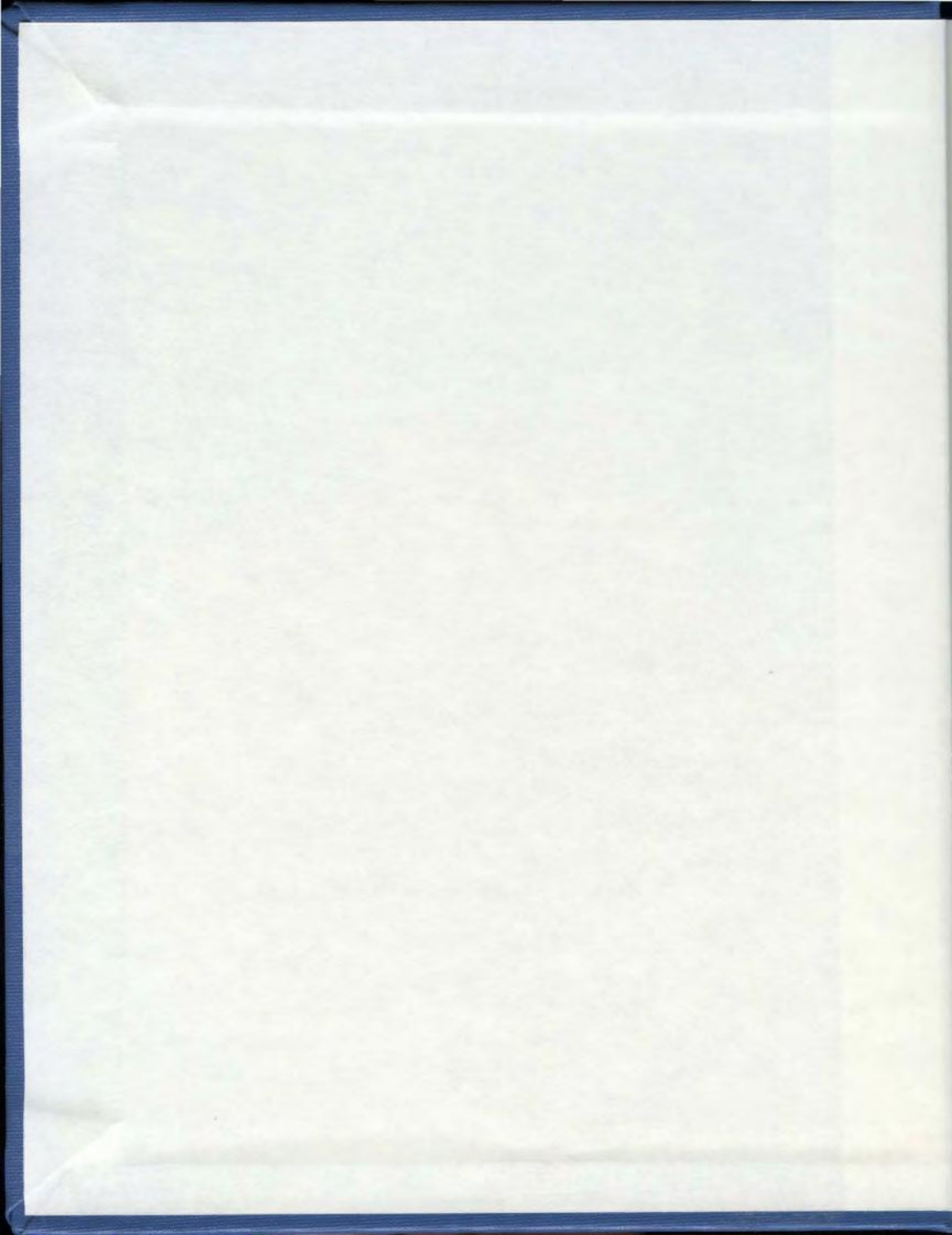


"UP THROUGH THE HAWSE HOLE!"
THE SOCIAL ORIGINS AND LIVES OF
SALEM SHIPMASTERS,
1640 TO 1720

VINCE WALSH







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ISBN 0-612-13961-1

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"UP THROUGH THE HAWSE HOLE:"
THE SOCIAL ORIGINS AND LIVES OF SALEM SHIPMASTERS,
1640 TO 1720

BY

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A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Department of History
Memorial University of Newfoundland
December, 1995

St. John's

Newfoundland

Abstract

This thesis argues that the early colonial shipmasters of Salem lived different social lives from what much of the literature has described for the master mariner under sail. Generally, they had urban rather than rural roots and came from all levels and occupations of Salem society. The relationship between shipmaster and mariner was defined by one of paternal and fraternal bonds and cut along vertical lines of community rather than along horizontal lines of class. Neither the shipmaster nor the mariner of Salem belonged to the ranks of the dispossessed, as some maritime historians have suggested, but were connected to the town socially and culturally through ties of blood and marriage. Finally, some assumptions regarding marriage patterns in Massachusetts need to be revised regarding the maritime community of Salem. Remarriage was much more common than has been previously suggested. To obtain economic support for themselves and their children, widows remarried frequently if they were of child bearing age, or they were often heavily dependent upon their adult children if older.

Acknowledgements

Many individuals and institutions have contributed to the completion of this thesis. For the help I received with my research, I would like to thank, first of all, the staff at the Essex Institute in Salem, Massachusetts. Their kindness and support during my stay there was a great aid in the early period of my thesis. I am indebted to all the staff in the Maritime History Archives, Eileen Wade, Paula Marshall, Robbie Thomas, and Heather Wareham. They were very helpful during the many hours I spent in their company. I would like to thank Heather, in particular, for the use of the Archives equipment, especially the computers and laser printer. I would like to thank the Maritime Studies Research Unit for the use of their computing and photocopying facilities, and for the funding they have given me over the past four years. My thanks go out to Jerry Bannister for his constructive criticism, help and especially his encouragement. Most importantly, I would like to offer a very special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Daniel Vickers. The support he has given me and the patience he has shown is difficult to measure. And I doubt if few thesis supervisors have had to endure as much frustration as Dr. Vickers in waiting for a thesis to be completed.

