashore. He was "bold and rough, much given to wine and women." In the voyage narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, "the tar appears in the literature of fact as much the same: lawless, amorous and brave." In 1733, George Balfour, commander of Royal Oak complained of seamen's appearance to Lord Sandwich, First Lord of Admiralty: "Everyone knows that cleanliness is the greatest preservative of health, and that seamen in general are very nasty and negligent of their persons." His behavior ashore was described by one contemporary: "His song, his bumper and his sweetheart (perhaps a street-pacing harlot) form his trio of pleasure.... He rarely thinks, seldom prays, etc." Criminals often had their sentences commuted to service aboard his Majesty's ships. Paupers were sent to the navy, as were some of the poor Irish brought to Liverpool. Doubtless, a certain number of these undesirables managed to escape naval service and ship out on merchant vessels, perhaps to America.

Music played a great part in seamen's lives. Chanteys, or work songs, provided needed rhythm and humor to dreary labor. Ballads reflected the problems
endemic to seafaring life. Common themes were the girl left behind, greedy landsmen, the press gang, and drinking.

The first thing Jack craves, is a chamber fine and clean with good liquor of every sort. With a pretty girl likewise, with her black and rolling eyes. Then Jack Tar is pleased to the heart. And so the game goes on, till his money's spent and gone, then his landlady begins for to frown. With her nasty leering eye, and her nose turned all awry Crying, Sailor, it's high time to be gone.21

"Rattlin' Jack" calls the sea his home and wants only to have a good time ashore. He swaggers and cuts a fine figure with Pretty Poll and a tankard. He can fight for more money as he wishes and can brave death in battle.22 He is, by his own lights, a fine specimen of a man. Similar is a song called "Jolly Jack Tar:"

A Jolly Jack Tar, but a little while since As drunk as a beggar, as bold as a Prince Fell foul on an alehouse, and thought it a sin To pass without calling, so went roaring in.

In the tavern, he found a Frenchman, insulted and beat him, attacked and bested the landlord, and, happily, "he went staggering away to his wench."23 A sadder, but even more satisfying tale is told in a "Song Between a Sailor and a Landlady." The seaman came home from his voyage looking down and out. He sought the landlady's daughter, but she would not come to see
him since he appeared to be poor. But he had just been paid off and he flashed a handful of gold coins at them and proudly marched off. The extent to which this song mirrors reality is probably not great, but the moral is universal:

While a man has Money, he may both sing and roar
Without that Companion, is turn'd out of Door.24

It was probably Jack Tar's experience to be turned out of doors more often than not.

One English seaman, John Gremer, found that New England was a land of plenty if one could simply make one's way through the obstacles. On a voyage in 1715 and 1716, he arrived in Boston in the middle of winter. Three of the crewmen on his ship hoped to escape to the higher wages paid in Boston, but an informer told the captain and the three were detained in jail for the duration of their stay in port.25 The following year, he returned to Boston. On this voyage, the captain changed his plans, so the articles under which the crew had sailed were made invalid. The company was paid off in New England currency and they set out to have a good time. Jack found one girl who suited him until he overheard her mother's plan to entrap him into marriage. Jack Gremer noted that merchants were then giving six months' credit since wages were high and work plentiful; there were no beggars or poor men
on the streets of Boston in 1717. But the women were a problem -- the poor had a disease and the rich wanted particulars.  

Cotton Mather recorded in his diary the publication of his "Sailour's Companion" with the comment, "Who can tell, what may be done? Whether some of the Elect of God may not be found out upon the Waters!" His tone is only barely hopeful. Mather's appraisal of seamen seems to have been held by others as well. Jaspar Dankers and Peter Sluyter noted that on their voyages in America they had met three New Englanders. One was a sailor on Charles, one was a ship's doctor, a charlatan, and the other, a Mr. Padechal, was a mariner of Boston. All were bad people. Captain Padechal was a wretched pilot, often confused. He held prayers at night but perfunctorily and irreverently. But Cotton Mather was the man most personally affected by the ungodly behavior of seamen because he took his ministry to all of God's flock so seriously.

