

Beyond the Banks: The Integrated Wooden Working World of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts' Cod Fisheries

Christopher Paul Magra

Cet essai examine la nature du travail dans la pêche de la morue du Massachusetts au dix-huitième siècle. Dès 1768, la morue séchée et salée apportait trente-cinq pour cent des revenus des exports de toute la Nouvelle Angleterre, ce qui l'a rendue l'export le plus valable pour cette région des colonies britanniques de l'Amérique du nord. Les historiens maritimes ont divisé la pêche et l'expédition en catégories analytiques séparées. Cependant, ma recherche sur les livres de comptes du dix-huitième siècle et sur les papiers d'expédition indique beaucoup de chevauchement entre la pêche et l'expédition. Dans beaucoup de cas les mêmes navires et les mêmes équipages ont travaillé à la pêche et aux voyages marchands pour les mêmes employeurs. La pêche et l'expédition ne peuvent donc pas être regardés comme deux mondes à part.

“It is usual with many of the seamen employed the summer season in the Whale and Cod fishery to proceed on [trade] voyages to the West-Indies...in the fish and lumber vessels, by which they employ themselves the three winter months, and so are ready for the spring [fishing] voyages.”¹

In the summer of 1774, skipper Joshua Burnham and his fishing company, which included George Pierce, Stephen Low, James Andrews, Samuel Burnham, Daniel Andrews, and Peter Edwards, left Ipswich, Massachusetts in the schooner *Polly* on a commercial fishing expedition, or “fare,” to the Grand Bank off Newfoundland. Their work did not end when they returned to port. At the tail end of 1774, when cold December winds and waters made fishing the North Atlantic more perilous and less productive, Burnham and some of his crew signed-on as merchant mariners for their Ipswich fish merchant employers, Francis and John Choat. The same hardy vessel that had taken them fishing now carried the men south on a trading voyage to warmer climes and slave plantations in Virginia. There, a variety of goods were exchanged for cereals and foodstuffs. The schooner *Polly*'s articles list Joshua Burnham as master. John Andrews shipped as mate, while Stephen Low, Joseph Burnham, and Daniel Andrews went as seamen. Three of the five-man crew had previously gone deep-sea fishing. There

1 “Considerations Upon the Act of Parliament, Whereby A Duty is laid of six Pence Sterling per Gallon on Molasses, and five Shillings per Hundred on Sugar of foreign Growth, imported into any of the British Colonies” (Boston: Printed and Sold by [Benjamin] Edes and [John] Gill, in Queen Street, 1764), 12–13. Early American Imprints, Series I: Evans #9625.

were three witnesses to “each Man’s Signing” the ship’s articles on 15 December 1774.² Thus, the same schooner and men with experience fishing were also employed in the distribution of dried, salted cod. The *Polly* and her crew were not exceptional in this regard.

This essay explores working lives in one of early America’s oldest and most lucrative businesses. Around the turn of the seventeenth century, small numbers of English fishermen established temporary fishing stations along the New England coastline and worked the waters near the shore before Pilgrims and Puritans settled permanently.³ And by 1768, dried, salted cod brought in 35 per cent of the total export revenue for all of New England, which made it the single most valuable export for this section of the British North American colonies.⁴ Dried, salted cod also represented the

2 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Polly*, 1771–1776, box 1, folder 4, James Duncan Phillips Library, Salem, Mass. (hereafter JDPL). An invoice for the schooner lists the outbound cargo as molasses, rum (most likely locally produced, “New England” rum), West India rum, sugar, cod, pollock, mackerel, train oil, pickled fish, “clove water” and salt. Burnham purchased beans and wheat in various Virginian ports and sailed home. The ship’s articles of agreement – a binding contract – listed such particulars as the destination and the wages; crew members had to sign it before departure.

3 For more on these ventures, see Brian Fagan, *Fish on Friday: Feasting, Fasting and the Discovery of the New World* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Phyllis Whitman Hunter, *Purchasing Identity in the Atlantic World: Massachusetts Merchants, 1670–1780* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 33–70; Todd Gray, “Fisheries to the East and West,” in “The Distant–Water Fisheries of South West England in the Early Modern Period,” in David J. Starkey, Chris Reid, and Neil Ashcroft, eds., *England’s Sea Fisheries: The Commercial Sea Fisheries of England and Wales since 1300* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), 98–100; Daniel Vickers, *Farmers and Fisherman: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630–1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 85–91; Faith Harrington, “‘Wee Tooke Great Store of Cod–fish’: Fishing Ships and First Settlements on the Coast of New England, 1600–1630,” in Emerson W. Baker et al., eds., *American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 191–216; Alaric Faulkner, “Archeology of the Cod Fishery: Damariscove Island,” *Historical Archeology* 19, no. 2 (1985), 57–86; Edwin A. Churchill, “Too Great the Challenge: The Birth and Death of Falmouth, Maine, 1624–1676,” PhD dissertation, University of Maine, 1979; David Beers Quinn, *England and the Discovery of America, 1481–1620* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974); Charles E. Clark, *The Eastern Frontier: The Settlement of Northern New England, 1610–1763* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 13–35; Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1955), 2–15; Richard A. Preston, “Fishing and Plantation: New England in the Parliament of 1621,” *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Oct. 1939), 29–43; Raymond McFarland, *A History of the New England Fisheries* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1911), 38–56; H.S. Burrage, ed., *Early English and French Voyages, Chiefly from Hakluyt, 1534 – 1658* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1906); and John Scribner Jenness, *The Isles of Shoals: An Historical Sketch*, 3rd ed (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), 46–57.

4 The second most valuable export commodity – livestock – represented only 20 per cent of this revenue stream. John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 108, Table 5.2. New England fish ranked sixth in value among British North American and Caribbean exports, 1764–1775,

fourth most valuable trade good in the Western Hemisphere for the British Empire on the eve of the American Revolution.⁵

Commercial fishing had always been an important source of employment for maritime workers in colonial America. But, the size and scope of the industry expanded over the course of the eighteenth century.⁶ Such maritime commercial expansion was part of a “Golden Age of Sail,” when more Anglo-American seamen and ships crossed the Atlantic Ocean than during any other early modern era.⁷ The eighteenth century, therefore, gives us the best window into life and work in this vibrant colonial enterprise.