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
1. Introduction	7
2. The Origins and Lives of Salem Shipmasters, 1640-1690	50
3. The Origins and Lives of Salem Shipmasters, 1690-1720	97
4. Wives and Widows	148
5. Conclusion:	176
Bibliography	184
Appendix A	194
Appendix B	199
Appendix C	201
Appendix D	202
Appendix E	203

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Average Probate Values of Three Groups	80
Table 2.2: Number of Taxable Household Heads, 1689-1695	92
Table 3.1: Shipmaster Distribution Among the Four Groups	134
Table 4.1: Marriage Patterns of Woburn	153
Table 4.2: Marriage Patterns of Shipmasters and Wives	154
Table 4.3: Number of Deaths in Relation to Years Married	155
Table 4.4: Widowed & Remarried Ages of Shipmaster Wives	157

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Age Distribution of Salem Shipmasters	105
Figure 3.2: Average Tax vs. Average Age of Shipmasters	130
Figure 3.3: Selected Ratios of Median Decile Values	139

Chapter 1

Introduction

The majority of British and colonial vessels which sailed the Atlantic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries belonged to a handful of larger towns and cities. London and Bristol were important ports in Britain; Boston, New York, and Philadelphia dominated the British colonial New World. When examining various aspects of maritime history, historians have focused almost exclusively on the larger port communities.

Despite the importance of these larger centres, significant numbers of mariners routinely sailed out of the smaller ports of the British Empire. A study by Bernard and Lotte Bailyn on vessel ownership in Massachusetts for the year 1697 revealed that seventy-four percent of all vessels belonged to Boston. Yet it also showed that the remaining twenty-six percent belonged to the smaller towns of the

colony.¹ To accept that these proportions were in some measure representative of the ratios between the larger centres and smaller communities throughout the colonies means that up to a quarter of colonial shipping has been almost entirely passed over by maritime historians.

In addition to ignoring the smaller port towns, historians have never studied carefully the lives of the men who captained the pre-industrial sailing ship, regardless of from where they hailed. Virtually nothing is known about the social origins or later lives of these men. Compounding this ignorance is the influence of stereotypical notions regarding the background and character of master mariners. Some hold to the images of a heavy drinking tyrant who lorded over his crew with cudgel and whip. Others cling to the picture of the respectable "middle class" gentlemen of strong character and high moral fibre who succeeded to the captain's cabin through hard work and ability. Both notions contain elements of truth, but each sprang originally from folklore and myth.

Maritime historians have shied away from any systematic study of the social origins and lives of mariners for good reason. Problems of documentation and identification made the task a daunting one. To examine the social origins of a

¹ Bernard & Lotte Bailyn, Massachusetts Shipping, 1697-1714 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 98.

particular group of people requires an examination of individual lives. Because of the lack of sufficient and consistent records for most areas and times in the pre-industrial world, this simply is not possible. Secondly, because of geographical mobility, the lives of seaman were often impossible to track. Shipmasters and their families often took up residence in different towns as job opportunities allowed. Although, at times it is possible to trace their history backwards from when we first encounter them, it is virtually impossible to follow their lives forward, if they left the community under study.

The purpose of this thesis is to address both these gaps in the literature. To do so it will examine the social origins and lives of shipmasters of Salem, one of the smaller port communities of Massachusetts. The thesis explores the social lives of the town's shipmasters from 1640 to 1720, examining their social origins, marriage patterns, the relations they established both with the shipowners and merchants for whom they worked and with the seamen who laboured under them. It explores their later lives and changes in their social and financial conditions. From this investigation, the thesis attempts to show that the early colonial shipmaster of Salem lived a social life different from what much of the literature on master mariners asserts. Generally, he had urban rather than rural

roots, and came from all levels and occupations of Salem society. The relationship between shipmaster and mariner was defined by one of paternal and fraternal bonds and cut along vertical lines of community, rather than along horizontal lines of class. Neither the shipmaster nor the mariner of Salem belonged to the ranks of the dispossessed, as some maritime historians have suggested; rather they were connected to the town socially and culturally through ties of blood and marriage. Finally, the evidence on shipmasters' wives, especially in widowhood, forces us to revise our assumptions regarding marriage patterns in Massachusetts. Remarriage was much more common than has been previously suggested. To obtain economic support for themselves and their children, widows remarried frequently if they were of child-bearing age or they were often heavily dependent upon their adult children if older.

There are several important reasons for the choice of Salem. Bailyn found in his analysis that despite its small size, the town made a significant contribution to the total shipping effort of Massachusetts. In 1697, for example, over twelve percent of Massachusetts vessels came from there. From the mid-seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century Salem's maritime economy was vital to its economic well-being. Of unique importance to the growth and success of the town's maritime economy, particularly in its

early years, were its shipmasters. Acting as business agents as much as navigators and captains, these early colonial masters played an essential role in carving out the trades routes which came to dominate Salem's maritime world for a hundred years.

The town is unique in that it possesses, virtually from the founding of the community in the early 17th century up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the richest deposit of documentation on the lives of its inhabitants of any North Atlantic seaport community. This data includes probate and court records, tax lists, church records, vital records, and a wide variety of merchant records for both the 17th and 18th centuries. For this reason, Salem offers a rare opportunity for the historian to examine in some detail the social lives of these resident shipmasters.

The years 1640 to 1720 were chosen because they covered an important period in Salem's maritime development from that of rapid economic expansion to that of economic stability. Such a transition in the economic structure of the town allowed for an examination of the changing status and roles Salem shipmasters experienced within the social and economic hierarchy of the community. On a practical level, despite the fact that the town played an important role in the development of the New England shipping industry

through 1720, the volume of shipping was not at that early period so large as to be unmanageable.