I was willing to make a good Use of such Evil occurring in the World, and especially of the strange Punishments inflicted by God on many Sinners in the World, and most especially of the Things befalling the Sea-faring Tribe, and to warn this Tribe of Men in a Singular Manner....

He provided money for Bibles to be given to sea captains for the use of the ship's company. Grim satisfaction was evident in Mather's diary entry for
May 6, 1717.

The Sea-Faring part of the Flock tho' degenerated into all possible Stupidity and Malignity, yett since the late Judgements of God upon them, are come to such a tremendous Degree of Desolation, there must be more attempts to awaken them unto some due notice thereof.

But the seamen seem to have drawn different conclusions about the nature of storms, shipwrecks, and drownings, occurrences which the minister was so ready to lay to their blasphemy and fornication. That Jack Tar wanted wine and women to help him forget the horrors and rigors of life at sea, rather than a sermon to remind him of death and destruction, is suggested by Mather's despairing comment late in his life:

What has a gracious Lord given me to do for the welfare of the Seafaring Tribe? In Prayer for them; in Sermons to them; in Books bestowed on them; and in various Projections and Endeavors to render the Sailors an happy generation. AND YETT, there is not a Man in the world, so Reviled, so Slandered, so cursed, among the Sailors.

Obviously, Cotton Mather's idea of a "happy generation" and that of the sailors were two radically different dreams.

Certainly there must have been some basis for the Reverend Mr. Cotton Mather's disapproval of the sailors. Indeed, seamen were never in high repute in any maritime town for their boisterous and immoral behavior. God's providence might be seen in any evil
that befell a tar. The Hand of God is plainly seen in an item in the *Evening Post*:

We are informed, That about Three Weeks ago, a Sloop being out a whaling near Canso, and the Men having struck a Whale upon the Sabbath-Day, the Beast was so enraged, that she stove the Boat to pieces, and all the Men received considerable Hurt, but the Whale made her Escape.

Profanity seems to have been a problem. Seamen are mentioned explicitly in the 1746 statute providing fines and whippings for blasphemy and cursing.

Drinking was a pastime much in favor with seamen. Taverns were distinguished from one another by clientele. Masters frequented the Bunch of Grapes at the head of Long Wharf in company with gentlemen and merchants. The Ship Tavern, at Clark and North Streets in the North End, was also for captains. The Three Mariners, also at the head of Long Wharf, was run by Thomas Fitch in the early 1700s and was patronized by the better class of sailors, and perhaps mates and masters of smaller vessels. The Crown Tavern served Jack Tar. It was located at Clarke's Wharf and was kept by the Widow Day in 1730. Fifteen years later its character had not changed, nor had its proprietor. The King's Head Tavern at Clarke's Wharf and Mrs. Coffin's Sign of the Anchor at Minot's T were rendezvous for privateersmen. An uncommonly large number of drownings occurred in Boston at night.
Almost all of these deaths were of seamen. Jack Tar, making his way back to his ship, was in such a state of intoxication that he could not manage to stay on the wharf. Minot's T and the Long Wharf were the scenes of most of these misfortunes.

The immorality of seamen was also legendary. Carl Bridenbaugh suggests that soldiers and sailors caused the tremendous rise in bastardy during Queen Anne's War. The large number of widows, coupled with sex-starved seamen, inevitably produced a crop of children who would be charges on the town. Certainly, a large number of prostitutes plied their trade in Boston. A mob in 1737 attacked a house of ill repute and though the lady, Widow Green, made her escape, she was not allowed entry into Charlestown. The same night, the mob visited another house, but found that the whore had fled. Dorcas Griffiths and Sarah Hinson had set up shop at the head of Hancock's Wharf in the 1740s -- a most convenient location for seafaring men. The problem was so serious in the eighteenth century that the House of Representatives was moved to pass legislation allowing the mothers of bastard children to be bound out for five years if they had to be supported by the town while lying in or if the child became a ward of the town.