Scholars who have studied eighteenth-century Anglo-American maritime labour tend to divide the wooden world of trade voyages from that of fishing expeditions.⁸ They

behind sugar products, tobacco, Newfoundland fish, bread and flour, and rice, in that descending order. See Stephen J. Hornsby, *British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power In Early Modern British America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2005), 26–28, especially Figure 2.1. For more on colonial New England’s cod trade, see James G. Lydon, “Fish for Gold: The Massachusetts Fish Trade with Iberia, 1700–1773,” *New England Quarterly* 54, no.4 (Dec. 1981), 539–582; “North Shore Trade in the Early Eighteenth Century,” *American Neptune* 28 (1968), 261–274; and “Fish and Flour for Gold: Southern Europe and the Colonial American Balance of Payments,” *Business History Review* 39 (1965), 171–83; William H. Bowden, “The Commerce of Marblehead,” Essex Institute, *Historical Collections* (1932), 117–145; and Ralph Greenlee Lounsbury, “Yankee Trade at Newfoundland,” *New England Quarterly* 3, no. 4 (Oct. 1930), 607–626.

5 See Hornsby, *British Atlantic, American Frontier*, 26–28, especially Figure 2.1. The value of the combined British fisheries, including New England and Newfoundland, made dried, salted cod the fourth most valuable export in the British Atlantic.

6 On growth in the colonial fishing industry in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, see below.

7 Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London: Macmillan & Company Limited, 1962).

8 No less an authority than Samuel Eliot Morison stated: “notwithstanding popular belief and congressional oratory, ex-fishermen were seldom found among crews of deep-sea merchantmen, at any period of our history.” Samuel E. Morison, *Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783–1860*, 3rd ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 136–137. Morison goes further in a footnote: “Fishermen were not used to discipline or to quick movements, and were apt to shy at laying out on yardarms.” *Ibid.*, 137, footnote #1. Also, see Daniel Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers In the Age of Sail* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005); and *Farmers and Fisherman*; Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Davis, *Rise*; and Raymond McFarland, *A History of the New England Fisheries* (New York: Published for the University of Pennsylvania by D. Appleton & Company, 1911). Vickers writes that in the early American fishing industry, “some” men “used an apprenticeship in the fishery as a springboard into a seafaring career.” However, the majority of fishermen laboured into their early thirties, “relinquished their berths to younger men,” and then drifted towards work as common seamen on trade voyages. Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 184. Elsewhere he states that “fishing and shipping were complementary industries ... throughout the seventeenth century, a good many men moved back and forth between the two.” Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*, 53, emphasis my own. He explains that during the eighteenth century ports such as Salem and its workers came to specialize in trade voyages, while others, such as Marblehead, concentrated on fishing expeditions. *Ibid.*, ch. 3. My work here reveals much movement back and

inform us that most fishermen worked deep-sea waters on board vessels ranging between 20 and 100 tons on four- to six-week expeditions between home ports and offshore banks. A separate group of men specially trained to labour on ocean-going vessels of over 100 tons burden shipped-out on transatlantic trade voyages that lasted months, even years. We are further informed that separate earnings systems were developed in the eighteenth century. Masters, mates, and seamen on trade vessels were given clearly delineated wages based on a rigid labour hierarchy, while members of fishing crews each earned the same share of the profits from the sale of their catches. Additionally, it is believed that separate modes of labour discipline emerged in the eighteenth century. The collective nature of ship life on fishing vessels, in which the skipper was not differentiated from the rest of the crew, is sharply contrasted with the authoritarian discipline that could be found on trade vessels, where masters had the legal authority to beat their crews. In short, fishing and shipping are commonly seen as involving different workers, competing modes of ship-borne authority, dissimilar pay systems, and even separate vessels.⁹

To be sure, fishing and shipping were not identical occupations. The labour process involved with catching, hauling in, and processing fish clearly separated these work activities. The master of a trade vessel was legally empowered to beat his crew into submission, while a fishing skipper was not. Commercial fishing expeditions typically involved work on North Atlantic waters, while labour on trade voyages took men around the Atlantic world. Fishing and trading vessels could be differently manned, as was the case with the *Polly*. Producing dried, salted cod and distributing it to overseas markets cannot be seen as precisely the same *modus operandi*.

None the less, work on eighteenth-century fishing expeditions and labour on trade voyages remained much more connected than has previously been credited. The same men were frequently utilized on both commercial fishing expeditions and trade voyages for the same merchant employers. The same hardy vessels even served double-duty on these expeditions and voyages. A “by-employment” labour system remained for many workers an inherent part of the commercial fishing industry in Massachusetts.¹⁰

forth between fishing and shipping even as late as the American Revolution.

9 Vickers more recently argues that kinship ties, community relations, and camaraderie at sea served in practice to mitigate the master’s legal authority. See *Young Men and the Sea*, 90–95 and 214–247. For a much different interpretation of the frequency with which masters abused their legal authority, see Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 205–253. In essence, Vickers argues that camaraderie and custom stayed the master’s hand, while Rediker argues that avarice and market forces forced his hand. Both scholars agree, however, that the master had the legal right to beat his crew.

10 By-employment is typically associated with agricultural labour. See, for example, Martin Bruegel, “The Social Relations of Farming in the Early American Republic: A Microhistorical Approach,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 26, no. 4 (2006), 523–553, especially 542–543; Joyce M. Mastboom, “By-Employment and Agriculture in the Eighteenth-Century Rural Netherlands: The Florijn/Slotboom Household,” *Journal of Social History* 29, no. 3 (spring 1996), 591–612. Vickers associates by-employment in eighteenth-century Massachusetts primarily with farming. Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 247–258. McCusker and Menard define it more broadly as a “diversity of occupations” and as “activities that supplemented income and helped make life more comfortable.” McCusker and Menard, *Economy*, 105, 206. In this article it refers to employment

Moreover, those who worked as skippers typically earned the highest annual incomes, which separated them from the rest of fishing crews just as higher pay set apart masters of merchant ships from their crews. There was much overlap between the production and distribution components of the colonial fishing industry. Coming to terms with this reality will help us better understand the nature of maritime labour in an important colonial enterprise.