Only a few historians have studied the social origins and lives of master mariners during the age of sail and much of this work merely constitutes a part of a more general interest in mariners as a whole. Overall, maritime historians have loosely divided themselves into two camps. Some have claimed that "Jack" was a social outcast, lacking in skills, condemned to the sea, exploited, and abused by his employers. Of more relevance to this thesis, they have argued that the route to the position of master was determined as much by proper connections as by ability. Such historians as Ralph Davis, Jesse Lemisch, and especially Marcus Rediker, belong to this camp. Davis has argued that mariners came from the lowest strata of society. Some enhanced their positions, some returned to the land, but most lived out their lives as "drunk and wild" Jack Tars.² Lemisch and Rediker believe that sailors were the dispossessed and outcasts of society, who spent their entire lives as proletarians of the sea.³

² Ralph Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1962), 122.

³ Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., XXV (1968), 371-407; Marcus

Other historians, notably Samuel Morison, Eric Sager and David Alexander, have emphasized the positive aspects of seafaring, arguing first, seamen were defined by the culture from which they came, second, that it was the attraction of the sea that brought them on board, and third, that they were skilled in a variety of occupations, literate, promoted based on ability, and socially mobile. Morison asserted that New England mariners came from the farms of New England and eventually returned there to establish themselves as independent farmers. Sager has argued that North Atlantic mariners were skilled craftsmen who upon retirement from the sea made an easy transition to shore life. For Alexander seamen were as literate as others members of the society from which they came and represented the entire social range of the its working class.⁴

When discussing shipmasters the major point of contention has been whether captains came in through the quarter deck or up through the hawse hole, that is, whether

Rediker, Between the Devil And The Deep Blue Sea (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁴ Samuel Eliot Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921, 1961); Eric W. Sager, Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914 (Kingston: McGill's-Queen's University Press, 1989). David Alexander, "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting, eds., Working Men Who Got Wet (St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1980), 3-33.

they were promoted through political and family connections or through ability. In addition, there is a difference of opinion whether they identified themselves socially with the shipowner above them or with the seamen under them.

Rediker, Lemisch, and Davis have generally sided with the former positions; Morison, Sager, and Alexander have sided with the latter.

A review of the literature of these six maritime historians will bring into focus their similarities and differences, outline the aspects of seafaring life upon which they have focused, and more vividly reveal what needs to be done to fill in the many gaps in the literature.

Ralph Davis offered some insight into the lives of British shipmasters in The Rise of the English Shipping Industry, where he devoted several chapters to British seamen and shipmasters of the late 17th and early 18th centuries and treated briefly the social origins of the master mariner. He argued that a career as a seaman was not one in which even a modestly prosperous artisan's or tradesman's son would be interested. Sailors were recruited from the lowest ranks of society: labourers, farmhands, seamen's children, and those dissatisfied or unemployable on shore.⁵

⁵ Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry, 114.

Until the mid-18th century, according to Davis, the route to being a master was often via an apprenticeship. Up to a point, however, promotion was open to anyone "who was not excessively stupid, who was more sober than most, and who put aside some of his earlier earnings to make advancement easier. Drunkenness and wildness characterised the merchant seamen, and the exceptions stood out."⁶ To become a master two assets were necessary; a knowledge of navigation and the right sort of connections. A man who was not a skilled navigator would never make chief mate and a mate who did not have connections had great difficulty in becoming a master. Davis implied that shipowners and merchants hired masters with whom they were acquainted, not because of class elitism, but because they needed someone whom they could trust with their investment, someone whose references were known. Friends or relatives could be trusted. This problem of reliability and competence was a real one and Davis offered numerous examples of the lack of both.⁷

⁶Ibid., 122.

⁷ A humorous story was of the master who sailed his vessel to Bristol thinking he was going up the English Channel. One way an unknown mate looking for his own ship could overcome a merchant's hesitation was to buy shares in the voyage or the ship. Putting aside savings was important for the ambitious officer. See Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry, 130-131.

There was a tension in Davis' work between his claim that seafaring was a vehicle of promotion and his belief that the vessel was an abode of social outcasts. In the end by stating that most seamen were drunk and wild he fell back on the stereotype which looked upon old Jack Tar as a simple soul fit for nothing other than a life of labour afloat. And notwithstanding that some mariners worked their way up from the forecastle to the captain's cabin, the majority of masters achieved their positions by apprenticeship and personal connections with the owners. Although he hedged, Davis ultimately came down on the side of the debate which argued the master came in via the quarter deck.

Taking a much stronger position, Jesse Lemisch disputed any claim that seamen were merely landsmen under sail. Most seamen, he argued, fled the land in fear as outcasts and dissenters. With their conditions different from those ashore, seamen remained afloat and spent their lives as "old salts." Never did there exist any solidarity between crew and master. Instead the state enacted "harsh or at best paternalistic" laws to create a structure which supplied cheap docile labour, laws aimed against the seamen whose purpose was to benefit the merchant and the master. He disagreed, moreover, with any position that argued that the road to the captain's cabin was open to all who were capable. Perhaps, he said, sons of merchants and

shipmasters, or the brothers-in-law of captains succeeded but what happened to the thousands of others who were not so fortunate?