Seamen were explicitly involved in some of these
cases of immorality. Sometimes the offence was rape rather than fornication. In 1736, "a seafaring Man was whipped Ten Stripes at the publick Whipping Post in this town (Boston), for beating and abusing a Woman in a very barbarous manner at Malden, because she refused his unlawful Embraces." Thomas Bryant, a Boston seaman, was found guilty of attempting to rape a widow of that town; he was fined £8. But far more numerous were the court actions in which seamen were named as co-defendants in proceedings arising from the production of illegitimate children. When Bathsheba Higgins was brought to trial in 1744 for having had a bastard child, she named as father a man who was away at sea. This case is typical of numbers of others which appear in the records of the Suffolk County Court of General Sessions of the Peace. In the late 1730s, a woman was found aboard a ship in the harbor. The captain was told that she had been concealed for several days, and he ordered her ducked from the yardarm three times and then towed in to shore behind the ship's boat. The subsequent newspaper story reported that this was not an isolated case of a single whore going aboard ships in the harbor, for "if we are rightly informed, 'tis a pretty common Practice with some of them of late." And in 1741, when a mother and daughter were being tried on charges
of prostitution, the daughter was accused \textit{viva voce} "of having given seven men belonging to one of his Majesty's Ships of War in the Harbour, something to remember her by."\textsuperscript{51}

Fornication could be allowed to go on relatively unchecked so long as not too many unwanted children burdened the town with expense. But other problems could not be ignored. A sloop lying at a wharf was robbed of clothing, silver spoons, and sundry other objects.\textsuperscript{52} This burglary could have been committed by a landsman. In a similar case in the same year, a woman was the culprit.\textsuperscript{53} But seamen about to sail might be especially tempted to make off with some goods. Two sailors charged with stealing £19 worth of dry goods were found guilty. Only one of them was in custody, and he was sentenced to receive twenty stripes and pay triple damages, the usual penalty.\textsuperscript{54} Men used to shipboard fare seem to have had a craving for fresh meat, which they could perhaps ill afford, for there were numerous cases in the court records of seamen stealing sheep and hogs. The mate of a vessel stole three hogs from a sty e south of the battery and hid them aboard his ship. He was deprived of the fruits of his exploit by an informer. Several dozen fowls were missing from a ship in the harbor that same week.\textsuperscript{55}

Sailors exhibited other kinds of anti-social
behavior which strained relations with the townspeople. 
Most eighteenth century ships were armed, and seamen 
sometimes had to resort to the use of small arms to repel 
attackers. But gunplay had no place in a harbor. When 
some boys rowed out to view Portland man-of-war, 
they were ordered to move away, which they did not do. 
One of Portland's crew fired a musket over their heads 
to frighten them. The ball wounded a man working aboard 
another ship in the harbor. Though Captain Hawks of 
Portland took the man aboard, placed him under the 
surgeon's care, and paid him until he should be able 
to return to work, such irresponsible behavior could not 
have pleased the citizens of Boston. In a similar, 
but even less defensible incident, two sailors engaged 
in target practice on a wharf in the North End 
fired a number of shots. One ball entered a house, 
narrowly missing the occupants. Soon after, another 
came through the wall and struck a woman.

Brawls and mobs, in which seamen often managed 
to be involved, also upset the sober and peaceable 
citizenry. To be sure, sailors were not always at 
fault. One night in December 1755, three seamen were 
set upon by a like number of soldiers and one tar 
was seriously wounded. But gangs who roamed the 
streets causing trouble seem to have included sailors 
in the role of aggressor. On December 1, 1745, three
seamen and a ropemaker beat and severely wounded a cooper. Two of the seamen, at sea by the time of the trial, were found guilty in absentia. Racial and religious intolerance on the part of seamen accounted for some of the trouble. David Lewis was charged with being a member of a mob of forty men who beat and abused some Negroes and pushed them off the causeway to the Charlestown ferry. Three years before that, in 1744, a sailor was among those indicted for disrupting a Baptist service on Copp's Hill.