Massachusetts maintained the principal fishing ports in mainland North America. Coastal communities there shipped 99 per cent of the cod that New England exported to southern Europe and Madeira from 1771 to 1772. The same ports shipped 45 per cent of New England's cod to the West Indies during this period. Massachusetts shipped 85 per cent of all the fish caught in New England in the early 1770s.¹¹ Marblehead and Gloucester, two major fishing communities in Massachusetts, caught 60 per cent of the annual haul for the entire New England region.¹²

Although other colonies had commercial fisheries, none equaled those in Massachusetts. In 1765, there were 4,405 workers employed in the Massachusetts cod fisheries. This figure corresponds to 8 per cent of the adult male working population among the 245,698 people counted in the colony's census.¹³ And the production of dried, salted cod benefited a larger portion of the colonial community outside of the immediate fishing industry. There were "spread effects," or ancillary benefits, associated with this production that stimulated commercial growth in the service, industrial, and agricultural sectors of the economy.¹⁴ The colonial shipbuilding industry especially benefited from backward linkages associated with the production and distribution of dried, salted cod. What is more, the fishing industry was a dynamic colonial enterprise.

Massachusetts' cod-fishing industry changed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For much of the seventeenth, the industry exploited inshore resources.¹⁵ Smaller, three-man crews – foreshipman, midshipman, and steersman – in

during slack times in deep-sea fishing.

11 British North American Customs Papers, 1765–1774, Massachusetts Historical Society (hereafter MHS).

12 Robert G. Albion, William A. Baker, and Benjamin W. Labaree, *New England and the Sea* (Mystic, Conn.: Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., 1972), 30.

13 For the size of the workforce, see Thomas Jefferson, Secretary of State, Report on the State of the Cod Fisheries, 1791, *American State Papers: Commerce and Navigation*, I: 13, Table 2. For the population figure, see Robert V. Wells, *The Population of the British Colonies in America before 1776: A Survey of Census Data* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 79. I worked out the figure of 8 per cent using Vickers' method, first factoring a 55 per cent male population and then factoring a 40 per cent demographic of men 15 to 45: "the male working population." Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 194n.

14 For more on spread effects, see McCusker and Menard, *Economy*, 23; and Melville H. Watkins, "A Staple Theory of Economic Growth," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 29, no. 2 (May 1963), 144–5.

15 Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, chap. 3, especially 122–126. Peter Pope defines these two fisheries: "Inshore fisheries are prosecuted from shore in day-to-day voyages by open boats on fishing grounds close to the coast; offshore fisheries are prosecuted from ships voyaging for weeks at a time to fishing banks, which may be days or even weeks sailing from land." Peter E.

shallops worked close to shore and near home ports. Back on shore, the men dressed and salted the fish on stages – enclosed wooden wharves. Workers then spread the filets on fish flakes, or open-air wooden platforms, for drying. At times, a specialist shoreman would help the fishermen process the catch.

In the eighteenth century, by contrast, most commercial fishermen headed to offshore banks to ply their trade.¹⁶ Larger vessels and local population booms resulted in seven-to-eight-man crews working on schooners far from home. Vessel ownership had contracted, and very few workers owned even a share of the schooner on which they went to sea. Fishermen tended to be born locally and still went into debt, but merchants had tightened credit terms because of the availability of labour.

Men from Massachusetts had also begun using the two-part combination cure, which the Dutch developed in the late fourteenth century.¹⁷ This cure changed the labour process in the colonial fishing industry. In the first stage, 20–100-ton schooners replaced six-ton shallops, permitting deep-sea fishing on banks where the men lowered handlines and hauled in cod.¹⁸ At sea, they would behead, gut, bone, and lightly salt the cod on board the schooners. During the second stage, the crew air-dried the catch on fish flakes in flake yards back in their home port.

Deep-sea fishing on offshore banks was central to commercial fishing in eighteenth century Massachusetts. Such work was physically demanding – a Boston writer referred to it as “one of the most labourious employments.”¹⁹ And Christopher Prince called it “the most trying of any employment.”²⁰ Fishermen had a gruelling, near-continuous schedule on the banks.²¹ Daniel Vickers estimates that they were on the job “most of the day and frequently in turns throughout the night.”²² But, deep-sea fishing formed only part of the industry. Workers did not stop working for employers and earning pay when they returned home from the banks at the end of autumn.

Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 14.

16 Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, chap. 4, especially 146–167.

17 Vickers refers to the combination cure as “a new cure.” Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 149. However, Pope notes that “similar processes had long been in use on the other side of the Atlantic.” Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 27. For more on the Dutch cure, see R.W. Unger, “The Netherlands Herring Fishery in the late Middle Ages: The False Legend of Willem Beukels of Biervliet,” *Viator* 9, (1978), 335–356.

18 For more on shallops, see Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 121, especially footnote 83. The most systematic examination of schooners is Basil Greenhill, *The Merchant Schooners*, first pub. 1951, 2nd ed., (Annapolis, Md: Naval Institute Press, 1988). Also see Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 145–146.

19 *Boston Evening Post*, 28 Nov. 1763.

20 Crawford, ed., *Autobiography*, 16.

21 John Groves and the crew of the schooner *Nancy* worked on the Grand Bank for 46 days in July and August 1795. Log of the schooner *Nancy*, 1795–1796, Ship’s Log Books, microfilm #91, reel 3, JDPL. Skippers George Stevens and Thomas Woodberry, together with their respective crews, worked on the Grand Bank for 52 days June–August 1770. Log of an unnamed schooner, 1774, George Stevens Logbooks, 1768–1774, MHS.