The most forceful proponent of the position that shipmasters achieved their position because of the right connections has been Marcus Rediker. Rediker recognized that Lemisch's assertion, that the aims of common seamen were different than those ashore, implied a separate cultural identity for the common mariner. In his work Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea he built a thesis around this argument. Rediker has been the most vocal in support of the quarter deck thesis, and has become its chief spokesperson. He argued that between 1700 and 1750 there emerged among the Jack Tars of the North Atlantic a separate cultural identity. This identity, growing out of their collective experience of work, turned seamen into a politically militant class collectively resisting efforts by merchant capitalists and shipowners to mobilize labour as efficiently as possible. According to Rediker the central plan of capitalism during its early and uncertain stages of expansion was to shift as many of the risks and burdens of the growing but unstable Atlantic economy onto the backs of seamen. An important aid in bringing this shift about was to give the autocratic powers of the captain the force of

admiralty law, which became nothing short of extraordinary.⁸ The law attempted to reinforce the patriarchal role of the captain, and the hierarchial structure aboard ship. Most captains, said Rediker, saw maritime life and culture as organized along the lines of a craft or traditional workshop and held together by the principles of hierarchy, paternalistic authority, and deference. Vertical solidarities linked the various ranks within the division of labour. He went on to say that this "craft model," though popular among captains, increasingly did not reflect the social realities of shipboard life.⁹

According to Rediker, the importance of extracting productivity from seafaring labour in the 18th century generated increasingly vicious, even "terroristic," methods of discipline. Such actions by the shipmaster or his mates were bloody testimony to the absence of a shared paternalistic conception of social relations among masters and seamen. Tension and conflict marked relations between captain and crew during the transition period of capitalism

⁸ Rediker argued the law had three primary functions: to protect the merchant's and owner's investments against the encroachments of the seamen, to attach the interests of sailors to the interests of their employers, and to discipline and make available enough maritime labour to suit the needs of commerce and capital. See Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, 121. See also *ibid.*, 151, 161, 208-9, 292.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 199-200.

between 1700-50. This power relation, depending as much on coercion as persuasion, was often enforced by food rationing, unlawful discharge, physical punishment and calculated viciousness. It was, said Rediker, a system of authority best described as violent, personal, and arbitrary.¹⁰ Although not all captains were brutal, the violent captain and the militant seaman defined and shaped the context and relations of authority at sea.¹¹

This confrontation between "classes" , stated Rediker, created among seamen "a subculture or 'oppositional culture' ... with a distinctive set of attitudes, values, and practices".¹² Collectively these men resisted shipowners and their agents, the ships' masters, by attempting to expand their control over the workplace, by disputing

¹⁰Ibid., 93, 199-201, 207, 221-2, 226, 241.

¹¹ According to Rediker, the organization of labour on each ship began with the master, the representative of merchant capital. Often a small part owner, with near absolute authority, his primary tasks were navigation, tending the compass, steering the vessel, and transacting business throughout the voyage. He procured the provisions and usually inflicted the punishments. Except on the largest ships, he ran one of the watches. Because they had to develop contacts and learn regionally specific business methods, masters tended to captain vessels in trade routes where they had already accumulated some experience. Over time, said Rediker, merchant captains increasingly secured their positions by kinship and other connections to merchants, rather than by promotion through the ranks. See Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, 84, 87, 159, 295.

¹² Ibid., 155.

destinations, wages and methods of discipline, by appealing to the court and by organizing work stoppages. Although mutiny was one response, desertion was the most common method employed by seamen when differences with the merchant or master could not be resolved. It was an essential component of seafaring labour since it gave the mariner the mobility necessary to control to some degree his work environment. "Desertion served as a firm demarcation of the captain's authority and as an affirmation of the sailor's own power."¹³

Rediker's collective seamen shared several characteristics in common. They did not possess traditional craft skills, nor did they own any means of production such as land or tools.¹⁴ Recruited from the dispossessed of the land and depending completely on wages, seamen were "the proletarians of the period of manufacture." Their collectivity was characterized by notions of class consciousness, bonding and unity. The character of seafaring work, its lonely setting, the sharing of almost every aspect of life, and the separation from family and church, all contributed to the formation of a strong

¹³ Ibid., 105.

¹⁴ Ibid., 78. Rediker asserted that generally only the master and mate knew how to navigate the ship although he claimed it was not until the 19th century that a complete separation of knowledge occurred.

labouring identity among seamen and forged new social relations.¹⁵

Much of Rediker's discussion focused on British seamen, and it was only toward the end of his work that he made even a brief reference to "American" mariners. He argued that the greater opportunities in America for the acquisition of land, and hence for an independent life, retarded the development of both free wage and maritime labour. As a result "American seamen seem to have been less permanent members of the brotherhood of the deep." Nevertheless, by the 1740's and 50's, American seamen began to develop a collective identity of their own, and the social distance between them and their merchant captains was growing. Whether in the colonies or in Britain, obedience was the rule of the sea, a rule which the master attempted to enforce and the seamen continued to resist.¹⁶

In opposition to the Davis, Lemisch, Rediker position some historians have argued that promotion to the rank of master was open to all who demonstrated ability and ambition. In addition, they have claimed that mariners were merely landsmen who got wet and that in regards to North America, at least, the maritime workforce was recruited from

¹⁵ Ibid., 83.

¹⁶ Ibid., 296-298.

all levels of colonial society. Samuel Eliot Morison, one of the first serious students of maritime life, placed the master mariner at the center of his work The Maritime History of Massachusetts. The colonial shipmaster, he argued, came from the ranks of what he called the "middle class."¹⁷ Producing the great merchants and shipmasters of later generations, the middle class of the colonial waterfront was the backbone of maritime Massachusetts.¹⁸ Although admitting colonial New England seaports were "carefully stratified," he claimed the one difference which separated these ports from the old world lay in the ease with which they allowed their members to pass from one class into the next.¹⁹ Because of social mobility, it was not unlikely for a Massachusetts shipmaster to retire from the sea by the age of 30, enter into business as a merchant, and if successful, marry into the New England merchant elite.²⁰

He claimed that from the late colonial period until the mid-19th century the route to a command of a Massachusetts ship was up through the forecandle or hawse hole.²¹ By this

¹⁷ Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 25.

¹⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹ Ibid., 23.

²⁰ Ibid., 113.