Ordination days and holidays were occasions for revelry, feasting, and sometimes brawling. On Christmas Day in 1746, six Boston seamen beat Constable John Cole, broke his staff, and tore his coat. Pope's Day, 1745, was the occasion for a particularly bloody encounter between mobs of "servants, sailors, workmen, apprentices and Negroes of the North and South Ends." Four years later, twenty-one individuals were tried in the Court of General Sessions of the Peace for their parts in another Pope's Day fracas; thirteen of these were engaged in maritime trades, and four were seamen.

At other times, the riot was caused by obvious threats to seamen and was aimed at specific individuals or institutions. The impressment riot of 1747 is a prime example of this. When Thomas Row gave in-
formation about smuggling to a customs officer, he was labelled an informer, led through the streets of Salem while having a live goose thrown at him and was told not to return to town. Cotton Mather, in noting a disturbance in which sailors had played a prominent part, was quick to point out that some of the culprits received judgements of God immediately by being wounded.

Many seamen, then, did not maintain a low profile in Massachusetts society, and as a result many feelings and prejudices of landsmen against them could find vindication. The seamen were at the bottom socially because that was where people who brawled, whored, and drank belonged.

All of Boston was close to the water; seamen were found living in all parts of the town. The North End was particularly known as the home of seafaring men. It was also the most populous section of town. Many captains and shipbuilders made their homes in the North End. It was an area of two and three story wooden houses for the most part. In 1707, 1708, and 1709 a number of captains applied for permission to erect dwellings on their properties in the North End. Among them were David Cutter, Andrew Wilson, Thomas Bell, and Thomas Miller. The size of these houses
ranged from twenty-one by sixteen feet to forty by twenty feet. All were within a stone's throw of the waterfront wharves and taverns. In 1714, Captain Benjamin Andrews was given permission to build a forty by twenty foot house in Atkins Street near the ropewalk in the South End. Three years later, Patrick Ogilvie, Boston mariner, was allowed to build a large house, fifty-five by thirty feet with an adjoining kitchen on his land next to the training field. With the exception of this last dwelling, the houses of captains were not much different in size from those of the other artisans who built at the same time, suggesting that the social and economic position of these masters was not significantly higher than that of their neighbors.

It is not clear where their crews resided. An item from the meeting of selectmen held on December 20, 1739 is suggestive. John McGuire, in accordance with town regulations, reported that four men had stayed in his house for periods of two to three weeks; all were sailors. Of course, many crewmen were kept aboard ship during a stay in port. Most crews were expected to rework the rigging of the ship and make general repairs as well as to supervise the unloading and loading of the cargo. The nature of his work made it impossible for the seaman to participate in the life of the town in the same way that a lands-
man could. The seaman was important in Boston not as an individual resident, but as a member of a very large and visible group of transients.

No one seemed to give much thought to the welfare of the sailors. A sixpence tax on each month's wages of fishermen and sailors went to support Greenwich Hospital. But merchant seamen could not retire there; it was reserved for naval pensioners. Old sailors were treated like common paupers, despite years of hard and faithful service. Churchwardens in Hampshire regularly noted gifts of from a sixpence to a shilling for passing sailors or their widows. While even the small possibility of upward mobility gave the merchant service a certain advantage over most land-based trades, the reality of the situation more than offset this. The actual short-term prospects for a working seaman included a seven day work week, danger, privation, and the possibility of a layoff. The expansion of the shipping industry helped by supplying some new command openings, but connections were still required for advancement. Subject more than any other group to the brutality of the press gang and naval service, reviled in the town as drunkards and ne'er-do'wells, seamen must have been people who for one reason or another could not fit into society's mold. Seamen of the eighteenth
century represented a commodity, needed but not respected as labor. They were angular social creatures, condemned to be the bottom rank in the hierarchical society of eighteenth century Boston.
APPENDIX A