22 Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 122, 150.

By-employment remained the norm in the fishing industry, even as late as the American Revolution. Each year, Massachusetts men went on fishing expeditions in spring, summer, and autumn. They then shipped themselves on trade voyages, mostly involving fish, during winter. This was a means by which profit maximizing fish merchants might avoid leaving their most capital-intensive investments, their schooners, idle and rotting in harbours.²³

While early fishing shallows were not suitable for trade voyages, eighteenth-century schooners typically were.²⁴ Fish merchants in Ipswich commonly used their schooners for both activities. From 1772 to 1774, the *Polly* went out on six fishing fares and re-exported West Indian trade goods and freighted dried cod to Virginia, Maryland, and the Carolinas.²⁵

A similar pattern repeated itself throughout Massachusetts fishing ports. During winter, the vessels in the colony's Atlantic cod trade freighted primarily "refuse"-grade, dried, salted cod to West Indian plantations to trade for sugar products and to plantations in the American south in exchange for provisions.²⁶ In Ipswich, for example, between 1768 and 1770 the schooner *Neptune* set sail on at least five fishing fares in spring, summer, and autumn; during winter, she freighted refuse-grade, dried, salted cod to Dominica and to Virginia and Maryland.²⁷ In Gloucester, on Cape Anne, between 1762 and 1774, fish merchant Daniel Rogers's vessels – including the schooners *Fame*, *George*, *Hannah*, *Liberty*, *Lucky*, *Rachel*, and *Two Brothers* – deep-sea fished and made

23 In 1763, Robert "King" Hooper and Jeremiah Lee carefully calculated the costs of sending a fishing vessel and crew out to sea. They were two of the foremost fish merchants in Marblehead, Mass., and calculated that "the first Cost of a Banker" – a vessel capable of working offshore fishing banks – was £500. They further determined the total cost for purchasing a single banker and outfitting a crew for one year to be £1,135. "Calculations respecting outfits of a Fishing vessel," Dec. 1763, Ezekiel Price Papers, 1754–1785, MHS. Therefore, fishing vessels represented 44 per cent of the capital necessary to get into the fishing industry.

24 According to Pope, seventeenth-century English fishing vessels in the migratory fishery at Newfoundland typically served in both fishing and trading capacities: "the vessels themselves were largely interchangeable." Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 104. Barry Cunliffe has similarly noted that medieval northern Europeans tended to use their fishing vessels to transport goods overseas "in slack periods." Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and Its Peoples, 8000 BC–AD 1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 542.

25 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Polly*, 1771–1776, box 1, folder 4, JDPL. For similar patterns of dual usage in Ipswich, see Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Abigail*, [c.1762], box 1, folder 1, JDPL; Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Neptune*, [1766–1770], box 1, folder 3, JDPL; and Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Dolphin*, [c.1762–64], box 1, folder 1, JDPL.

26 Edward Payne, a Boston fish merchant, defined refuse-grade dried, salted cod as "that being only such as is over Salted, Sun Burned, and broken, & thereby rendered unfit for any Market in Europe." "In the Preamble to a late Act of Parliament," 1764, attributed to Edward Payne, Ezekiel Price Papers, 1754–1785, MHS. Purchasers for these plantations used the refuse to supplement slave diets.

27 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Neptune*, [1766–1770], Box 1, Folder 3, JDPL.

trade voyages to Virginia, the Carolinas, and the West Indies.²⁸ In Beverly, in the early 1770s, fish merchant Thomas Davis sent his schooners *Swallow*, *Swan*, and *Volant* on fishing fares during spring, summer, and autumn before they sailed on trade voyages to Virginia every December.²⁹ In nearby Marblehead, fish merchant Richard Pedrick's schooner *Molly* left in the winter of 1768–69 with refuse-grade dried cod for the sugar island of Barbados; the vessel also went on at least eleven fishing fares between 1766 and 1771.³⁰

In the prominent commercial port of Salem, dual usage of capital-intensive vessels was common.³¹ During the 1750s and 1760s, fish merchant Timothy Orne sent his schooners *Esther* and *Molly* on fishing fares and then on trade voyages to Maryland, the Carolinas, and Monte Christo in the West Indies.³² Similarly, fish merchant and distillery owner Richard Derby utilized his schooners *Three Sisters* and *Three Brothers* on fishing fares to offshore banks, and on trade voyages to Virginia and South Carolina, in the 1750s.³³ The dual usage of these vessels made merchants' most capital intensive assets valuable and productive year-round.

Similar to schooners, many men who went on fishing fares in the spring, summer, and autumn also went on trade voyages during the winter. For the workers, such by-employment made annual earnings from fish merchant employers possible. As for the *Polly's* crew, Joshua Burnham worked for the Choats as skipper/master of various Ipswich schooners on trips to offshore banks and then to ports in the Southern and West Indian colonies throughout the 1760s and early 1770s. Between 1766 and 1774, John Andrews laboured as sharesman/mate alongside Burnham on these trips.³⁴

Well into the eighteenth century, by-employment was the norm throughout Massachusetts' fishing ports. Gloucester fish merchant Daniel Rogers typically employed men as fishers and merchant mariners. Elisha Bray, Alford Davis, and Benjamin Webber, Jr. worked on fishing fares to offshore banks during the first three seasons of the year for Rogers before they signed on for winter trade voyages to Virginia during the early 1770s.³⁵ In nearby Beverly, 1771–73, John Lovett skippered the schooner *Volant* for merchant Thomas Davis and was master on her trade voyages to Virginia.³⁶ In Salem, Benjamin Henderson served as mate on board fish merchant

28 Daniel Rogers Account Book, 1770–1790, JDPL.

29 Thomas Davis Account Book, 1771–78, JDPL.

30 Richard Pedrick Account Book, 1767–1784, MDHS; and Richard Pedrick Papers, schooner *Molly*, [c.1766–71], box 2, folder 28, MDHS.