²¹ Ibid., 68, 76, 107, 112.

he meant that masters were picked from the rank and file and promoted when they had earned their credentials as seamen. Only a minority received their positions entirely as a result of merchant class connections.

Massachusetts, he contended, never had a deep sea proletariat. Although instant and unquestioning obedience to the master was the rule of the sea, wages and profits from 'adventures' attracted the best of New Englanders.²² Her fleets were manned by "successive waves of adventure seeking boys."²³ Born on the farms of New England, the majority were literate enough "to post a log, draft a protest, draw up a manifest, and with a little instruction on shore or shipboard, find a position at sea."²⁴ They were young men attracted to the sea because of high wages who, on average, returned with enough money after several years to buy some land and farm on their own.

David Alexander, examining seamen in the second half of the 19th century, claimed that the popular view at that time

²² The term 'adventures' refers to freight that seamen were allowed to carry on board as their own. Samuel Kelly, a late 18th century seaman, gave several excellent examples of the business of 'adventures' among English seamen. See Samuel Kelly, Samuel Kelly: An Eighteenth Century Seaman, ed. Crosbie Garstin (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), 28, 71.

²³ Morison, The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 106.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

saw "Jack" as one subjected to abuse at sea, and inclined to improvidence and to abuse when ashore. Disputing the claim that mariners were condemned to the sea like men to a prison, Alexander claimed that "contemporary literature does not provide a very clear portrait of who these men were - where they came from, their education and the social and economic circumstances of their families."²⁵ Arguing that if life at sea was unusually cruel, degrading, and poorly paid, there should be some evidence of a high proportion of crewmembers that could be classified as "lumpen proletariat" that is, men who were forced to sea because of an inability to succeed ashore. To establish the matter one way or the other, claimed Alexander, would require monumental research, and settling for a more modest approach to the problem, he argued that evidence of low literacy rates, especially in relation to the areas from which they came, would support the lumpenproletariat thesis.²⁶

Examining the crew lists from the Yarmouth N.S. fleet for the years 1863 to 1899, he found that masters of large trans-ocean vessels were highly literate and numerate, in

²⁵ Alexander, "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Ommer and Panting, eds., Working Men Who Got Wet, 4.

²⁶ Alexander defined literacy as the ability to sign one's name. See Alexander, "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Ommer and Panting, eds., Working Men Who Got Wet, 11.

order to handle communication with owners and dealings with port officials, agents, and shippers. Thus a young man going to sea was not likely to progress any further than the rank of able seaman if he was illiterate. Furthermore, he found no strong evidence that seamen were drawn from a less literate sub-class of the working class of their respective homelands. Such a conclusion, he argued, calls into question the popular assumption that common seamen came from the dregs of society.²⁷

A recent and important work by Eric Sager has addressed, even if only briefly, questions regarding the social origins and lives of shipmasters and mariners. Challenging many of the assumptions of the Davis/Lemisch/Rediker camp. Concentrating on the Atlantic Canadian and Newfoundland fleets of the nineteenth century, he claims that among the small Canadian coastal vessels of the early 19th century sailors did not escape the influence of social relations created on land. Relations at sea were in some measure dictated by the paternalism of the master-servant relationship on land and in the fishery.²⁸ The

²⁷ Literacy rates among seamen increased from 69% in 1865 to 85% in 1899. See Alexander, "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Ommer and Panting, eds., Working Men Who Got Wet, 11, 12, 29, 32.

²⁸ Sager, Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914, 44.

small ship was a type of working household with the master as its head. Even where the relationship between captain and crew was increasingly reduced to a wage-labour exchange, old assumptions persisted when the master and worker lived and worked together and when the master was obliged to feed and accommodate his workers.

In the boat fishery there was an "ethic of egalitarian relations" in which the fishing skipper was merely a man of seniority and experience working with close relations, usually patrikin. Decisions about how, where and when to fish depended more upon consensus within the group than the skipper's imposed authority. The result was that "every Bank fishing schooner was a sort of seafaring democracy."²⁹ The masters and officers of the schooner did not appropriate knowledge as their exclusive possession. An experienced deckhand on one voyage could show up as master on the next and often did. The fraternal egalitarianism aboard the schooner, reinforced by the diffusion of knowledge among the crew, reflected landward pre-industrial relationships. Such fraternal relationships endured even into the 20th century among the small coastal vessels of Atlantic Canada, in part because independent commodity production in agriculture and fishing persisted through the 19th century in that part of

²⁹ Ibid., 48.

the world. The survival of the family boat and the small family farm, of the share system in fishing, and of petty enterprise on land preserved fraternal relationships at sea.³⁰ The cargo-carrying coastal schooner shared, therefore, something of the fraternal egalitarianism of the fishing schooner. On most coastal passages many seamen knew the master and one another before joining the vessel. But paternalism was more common than actual kinship, not least because the majority of crews were composed of young men.³¹

Sager argues that the crews on Atlantic Canadian vessels came from pre-industrial communities and that positive attractions brought these men to sea - attractions which included the desire to see the world, acquire skills, and to experience the comradeship which sailors shared.³² Seamen, furthermore, were not trapped at sea, but made an easy transition to land where the skills they had acquired were in demand. He claimed they shared the common culture of working people which was characterized by "occupational pluralism."

³⁰ Ibid., 65-6.

³¹ Ibid., 47-52. By this he meant that because pre-industrial mercantile society was defined by master-servant relationships, these relationships were carried over onto these vessels.

³² Ibid., 137.

He affirms that seamen "were literate and calculating men and the most litigious of workers," and concludes that Canadian seamen and some Europeans brought with them the values of the fishing and farming communities from which they came - the heritage of the independent producer and small proprietor who worked towards the goal of independence. It was this independent spirit, said Sager, which caused the mariner to see his difficulties as personal rather than collective and which formed a barrier to collective organization.³³

In the third quarter of the 19th century the Atlantic Canada shipping fleet underwent technological change, of which the most important for the vessel under sail was the increase in its size. Unlike the small coastal schooner which was owned by one or two individuals, one of whom was often the master, these new barques and ships were usually owned by several people, often the members of family firms engaged in the import and export trades. On these vessels more formalized contractual relations emerged between crews and captains, and between captains and owners. Many of these new masters shared family connections or investments with those who owned the vessels in which they sailed.³⁴

³³ Ibid., 161-2.