HARVARD MEN AT SEA, 1700 - 1760

The following table is compiled from the capsule biographies given in volumes V to XIV of Clifford K. Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, 15 Vol. (Boston, 1873 - 1970). The page references are to volumes in this series.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>BIRTH</th>
<th>DEATH</th>
<th>UNRULY</th>
<th>SUCCESS</th>
<th>REFERENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christophers, C.</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>1682</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>V, 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gore, J.</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>1683</td>
<td>1720</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>V, 150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiswall, P.</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>1684</td>
<td>1767</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>V, 177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fales, T.</td>
<td>1711</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>1777</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>V, 578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillips, S.</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>1693</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>V, 644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowse, J.</td>
<td>1715</td>
<td>1695</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>VI, 86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherburne, W.</td>
<td>1719</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>1765</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>VI, 341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall, S.</td>
<td>1721</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>VI, 502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedge, B.</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>1705</td>
<td>1762</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>VII, 356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dowse, E.</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>1705</td>
<td>1733</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>VII, 510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodridge, T.</td>
<td>1726</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>VIII, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saltonstall, N.</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>1747</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>VIII, 263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rogers, J.</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>1708</td>
<td>1781</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>VIII, 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hicks, Z.</td>
<td>1729</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>1744</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>VIII, 585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cary, S.</td>
<td>1731</td>
<td>1713</td>
<td>1769</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>IX, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herrick, J.</td>
<td>1732</td>
<td>1714</td>
<td>1747</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>IX, 167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris, J.</td>
<td>1732</td>
<td>1713</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>IX, 186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorham, D.</td>
<td>1733</td>
<td>1712</td>
<td>1786</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>IX, 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wainwright, J.</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>IX, 448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunker, J.</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>1714</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>IX, 479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnell, S.</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1754</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>IX, 480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curwen, G.</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>1746</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>IX, 508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>CLASS</td>
<td>BIRTH</td>
<td>DEATH</td>
<td>UNRULY</td>
<td>SUCCESS</td>
<td>REFERENCE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willis, E.</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>1714</td>
<td>1801</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes²</td>
<td>IX, 606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodbury, W.</td>
<td>1735</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>IX, 612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downe, H.</td>
<td>1736</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>1791</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>X, 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis, J.</td>
<td>1737</td>
<td>1717</td>
<td>1742</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>X, 203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mower, R.</td>
<td>1738</td>
<td>1718</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>X, 306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charnock, W.</td>
<td>1743</td>
<td>1723</td>
<td>1743</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XI, 187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuttle, J.</td>
<td>1743</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>1758</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XI, 313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, W.</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>1812</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XI, 556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dummer, N.</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>1724</td>
<td>1751</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XI, 559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higginson, A.</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XI, 562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henshaw, J.</td>
<td>1748</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>XII, 268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marston, B.</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>1730</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>XII, 439</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paine, R.</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>1739</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XII, 462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidmarsh, W.</td>
<td>1749</td>
<td>1733</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XII, 489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lasingby, B.</td>
<td>1752</td>
<td>1732</td>
<td>1752</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XIII, 244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterson, J.</td>
<td>1752</td>
<td>1730</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>XIII, 276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warner, W.</td>
<td>1754</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>1761</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>XIII, 498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hicks, Z.</td>
<td>1756</td>
<td>1737</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>XIV, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill, H.</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>1763</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>XIV, 442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbs, B.</td>
<td>1759</td>
<td>1740</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>XIV, 442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark, J.</td>
<td>1760</td>
<td>1741</td>
<td>1819</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>Yes¹</td>
<td>XIV, 573</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²Moderately successful.

The following Harvard students were the sons of sea captains: Christophers, the Dowse brothers, Goodridge, Herrick, Woodberry, Bunker, Mower, Langdon, Charnock, Higginson, and Hicks.
CHAPTER I


5 Council of Trade and Plantations to the King, Calendar of State Papers, XXXII, 414.

6 Governor Jonathan Belcher to the Council of Trade and Plantations, Calendar of State Papers, XLII, 60.


9 Cotton Mather, The Sailor's Companion & Counsellor (Boston, 1709), Evans microcard 1406.

10 Ibid., 6.

11 Ibid., 38.

12 Ibid., 38.

13 Ibid., 39 - 40.
CHAPTER II


4 Ibid., 139.

5 Oxenford, A Treatise.

6 Davis, English Shipping, 136.

7 Ibid., 137.

8 Vice-Admiralty Court Records, Suffolk County Court House, Boston, Mass., II, 1, 18. £2 per month was the lowest wage paid to someone with seagoing experience; most sailors were paid more than this.