31 For more on Salem's importance as a commercial port, see Vickers, *Young Men and the Sea*.

32 Timothy Orne Shipping Papers, JDPL: schooner *Esther*, 1759–61, box 5, folder 2; schooner *Esther*, 1760–68, box 5, folder 3, JDPL; schooner *Molly*, 1751–57, box 7, folder 9; schooner *Molly*, 1751–57, box 7, folder 10; schooner *Molly*, 1758–60, box 7, folder 11; and schooner *Molly*, 1761–66, box 7, file 12, JDPL.

33 Richard Derby Ledger, 1757–1776, JDPL.

34 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, JDPL.

35 Daniel Rogers Account Book, 1770–1790, JDPL.

36 Thomas Davis Account Book, 1771–78, JDPL.

Timothy Orne's schooner *Esther* (Tobias Davis, Jr, master) on a trade mission to South Carolina in late 1759 and as master to Maryland the following two Decembers; he also went on at least eighteen fares as the *Esther*'s skipper between 1760 and 1764.³⁷ In Marblehead, Jonas Dinnis was skipper for fish merchant Thomas Pedrick for at least three fishing fares in 1761 and 1762; in 1761, he was a mariner on Pedrick's schooner *Salisbury* (Thomas Dixey, master) on a trade voyage to Cadiz, Spain. Joseph Pribble was a mariner on this transatlantic trip in 1761, after being a sharesman for Pedrick on a fare earlier that year. William Pedrick worked as a ship's boy on this trade mission, after being a "cuttail" on a fishing fare for his relation, Thomas Pedrick.³⁸ John Chin Knight, who had worked his way up from cuttail to "sharesman" to skipper between 1768–1775, was also master of fish merchant William Knight's schooner *Fox* in 1778.³⁹ These were the same men working for the same employer, producing and distributing dried, salted cod.

All these maritime labourers received pay for trade voyages as well as for fishing expeditions. As we saw above, conditions and pay differed markedly in the two systems, but the two worlds overlapped substantially. Once a colonial fish merchant knew how much and what type of fish he had to sell, as well as the current market price per unit weight of each grade, a total value was placed on the catch and he and the skipper sat down to reach a financial settlement for fishing company (the skipper and the fishermen he recruited). If dried cod was in great demand in overseas markets (which was ascertained principally through correspondence between merchants and the reports of returning ship captains) and it could fetch a high price, the value of catches and workers' earnings were adjusted accordingly. That is to say, these earnings would only be adjusted if workers operated on a share system. The fishing company returned any left-over "great" general goods to the merchant. The total cost of the "small" general goods for each fare was then divided equally among the company and charged to crewmembers' individual accounts with the merchant.⁴⁰ If barrels of "train" oil had been made, each man would receive a share of the overall value of the oil.⁴¹ In each annual settlement involving a share system, the fishing company's portion of the value of the fish caught on each fare typically amounted to five-eighths. This five-eighths was then divided equally among the sharesmen in the fishing company, regardless of how many fish each man

37 Timothy Orne Shipping Papers, schooner *Esther*, 1759–61, Box 5, Folder 2, JDPL.

38 Thomas Pedrick Account Book, 1760–1790, Marblehead Museum & Historical Society, Marblehead, Massachusetts, (hereafter cited as MDHS). A cuttail was a younger, inexperienced hand on board a fishing vessel.

39 William Knight Account Book, 1767–1781, JDPL. A sharesman was the older, experienced hand on board a fishing vessel that operated on a profit sharing system.

40 "Great" general goods typically consisted of work-related necessities for the trip: barrels of mackerel or clams for bait, barrels of water, hogsheads of salt, candles, hooks, lines, leads, extra sail cloth, powder, shot, gloves, and mittens. "Small" general goods were mostly personal goods that made the trip less arduous: soap, brooms, brushes, cords of wood, paper, cider, rum, molasses, pepper, beans, flour, beef, oil, and lamps. The most detailed accounts for these items include: Thomas Davis Account Book, 1771–78, JDPL; William Knight Account Book, 1767–1781, JDPL; and Miles Ward Ledgers, 1765–1772, JDPL.

41 Cod liver oil could lubricate various machines, or "trains"; hence "train oil."

actually caught. Fish counts were, in effect, carefully contrived vernacular calibrations of rank, age, and experience.⁴²

At times, fishing crews went to sea on the count system. In this less customary pay system, workers were given pre-arranged pay rates based on the number of fish caught. Usually, men agreed on a rate per every thousand fish caught. For example, in 1771 merchant John Stevens paid John Perry £19.12.10 for 3,272 fish caught on a single fare at £6 per thousand fish.⁴³ In a rare instance in which the terms of the count system were contractually recorded, Gloucester merchant Ezekiel Woodward, Jr. agreed in 1762 to “Engage to Give Joshua Burnham Six Pounds Thirteen Shillings and 4 [pence] for Each Thousand of Cod fish said Burnham Shall Catch on Board my Schooner [*Abigail*] this fall fare on the Banks & Bring home.”⁴⁴ Burnham and the crew of the *Polly* operated on a count system when they went to the Grand Bank in 1774.⁴⁵ Such a method of piece work encouraged aggressive competition and abolished customary pay distinctions between skilled and unskilled labour. If one man worked hard and was lucky, he could catch a lot of fish and make more than another labourer, regardless of age or experience.

Neither system benefited all workers equally. The share system privileged age over competency, while the count system ignored more customary benefits associated with seniority and tenure. However, the workers in my study preferred them to straight wage labour.⁴⁶

Workers in the cod fisheries did not typically earn straight wages during the eighteenth century. There is modest evidence that Robert Trelawny introduced such wages in his failed mid-seventeenth-century attempt to establish a permanent resident fishing station at Richmond Island off the coast of Maine.⁴⁷ Apparently John Stevens tried to do the same in Gloucester in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Yet, for the most part maritime labourers employed in the fishing industry had an aversion to this

42 There were five sharesmen and only two cuttails on board the schooner *Esther* (Benjamin Henderson, skipper), during an autumn fare in 1760. The reported fish count was that the skipper and one other man each caught exactly 2,419 cod; the remaining three sharesmen were supposed to have each caught precisely 2,418; and the cuttails caught 1,860 and 1,524 each. Timothy Orne Ledgers, 1762–1767, JDPL.