³⁴ Ibid., 81-2.

Sailing these larger vessels was much more complicated than sailing schooners and much of this knowledge became the preserve of the master alone. Rarely was the master personally acquainted with those who served under him. This was a relationship between management and labour. The fraternalism of the schooner master and his crew disappeared on larger ships.³⁵

When Atlantic Canadian shipowners invested in these larger sailing vessels in the 19th century, argued Sager, they inherited the shipping technology and seafaring traditions from other shores, including an age-old physical separation of master and crew. The technology they purchased was not new; the sailing ship was a machine inherited from centuries of European experience. When they borrowed and adapted this technology, they were accepting certain social choices and assumptions that went into the design of the vessel. The sailing ship assumed a division of labour and a social hierarchy.³⁶

Conflict between master and crew of Atlantic Canadian vessels arose and grew as the vessels got larger and the social distance between master and crew increased. There was a striking contrast between small vessels of the 19th

³⁵ Ibid., 85-8.

³⁶ In coastal vessels any division of labour was often overridden by social and familial proximity.

century where conflict was relatively rare and the large ocean-going vessels of the later 19th century where conflict was endemic. The problem arose from the pressure placed on masters by the shipowners for speed and economy. The master, in turn, transferred this pressure to his crew.³⁷

Sager emphasized that the breakdown of fraternal and paternal relationships was due to the transition from small coastal schooners to large ocean-going vessels. More importantly he had argued that the Canadian fleet in adopting these larger vessels from the British inherited from them formalized, distant, and conflict-dominated interactions between master and crew, the type of relationships which Rediker argued emerged in the early 18th century. For Sager the size of the vessel had an important bearing on the relationships that existed on board.

Comparing these studies produces a number of problems. First, the questions posed by each writer regarding the social lives of shipmasters, and indeed mariners in general, only loosely overlap, which, in turn, exposes how recent the debate really is. Davis limited his discussion on the lives of British seamen to two chapters of a book that was otherwise devoted to an economic history of British shipping. Lemisch's examination of the roots and culture of

³⁷ Sager, Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914, 167-8.

seamen made up only a section of an article devoted to the role American seamen played in events leading up to the American Revolution. Rediker devoted his entire work to the social relations that existed between the mariner on one side and the shipmaster and merchant on the other. But we learn nothing about the origins and later lives of these shipmasters nor of the men who sailed under them. Even in regarding the question of social relations the reader is subjected to a barrage of conclusions based upon the examination of Admiralty court records alone. What defined the relations between shipmaster and crew on the hundreds and thousands of voyages which never appeared in the courts?

Morison, arguing his position over 70 years ago, was among the first, and in fact, one of the few to directly address the social history of master mariners. A major weakness of Morison's study, however, was the lack of documentation his work contained. Never sharing with his reader those sources from which he drew his conclusions, he merely asserted his position, and many of his conclusions have no evidence to support them.

Alexander's work lacked any extensive discussion on master mariners. To its credit it did present a systematic and rational approach to examining a particular question regarding ordinary seamen. His sources, however, did not justify the presupposition that all seamen came from the

working class societies of North America and Europe.³⁸

Alexander merely assumed this. His conclusion that seamen reflected the *entire* working class of the societies from which they came was another inference; in his study there were no direct sources to confirm this.³⁹

For all the discussion on master mariners in Sager's work, the debate is heavily weighted toward one aspect of their lives, namely, the relations between master and crew. And like Morison, he asserts more than the evidence allowed. In arguing that Canadian crews originated from communities imbued with an independent spirit he needs to offer more evidence than he presented. He never shows that such communities existed nor does he prove that all Canadian crews came from them. Many of these people could have originated as easily from the urban areas of Atlantic Canada.⁴⁰ He talks of the seaman's desire to achieve an

³⁸ Alexander, "Literacy Among Canadian and Foreign Seamen, 1863-1899," in Ommer and Panting, eds., Working Men Who Got Wet, 6.

³⁹ Direct evidence, of course, may never be available, and the only route open for a study of the origins of these men may have been the one Alexander took.

⁴⁰ The similarities between Morison's image of the American deep sea sailor before 1850 and Sager's image of the Canadian deep sea sailor of the 19th century are many. Both emphasized his rural routes, his independent spirit, and his skills. What is most striking is that Morison, an advocate of the American free enterprise system, and Sager, a strong supporter of socialism, both saw the pre-industrial mariner as one of the finest examples of what their own

independent livelihood but the work examples he gives of those who had left the sea were of wage earners.⁴¹ This should not be surprising. The pre-industrial world of Morison's farm boys was primarily a rural one where an independent life was still possible. But Sager's seamen lived in a society where proletarianization and urbanization were evolving into their mature stages. Industrialization may have greatly diminished the possibility of independent existence.⁴² Only Alexander emphasized the importance of studying their origins and only he made an effort to examine the problem, albeit indirectly through his literacy study.

This thesis aims to correct some of these weaknesses in the literature by offering a systematic study of the social origins and lives of Salem resident shipmasters, basing its

ideologies had to offer.

⁴¹ For example, Sager stated that in London they found work as stevedores and skilled dock workers. In Canada they found work with the new telephone companies installing poles and lines or as carpenters, stevedores, or in the rope works. See Sager, Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914, 138.