9 Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston (Boston, 1876 - 1909), vol. 14, 98. Hereafter cited as SRC.

10 Ibid., 98.

11 Vice-Admiralty, II, 53.

12 Boston would see the entry of colonial coasting vessels
and English trans-Atlantic traders. English coasting ships would, of course, be smaller than their ocean-going sisters, and the masters of these coasters would be paid less than £6 per month.


14 Morris, Government and Labor, 235.

15 Ibid., 241.


17 Hutchins, Maritime Industry, 222.

18 Ibid., 218

19 Ibid. 221.

20 Richard Pares, Yankees and Creoles: The Trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution (New York, 1956), 18.

21 Ibid., 20-21.

22 Warden, Boston Politics, 160.

23 12 BRC, 119-124.

24 Warden, Boston Politics, 198.

25 14 BRC, 12.


28 Morris, Government and Labor, 246.

29 Ibid., 251.

30 Ibid., 255.

31 Vice-Admiralty, II, 28, 52.
32 Boston Gazette, Sept. 25, 1721.
33 Boston Evening Post, June 8, 1761.
34 The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay (Boston, 1869 - 1922), IV, 148.
35 Ibid., I, 217.
36 Ibid., III, 318.
37 Bernard and Lotte Bailyn, Massachusetts Shipping, 1697 - 1714 (Cambridge, 1959), 58.
38 Morris, Government and Labor, 256.
39 Ibid., 231.
40 Ibid., 257.
41 Carl Ubbelohde, The Vice-Admiralty Courts and the American Revolution (Chapel Hill, 1960), 20.
42 Davis, English Shipping, 117.
43 Ibid., 114.
45 M. Dorothy George, London Life in the XVIIIth Century (New York, 1925), 234.
46 Marbleheaders, however, took boys of five and six years of age.
47 Salem Indentures, Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.
48 City of Boston Indentures, Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Mass., I - III (1734 - 1769).
49 Ibid., I, 146.
50 Ibid., III, 75.
51 Ibid., III, 149.
52 Ibid., III, 84, 98, 173.
(Notes to pages 23 - 29)

53 Salem Indentures, Feb. 26, 1760.
54 Acts and Resolves, I, 192.
55 Boston Gazette, Sept. 15, 1747; June 28, 1756.

CHAPTER III

4 Boston Gazette, Dec. 22, 1747.
5 Pennsylvania Gazette, Jan. 29, 1740/41.
6 Ibid., Jan 1, 1740/41.
7 Boston Evening Post, Aug. 13, 1749.
8 Pennsylvania Gazette, June 24, 1731; July 13, 1738.
10 Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, Nov. 26, 1767.
11 Pennsylvania Gazette, Mar. 11, 1734/35.
12 Boston Gazette, Dec. 22, 1747.
13 Pennsylvania Gazette, Feb. 8, 1732/33.

15 See note 57, page 25, above.

16 Boston Evening Post, Aug. 30, 1736.

17 Boston Gazette, Oct. 24, 1757.

18 Log of Desiré, Mariner's Museum.

19 Hunter's Virginia Gazette, May 22, 1752.

20 Purdie and Dixon's Virginia Gazette, June 6, 1766; Pennsylvania Gazette, July 8, 1736.

21 8 BRC, 126.


23 20 BRC, 296 - 298.