43 John Stevens Account Book, 1769–75, JDPL.

44 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Abigail*, [c.1762], box 1, folder 1, JDPL.

45 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Polly*, 1771–1776, box 1, folder 4, JDPL.

46 I base this assessment on three pay systems that appear in the fish merchants’ ledgers that I cite in this essay. A straight wage system involved a flat payment for labour that disregarded the number of fish caught.

47 Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 190–191. Pope ingeniously demonstrates the ways in which Trelawny’s fishermen equated these wages with portage, or private venture they would have received in the migratory fishery. In other words, the early workers felt they were receiving compensation for not getting the chance to sell any venture on the return trip to England. Pope argues that such logic originated the term portledge bill for a waged agreement.

48 John Stevens paid Gideon Carter “wages” for a trip “to the Banks with Phillip Babson” in 1770. David Walles, Jr. deposited in an account with Stevens his “Wages to the Banks” with John Derry Skipper at an unidentifiable date. See John Stevens Account Book, 1769–75, JDPL.

form of payment.⁴⁹ Such antipathy was common among workers in other early modern industries.⁵⁰ In order of usage, then, those who worked on eighteenth-century fishing expeditions went on the share system, the count system, and straight wages.⁵¹ Whenever a straight wage system was used, fishermen and merchant mariners were both wage labourers. In addition, both wooden worlds applied a sliding pay scale, which further complicates the notion that competing pay systems were utilized in fishing and shipping in the eighteenth century.

The actual earnings maritime labourers made for fishing expeditions varied depending on which pay system was employed, the number and weight of fish caught (which depended on environmental and biological factors), and the price of cod. However, on average, between 1750 and 1775, older, experienced hands typically earned £10–£20 per fare, usually for three fares a year, while younger lads averaged £5–£10 per fare.⁵² Put another way, men of all ages and abilities who worked on fishing expeditions could earn between £15–£60 for labour in the spring, summer, and autumn.

Perhaps skippers operating on a share system were actually “paid on exactly the same terms” as the rest of the crew, creating less of a gap between skipper and crews than existed between masters and men on trade ships.⁵³ However, even when workers

49 Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 185, 188–189. Vickers writes that during the eighteenth century “free market relations” between labour and capital in the cod fisheries had “supplanted” more traditional relations in the cod fisheries. Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 203. But, he does not define these relations as wage labour or deny that fishermen preferred shares. For bold, yet unsubstantiated, claims that the Newfoundland cod fishing industry converted completely to wage labour by the mid-eighteenth century, see Harold Adams Innis, *The Codfisheries: The History of an International Economy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1940), 151–152; and Ralph Greenlee Lounsbury, *The British Fishery at Newfoundland 1634–1763* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1934), 90.

50 Christopher Hill, “Pottage for Freeborn Englishmen: Attitudes to Wage–labour,” in Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth–Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), 219–238.

51 This point represents a departure from McFarland and is more in line with Vickers. See McFarland, *History*, 96–97; and Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 162, especially footnote 31.

52 I calculated average earnings from merchants’ account books that I list in this article. Younger, inexperienced, and therefore less productive, cuttails could only earn a flat rate for every fish they caught. In addition, cuttails earned a small annual wage that was referred to as “gratis money,” money that was separate, or free, from the count of their fish. Evidence that gratis money was provided to younger workers can be found in William Knight Account Book, 1767–1781, JDPL; and Thomas Pedrick Account Book, 1760–1790, MDHS. For example, William Knight’s Marblehead schooner *Molly* left after 22 September 1767 on an autumn fare with a seven-man crew; four sharesmen and three cuttails. Of the latter, Samuel Andrews, the “single,” caught fish worth £12.2.8, plus £0.8.0 in gratis money (in inflated colonial Massachusetts’ currency); Thomas Salter, the “double,” £10.17.3 worth plus £0.8.0; and Christopher Oaks, the “swallow,” £6.7.10 worth plus £0.5.0. Gratis money had been provided to younger, less-skilled workers in the Newfoundland fisheries since at least the seventeenth century. Pope, *Fish into Wine*, 175, 186–7. Pope suggests that this development led eventually to “the broader trend to a greater emphasis on wages in the remuneration of skilled workers.” *Ibid.*, 187.

53 Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 151.

laboured on the share system there were cuttails who did not receive earnings equivalent to the rest of the crew. Shares were reserved for sharesmen. Also, on the count system, and every time straight wages were the order of the day, earnings were anything but equal. What is more, when we take into account the fact that skippers commonly worked as masters, and sharesmen typically laboured as mates and common seamen, then a sliding wage scale emerges *even* between sharesmen and skippers who operated on a share system on fishing expeditions.

Fishermen who did double-duty as merchant mariners on trade voyages were able to earn annual incomes from their fish merchant employers. In Salem in 1753, just before the Seven Years' War, masters of schooners on trade voyages earned £1.17.4 per month, mates £1.12.0, and mariners £1.6.8.⁵⁴ In Ipswich in 1774 similar masters earned £2.8.0 per month, mates £1.12.0, and mariners £1.6.8.⁵⁵ In general, wages on trade ships typically ran between £1.14.0 and £2.18.0 per month.⁵⁶

Additionally, maritime labourers could supplement their earnings on these trade voyages in a variety of ways. The foremost means by which they could pad their earnings involved certain trade "privileges." In a typical voyage from Massachusetts to the Southern slave plantations, Burnham mastered the schooner *Neptune* on a passage to Virginia and Maryland in the winter of 1768–69. Most of the crew was "shipped" on 22 November. The final seaman was added on 5 December. The master received £2.8.0 per month, the mate £1.12.0, and each of the four seamen £1.6.8. Their "time on board" was listed as four months and twelve days for everyone except the delinquent seaman, who was on board for three months and twenty days. The crew's "wages due," which included any advance wages and deductions for the Greenwich Hospital tax, were as follows: £8.3.3 for the master, £4.16.5 for the mate, £3.19.4 each for the three original seamen, and £3.8.8 for their late-arriving colleague. In addition, the Choats had allowed Burnham space for 100 bushels in the schooner's hold for his own trade goods, the mate fifty, and each seaman thirty-five.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, there is no record of what type of trade good the men used, or how much they earned in trade for their items. But, it is probable that Burnham, as master, made more money than the rest of the crew as a result of having greater space in the hold for trade goods.⁵⁸

54 Timothy Orne Shipping Papers, Schooner *Molly*, 1751–57, box 7, folder 10, JDPL.

55 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, Schooner *Polly*, 1771–1776, box 1, folder 4, JDPL.