⁴² The review of Sager's position has been extensive because in describing the fraternal and paternal bonds that existed between master and crew, particularly in regards to the relationships which existed on the smaller vessels of Atlantic Canada, he came closest to describing the world of the Salem mariner. Elaborating on Sager's thesis now will allow for a more extensive comparison between these relationships and those of shipmaster and mariner in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Massachusetts later in the thesis.

conclusions upon evidence derived from local, county and state documents. In doing so it makes several claims. Chapter two examines their origins and lives from 1640 to 1690 and argues they came both from the community and from overseas. Once admitted into the community, a shipmaster's opportunities were limited only by his ambition and ability. Chapter three asks similar questions for shipmasters who first began sailing following 1690. It concludes that, unlike those of the earlier period, most shipmasters were recruited from the town itself. More complicated social interactions based on marriage ties began to play an important role in opening up opportunities for any master mariner. Chapter four examines the lives of shipmasters' wives and widows and concludes that continued connections with and support from their children played an important role in both parents' financial well being in later life. Several chapters examine the social relations in which shipmasters were involved. It shows that paternal and fraternal relations dominated the interactions between master and crew with very little evidence of conflict. On the other hand, the level of conflict between a master and his employer, the merchant shipowner, were almost ten times as frequent as that between master and seaman, as measured by the number of court cases. Finally the thesis claims that much of the division that existed in Salem society was

based not on class but on community, that is, on whether a person was a resident of the town or an outsider. All of these claims will be developed in the chapters that follow. Chapter five offers a summation of the principal arguments of the thesis and some concluding remarks.

Two further points need discussion - methodology and sources. Salem shipmasters of the 17th and early 18th centuries left very few private documents. Few letters and not a single diary survive. Everything known about them, almost without exception, has come from government and business documents. Questions such as whether they were religious men must be inferred from church records, useful only if a mariner was a Puritan, or from probate records where at times the inventory listed a Bible or a pew in a meeting house. Frustrating was the inability to get into the mind of even one of these men, to understand his likes and dislikes, to discover his political and religious views, or to learn anything about the dreams and hopes of even one of them. We can learn something of the choices shipmasters made throughout their lives but we can learn virtually nothing about why they made them. Despite these limitations, however, the public documents have proven fruitful in reconstructing the lives of Salem shipmasters for the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

How was the personal history of shipmasters constructed in this thesis? The first task was to identify the masters themselves through actual references in the sources to shipping voyages in which they were the commanders. The term shipmaster was broadly defined to include a master of any vessel involved in shipping goods - not only ships, but ketches, sloops, and schooners as well.⁴³ Normally fishing voyages were not incorporated into this list.⁴⁴

In searching for shipmasters, the sources were examined as much as possible in chronological order. For this reason the first source inspected was the court records of Essex County where some of the earliest voyages for Salem were

⁴³ The seventeenth century Massachusetts ketch was a small two-masted vessel with a covered deck almost always under 50 tons and manned by a crew of four to six men including the captain. Throughout the 17th century it was the most common vessel used by the communities of Massachusetts trading along the coast and with the West Indies and was even used in trans-Atlantic crossings. It remained the vessel of choice until the end of Queen Anne's War in 1713 by which time the sloop and the schooner overtook it in importance. For further discussion on ketches see Howard I Chapelle, The History of American Sailing Ships (New York: Bonanza Books, 1985).

⁴⁴ A fishing skipper was not classified as a shipmaster because normally he was not involved in the movement of goods. However, on occasion he combined both fishing and freighting along the coast in which case he and the voyage would be listed in the appropriate data files. Once a shipmaster had been identified, however, any fishing voyage in which he may have sailed was recorded, for this information was useful in revealing an important aspect of his working life.

recorded. Court documents provided information on voyages and shipmasters from as early as 1640 to as late as 1720. Up until 1719 the Quarterly Courts and the Court of Common Pleas handled all civil cases involving mariners. Disputes between crewmen and their masters or shipowners, or between masters and their employers were handled in these courts. Beyond the name of the master, the court records usually contained a variety of information including the names of crewmen, the name and type of the vessel, as well as the origin and destination of the voyage.⁴⁵

Upon completion of the court records, the Essex County notarial records and the naval officer shipping lists for Massachusetts were examined.⁴⁶ Listing dates, destinations,

⁴⁵ The Quarterly Courts of Massachusetts existed from 1636 until 1694 when they were replaced by the Court of Common Pleas. The James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts houses the verbatim transcripts of the Quarterly Court files for the years 1636 to 1694. See Archie N. Frost, comp., Verbatim Transcriptions of the Records of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-1694, 57 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1939). In addition, the Quarterly Court records of Essex County for the years 1636 to 1686 have been published. See George F. Dow and Mary G. Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 9 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1911-1975). Also housed at the Peabody Essex Museum are the complete records for the Court of Common Pleas. See the files of the Essex County Inferior Court of Common Pleas, property of the Supreme Judicial Court, Division of Archives and Records Preservation, on deposit at the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

⁴⁶ See "Essex County Notarial Records, 1697-1768," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, XLI-XLVII (Salem,

name, size, and type of vessel, both types of records listed the master's name. Notarial records contained a number of protests, special statements made by shipmasters following their entrance into port usually listing damages to ship or cargo due to natural causes. They were a form of protection for the master and crew against being held responsible for the cost of repairs. The naval officer shipping lists were records of entrances and clearances of vessels entering and leaving British colonial ports. For the period up to 1720 the Salem records for the years 1714 to 1719 have survived. The Essex County notarial records have survived for the

Massachusetts, 1905-1911). The Essex Institute, now the Peabody Essex Museum, has published the Historical Collections from 1840 to the present. Also of interest were Thomas Lechford's notebook from 1638 to 1641 and the William Aspinwall notarial records of Boston for the years 1644-1651. Lechford's note book recorded vessels entering and leaving Boston for that period, while Aspinwall's records are the earliest know notarial records for Massachusetts. Although they did so only rarely, both documents mentioned shipmasters from Salem. See Edward E. Hale, ed., Note-book Kept by Thomas Lechford, Esq., Lawyer, in Boston, Massachusetts Bay, from June 27, 1638, to July 29, 1641 (American Antiquarian Society, Transactions and Collections, VII [Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1885]), and "A Volume Relating to the Early History of Boston Containing the Aspinwall Notarial Records from 1644-1651," in Registry Department of the City of Boston, Records Relating to the Early History of Boston, XXXII (Boston, 1903). The Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Massachusetts can be found in Colonial Office files under CO 5 Vol. 848 and in the Massachusetts Archives Vol. 7. All references for both CO 5 Vol. 848 and the Massachusetts Archives Vol. 7 are to the microfilm copies in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

years 1697 to 1769. For the identification of shipmasters, these records proved an excellent source.