24 Pennsylvania Gazette, Nov. 26, 1730.

25 Ibid., May 6, 1731.


27 Boston Gazette, Oct. 15, 1722.


30 Boston Gazette, Mar. 2, 1724.

31 Pennsylvania Gazette, Jan. 20, 1729/30; Sept. 10, 1730.

32 Ibid., Oct. 16, 1729.

33 Boston Gazette, Nov. 29, 1756; May 16, 1757.

34 Boston Evening Post, June 28, 1762.

35 Pennsylvania Gazette, Oct. 9, 1729.

36 Sewall, Diary, 178.
(Notes to pages 35 - 41)

37 Boston Evening Post, June 12, 1738.
38 Ibid., Sept. 6, 1736.
39 Boston Gazette, May 16, 1757.
42 Sewall, Diary, 184.
43 15 BRC, 369.
47 See above, pages 8 - 11.
48 Boston Evening Post, Dec. 15, 1740.
49 Boston Gazette, Nov. 24, 1747.
50 Boston Evening Post, June 22, 1761.
51 Ibid., June 8, 1761.
52 Ibid., May 25, 1761.
53 Boston Gazette, Oct. 11, 1756.
54 Ibid., Nov. 29, 1756.
55 Ibid., June 29, 1757.
56 Ibid., June 9, 1760.
57 Boston Evening Post, May 25, 1761.
58 Ibid., June 28, 1762.
59 Michael Lewis, *British Ships and British Seamen* (New York, 1940), 27.

60 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, July 13, 1738.

61 *Boston Evening Post*, March 31, 1740.

62 *Boston Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1755.


64 *A Proclamation* (Boston, 1692), Evans microcard 619.


67 Ibid., Aug. 20, 1739.

68 Ibid., Aug. 4, 1740.

69 Ibid., May 11, 1741.

70 Ibid., July 6, 1741.

71 14 BRC, 77, 79.

72 Ibid., 84.

73 See note 37, page 19, above.


76 14 BRC, 127.

77 Shirley, *Correspondence*, I, 417.


79 *Boston Gazette*, May 16, 1757.

80 Ibid., May 15, 1758.
CHAPTER IV

1 Morison, Maritime History, 16.


4 Morison, Maritime History, 25.


6 Boston Gazette, Jan. 4, 1731.


8 Shipton, Harvard Graduates, XII, 354.

9 Morison, Maritime History, 25.

10 Shipton, Sibley's Harvard Graduates, V - XIV. See Appendix A for a listing of those Harvard students who went to sea.

11 Ibid., XIV, 442.

12 Ibid., IX, 448.

13 Ibid., V, 150.

14 Ibid., XII, 268.

15 Ibid., 462.

17 Ibid., 45.

18 Mariner's Mirror, VIII (1922), 248.


21 Ashton, ed., *Real Sailor Songs*, number 44.

22 Ibid., number 50

23 Ibid., number 46.

24 Ibid., number 47.


26 Ibid., 110.


30 Ibid., 85.

31 Ibid., 451.

32 Ibid., 705.

33 *Boston Evening Post*, Oct. 25, 1736.

34 *Acts and Resolves*, III, 318.


37 Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 266.

38 Ibid., 429.


40 *Boston Gazette*, Jan. 11, 1730; Aug. 2, 1756; *Boston Evening Post*, Dec. 8, 1735; Feb. 24, 1760; May 11, 1761.


42 Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness*, 226.

43 *Boston Evening Post*, Aug. 23, 1736.


45 *Acts and Resolves*, IV, 178. See for example Minute Book, Suffolk County Court of General Sessions of the Peace, Apr. 5, 1720, Suffolk County Court House, Boston, Mass.

46 *Boston Evening Post*, Aug. 23, 1736.

47 Gen Sess. of the Peace, Jan 27, 1752; 24 April, 1752. Bryant was ordered to pay £8, and when the sentence was pronounced he cried out, "You have done your worst, You can do no more, Damn you all." Upon hearing this outburst, the Court sentenced him to be a "Close Prisoner, in the goal and confined in the Dungeon until further order of the Court."

48 Gen. Sess. of the Peace, July 30, 1744.

49 The Court was concerned with two factors when it handled cases dealing with illegitimate children. These were punishment of the woman (but not of the man) and some means of assuring that the child would not be a financial burden on the public. Punishment usually took the form of a severe fine -- often as much as £3 or £4 -- in addition to a public whipping of ten strokes. The father was not punished so long as he maintained the child, usually at the rate of
3/6 per week in 1718. If the father could not be identified or located, the mother would be bound out to pay for the care of the child.