56 Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), Figure 6, 414.

57 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, schooner *Neptune*, [c.1768–70], box 1, folder 3, JDPL. For additional evidence of similar privileges, see Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817: schooner *Abigail*, [c.1761–62], box 1, folder 1; schooner *Dolphin*, [c.1764], box 1, folder 1; schooner *Endeavor*, [c.1762–64], box 1, folder 1, JDPL; and Timothy Orne Shipping Papers, schooner *Molly*, 1758–60, box 7, folder 11, JDPL. Since 1729 Parliament had required American colonists, particularly those in maritime commercial activities, to pay sixpence every month; hence its pseudonym the "Sixpence Duty." The profits from the duty were meant to support a seaman's hospital located in Greenwich, England. See Allyn B. Forbes, "Greenwich Hospital Money," *New England Quarterly* 3, no. 3 (July 1930), 519–526.

58 Workers on trade voyages had enjoyed this "privilege" from at least the twelfth century,

If maritime labourers needed ready money in a hurry, they could negotiate for an advance on their wages for the trade mission. Each crew member of the *Polly* in 1774 received one month's advance wages: £2.8.0 for the master, £1.12.0 for the mate, and £1.6.8 for each of the three seamen.⁵⁹ Burnham, his mate, and three seamen all obtained similar advances for a voyage from Ipswich to the West Indian island of Dominica in December 1766.⁶⁰

Through such advance wages, monthly wages, and trading privileges, workers in the commercial fishing industry could earn pay above and beyond what they made on fishing fares. In a year in the mid-to-late eighteenth century, experienced fishermen, who were more likely than younger men to be taken on trading voyages, could earn £10–£20 per fare for three fares a year, £1.6.8 for each month as common merchant seamen, and income from privileges. They typically worked southern trade routes December–March and might sell their privilege for a modest £2. Thus, a sharesman/common seaman could earn between £38 and £68 each year for his part in producing and distributing dried cod. As mate on the trade voyage, they received higher wages and a greater privilege. Factoring in the typical £1.12.0 per month for mates, the standard privilege of 50 bushels, and £2 for privilege, a sharesman/mate could have earned £39–£69 annually. The skipper/master of course could earn the most on a yearly basis – evidence of a sliding pay scale.

Skippers performed a host of duties and responsibilities not shared by the rest of the crew and were the most remunerated. One of the first ways in which a skipper stood apart involved the process of labour recruitment in the fishing industry. While still on land it fell to the skipper to recruit a crew, or “company.” At sea, a host of work-related duties further separated the skipper from his crew. First and foremost, commanders of fishing vessels were skilled in the art of navigation. They were responsible for taking daily observations, recording the speed and direction of winds and ocean currents, writing down depth levels, noting the condition of the sea and weather, and calculating longitude and latitude. Moreover, they needed to plot a course between home port and fishing waters, and it fell to them to make arguably the most important decision of an expedition: where to fish. Skippers also acted as agents, or supercargoes, for their vessel-owning merchants on trade voyages. This role meant that these men were entrusted with their

and in Ralph Davis's words it became a “customary right” in the English shipping industry by the eighteenth. See Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, 130–131; and Davis, *Rise*, 147. By contrast, Billy G. Smith has examined merchant mariners' earnings in eighteenth-century Philadelphia and finds privileges there were “more often...reserved for captains than extended to the entire crew.” *The “Lower Sort”: Philadelphia's Laboring People, 1750–1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 113, footnote 67. Whether Philadelphia merchants were or were not unique in this matter, the master's increased earning potential was common throughout the British Atlantic world according to Davis. “On the whole,” he writes, “the valuable privileges were privileges of the master.” Davis, *Rise*, 150.

59 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, schooner *Polly*, 1771–1776, box 1, folder 4, JDPL.

60 Joshua Burnham Papers, 1758–1817, schooner *Neptune*, [c.1768–70], box 1, folder 3, JDPL. Also see Thomas Davis Account Book, 1771–78, JDPL.

merchant employer's reputation, along with his vessel and commodities, on trade missions.⁶¹

According to Vickers, skippers earned no more than crewmen, and so their position represented "merely the first among equals"; in contrast, a more rigid labour hierarchy gave a master of a vessel on a trading voyage the highest wages.⁶² Yet, skippers commonly *were* masters and routinely commanded the same vessel on fishing expeditions and trade voyages, which reality blurs the lines between these competing images. As we saw above, sharesmen/common seamen could earn £38–£68 each year for producing and distributing dried, salted cod. On a share system, the skipper earned £30–£60 for fishing in the spring, summer, and fall, just like the sharesmen. However, masters typically earned £2.8.0 for each month they headed a trade voyage and could sell nearly three times as much of trade goods as the common seamen. Thus, all things being equal, in the third quarter of the eighteenth century skippers/masters in Massachusetts could earn £45–£75 each year, or nearly £7 more than the sharesman/common seaman.⁶³ This figure added up year after year.