50 Boston Evening Post, July 4, 1737.
51 Ibid., Nov. 9, 1741.
52 Ibid., Dec. 15, 1735.
53 Ibid., Dec. 1, 1735; Dec. 15, 1735.
54 Gen. Sess. of the Peace, Jan. 23, 1753. The amount of the damages would amount to more than three years' net pay for most seamen.
55 Boston Evening Post, Nov. 15, 1736. See also Gen. Sess. of the Peace, Jan. 3, 1743/44.
56 Ibid., Aug. 4, 1760.
57 Pennsylvania Gazette, Apr. 5, 1739.
58 Boston Gazette, Dec. 15, 1755.
60 Ibid., July 27, 1747.
61 Ibid., Jan 30, 1743/44.
62 Acts and Resolves, XVI, 132.
63 Gen. Sess. of the Peace, Jan. 6, 1746/47.
64 Bridenbaugh, Cities in Revolt, 114.
66 See page 47, above.
67 Felt, Annals of Salem, II, 263.
69 Walter Muir Whitehill, A Topographical History of Boston (Cambridge, 1959), 27.
(Notes to pages 69 - 71)


73 29 *BRC*, 212.


75 15 *BRC*, 217.


BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES


Minute Book, Suffolk County Court of General Sessions of the Peace. 1743 - 1749. Suffolk County Court House, Boston, Mass.

Minute Book, Suffolk County Court of General Sessions of the Peace. 1749 - 1754. Suffolk County Court House, Boston, Mass.

Minute Book, Vice-Admiralty Court. II (1718 - 1726), Suffolk County Court House, Boston, Mass.


Alexander Purdie and John Dixon's *Virginia Gazette*.  
Williamsburg, Va. 1766 - 1770.

MICROTEXTS

*A Procession*... (Boston broadside, 1789), Evans microcard, number 21701.

*A Proclamation*... (Boston broadside, 1692), Evans microcard, number 619.

City of Boston Indentures. I - III, reel 1, Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va.

(Boston, 1709), Evans microcard, number 1405.

Salem Indentures. The Essex Institute, Salem, Mass.

PRINTED

Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, The. 22 Vols. (Boston, 1869 - 1922).


Essex Institute, The. Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750 - 1769. (Salem, 1934).


Reading...The Diary of Cotton Mather D.D., F.R.S., for the Year 1712. Manierre, William R., ed. (Charlottesville, 1964).


Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston. 39 Vol. (Boston, 1876 - 1909).


SECONDARY SOURCES


Crawford, Mary C. Among Old New England Inns. (Boston, 1907).


Drake, Samuel Adams. The Old Boston Taverns and Tavern Clubs. (Boston, 1886).

Drake, Samuel G. The History and Antiquities of Boston. (Boston, 1856).


Field, Edward. The Colonial Tavern. (Providence, 1897).


Gras, Norman S. and Ethel C. The Economic and Social History of an English Village, Crawley, Hampshire, AD 909 - 1928. (Cambridge, 1930).


Shattuck, Lemuel. Report of the City Council Appointed Committee to Obtain the Census of Boston for the Year 1845. (Boston, 1846).


Starbuck, Alexander. History of Nantucket: County, Island and Town. (Boston, 1924).


Thwing, Annie H. The Crooked and Narrow Streets of Boston, 1630 - 1822. (Boston, 1920).

Ubbelohde, Carl. The Vice-Admiralty Courts and the American Revolution. (Chapel Hill, 1960).


Watson, Harold F. The Sailor in English Fiction and Drama, 1550 - 1800. (New York, 1931).


Winsor, Justin. Memorial History of Boston, 1630 - 1880. 4 Vol. (Boston, 1886).
VITA

Clark Joseph Strickland


Pursued full-time graduate study at the College of William and Mary in the Department of History during the academic year 1970 - 71. The author held a teaching assistantship during that year.

Employed in June, 1972 as an assistant manuscript librarian by the Historical Society of Delaware, Wilmington, Del.