The skipper was not the first among equals on a fishing vessel. Skippers wore many hats and bore different types of stress, and the overall success of the industry depended in no small part on their endeavours. Such multi-faceted additional responsibilities explain why skippers/masters earned more on an annual basis than sharesmen/common seamen. His position was more powerful than anyone else's on board because it represented a gateway to higher annual income, and all that that entailed. Higher remuneration amounted to recognition (as opposed to exploitation), increased purchasing power, and some amount of social prestige. In addition, an unquantifiable measure of status must have gone along with the responsibility of recruiting and commanding men on fishing expeditions and trade voyages. Thus, skippers stood above their fishing crews in ways that mirror the distance between masters and merchant mariners.

In sum, by-employment was the norm in the eighteenth-century commercial cod fishing industry – the most lucrative export sector in Massachusetts' pre-Revolution economy. In many instances the same vessels and crews worked on fishing and trading voyages for the same employers. As a result, there was much overlap between fishing and shipping. There were wage labourers in both work activities, and being skipper on a fishing vessel, much like serving as master on a trade ship, brought higher annual income than other workers could achieve. In fact, on many occasions skippers and masters were the same person. And a sliding pay scale operated on fishing vessels just as it did on trade voyages. It is therefore inaccurate to portray fishing expeditions and trade voyages in a way that only contrasts or divides these occupations. Fishing and shipping cannot be seen as two completely separate wooden worlds in the eighteenth century. Much overlap

61 On the skipper's duties on land and at sea, see Christopher Paul Magra, "The New England Cod Fishing Industry and Maritime Dimensions of the American Revolution," PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2006, chap. 1.

62 Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 151.

63 I have not deflated these earnings in terms of living costs such as food and board.

remained between fishing and shipping in colonial America, even as late as the American Revolution.

An integrated analysis of fishing and shipping and the evaluation of annual incomes holds broader implications for the social history of poverty in early America. Some scholars have portrayed the mainland colonies as the “best poor man’s country” in the Atlantic world.⁶⁴ This interpretation of colonial America as an exceptional work environment in which high-paying jobs were readily available has been challenged by scholars who maintain that poverty was widespread and social mobility was rare.⁶⁵ Colonial fishermen, in particular, have been seen as nearly destitute.⁶⁶ Being a fisherman in eighteenth-century Massachusetts has been equated with rigorous manual labour, chronic debt, and a low standard of living. Year by year, many poor fishermen struggled to survive on “annual earnings” that increased only “from about £20 sterling in the 1660s and 1670s to £25–£30 sterling on the eve of the Revolutionary War.”⁶⁷ To be sure, existing poverty may have motivated men to take up more than one job during the year. Yet, the fact that the workers who took advantage of these opportunities were well compensated complicates the portrait of impoverished fishermen.

The earnings of those who worked in the colonial fishing industry did not cease at the end of fishing seasons, and “annual earnings” for fishermen did not simply amount to “£25–£30 sterling on the eve of the Revolutionary War.” Such conclusions are accurate only if we limit our discussion of the fishing industry to deep-sea handliners of cod who worked offshore banks. When we extend our vision beyond the banks, as we saw above, a sharesman/common seaman could earn between £38 and £68 each year, a sharesman/mate between £39 and £69, and a skipper/master between £45 and £75.

Such annual earnings compare favourably to other eighteenth-century colonial occupations. According to Billy G. Smith, day labourers at standardized wages in Philadelphia during this time period could potentially earn just over £59 in annual income. However, these earnings assume wage earners were employed “six days each week throughout the year,” which was an employment record Smith maintains was “rarely attained.”⁶⁸ “Much more prevalent” annual earnings for common day labourers in the Quaker City was £41.⁶⁹ During the same time period, merchant mariners in Philadelphia earned a maximum annual income, assuming full annual employment, of £49 during war times, when wage rates were inflated.⁷⁰ Yet, Smith finds that this figure was “abnormally high,” and that peace time wages “slackened.”⁷¹ During periods

64 See, for example, Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988); and James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man’s Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1972).

65 See, for example, Smith, *The “Lower Sort”*; and Nash, *Urban Crucible*.

66 Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*.

67 *Ibid.*, 168–169.

68 Smith, *The “Lower Sort,”* 109.

69 *Ibid.*, 112.

70 *Ibid.*, 113.

71 *Ibid.*, 115.

without conflict in the 1760s and 70s, sailors earned annual incomes that were 10–37 per cent less than the inflated war-time average.⁷² According to Gary Nash, between 1750 and 1775 workers in colonial America typically earned £8–£40 annually, or £0.13.4–£3.6.8 per month.⁷³ Work in the fishing industry, then, paid slightly more than other occupations.

Of course, by-employment could have been the norm throughout early America. Other sorts of workers could have supplemented their income in one area through work in another area. Therefore, income by profession may be an incomplete measure of annual income for early American workers in general. If we knew the full annual earnings (as opposed to more narrowly defined occupational earnings) of workers in other sectors of the colonial economy, then we would be in a better position to evaluate the income levels of those involved in commercial fishing. We would also know more about colonial economies, material conditions, and living standards.

Acknowledgements:

Several scholars provided constructive criticism on earlier drafts of this article. I particularly want to thank Jeffrey Auerbach, Ronald Davis, Thomas Devine, James Henretta, Marcus Rediker, and Josh Sides. These skillful pilots pointed out shallow waters and sandbars to avoid, though I plotted my own course in the end. I would also like to thank the *Northern Mariner's* editor, Roger Sarty, and its anonymous readers for their help bringing this vessel into port. This article is dedicated to my mother, Maryann. She has taken-on many roles and worked very hard to raise her children.

72 Ibid., Table 6, “Indices of mariners wages (base year = 1762), 1750–1800,” 114.

73 Nash, *Urban Crucible*, Figure 7, 415. Here it is assumed that the figures for the “lower 50 per cent of decedents” pertained to workers. Other statistics for colonial workers’ wages are given in local currency, which prevents comparison from colony to colony. See “Daily Wages of Selected Types of Workmen, by Area: 1621 to 1781,” *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957*, 2nd ed., (Washington, DC: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1961), 771. The fact that compensation in these statistics is based on both time and piece work further complicates direct comparisons.