Although frequently these records listed the shipmaster's town of residence, the determination of residency was at times a complicated affair. A court record might state, for example, that a certain shipmaster was "of Boston, now a resident of Salem." This simply may have meant that he had been staying in Salem temporarily while he was awaiting freight or having repairs done to his vessel. In fact to have a document state a person was "of" a certain town was a clearer indication of residency than the use of the term resident itself. But this ambiguity was not limited to the choice of a term in a document. Some shipmasters relocated to other towns in mid-career. This was often true of first generation immigrants who migrated between various towns before settling down to establish themselves. Because of this confusion other sources were consulted to decide whether a shipmaster belonged to Salem. In the early years, the town's church records were valuable in revealing residency.⁴⁷ These records showed when immigrants were accepted as members and listed the baptisms of their children. Town records were also a valuable

⁴⁷ Richard D. Pierce, ed., The Records of the First Church in Salem, Massachusetts, 1629-1736 (Salem, Massachusetts, 1974).

source.⁴⁸ These listed the names of residents who were appointed to various positions for the year, such as surveyors of fences or thythingmen.⁴⁹ Jury lists in the court records were also used. Town appointments required the person appointed to be a resident of the town; jury appointments were drawn from the local area.

From 1683 onwards, the Salem tax lists became an important source in determining residency.⁵⁰ So long as a

⁴⁸ For the period 1634 to 1659 see William P. Upham, ed., "Town Records of Salem, 1634-1659," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, IX (Salem, Massachusetts, 1868), 1-242. For the period 1659 to 1680 see "Salem Town Records, 1659-1680," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, XL-XLIX (Salem, Massachusetts, 1905-1913); Marblehead, just a few miles from Salem was an important fishing town with close connections to Salem. Its town records were also a valuable source. See William H. Bowden, ed., "Marblehead Town Records, 1648-1683," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, LXIX (Salem, Massachusetts, 1933), 207-329.

⁴⁹ A thythingman's role was to ensure that the laws of the Sabbath were obeyed. For example, he would report any cases of drinking or swearing within the boundaries of Salem on the Sabbath, and pressured church members into attending the Sunday meetings, if they were negligent. He was also responsible for ensuring that those in attendance at church services were quiet and attentive.

⁵⁰ The tax records for 1683 can be found in volume nine of the published court records. See Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, IX 351-355. The records from 1689 to 1776 were obtained in Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9. All microfilm references are to the microfilm copy in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

shipmaster paid taxes his name would appear year after year on these lists. More importantly it helped to confirm when he had taken up residency in Salem, departed for another town, or was temporarily out of the colony. Sometimes a shipmaster would disappear off the lists for several years and then re-emerge again. During this period the name of such a person frequently showed up as master of a vessel belonging to another town. In sum, from all of these sources, 132 shipmasters were found between 1640 and 1720 who could be safely classified as Salem residents and who had a least one recorded shipping voyage.

Once shipmasters had been identified a genealogical history of each was constructed. The first and most important source was the genealogical footnotes in Perley's History of Salem.⁵¹ Unfortunately Perley did not reference his sources, but the accuracy of his information was, with only a few exceptions, fully supported by other sources. In fact, his obvious use of primary sources was so extensive that little genealogical information was found other than what was already contained in his footnotes. Nevertheless, other documents were examined to confirm his findings. The Essex Institute which published six volumes of vital

⁵¹ Perley traces the lives of Salem residents from the founding of Salem up to the 20th century. See Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, 3 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1924-1928).

statistics on birth, marriage and death records for Salem from the beginning of the town up to 1849 were examined.⁵² Information contained in these volumes came from church and court records, gravestones, and the genealogical records contained in privately owned Bibles of the area's residents. Next the probate records of Essex county were examined.⁵³ These files contained up to four pieces of documentation for any individual; an inventory of the estate of the deceased, a will if one had been made, an account of the administration of the estate by its executors, and at times other documentation such as the statements of witnesses if the will was contested or if the legal claim of ownership of property was in doubt. Another useful source was the Essex County land records, which not only provided records of land deeds and exchanges, but gave valuable information relating to fathers, sons, and brothers.⁵⁴ Finally, the private

⁵² Essex Institute, ed. Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to 1849, 6 vols. (Decorah, Iowa: Anundsen Publishing Co., 1988).

⁵³ The probates from 1636 to 1681 have been published. See George F. Dow, ed., The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81 3 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1916-1920). The probates from 1682 to the present have not been published but the original files from 1636 to 1900 are located in the Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts. The bound volumes of these probates can be found at the Probate Record Office, Registry of Deeds and Probate Record Office Building, Salem, Massachusetts.

⁵⁴ Essex County Deeds, Bound Transcriptions, vols. I-XX, Registry of Deeds and Probate Record Office Building,

business records of various Salem merchants helped fill in the genealogical picture.⁵⁵

Once a genealogical file had been compiled, the economic and social histories of shipmasters, their fathers and their fathers-in-law were constructed, from many of the same sources mentioned above. Probate records were especially useful for several reasons. They gave a good measure of a shipmaster's financial and therefore social standing within the community at the time of his death and they gave an indication of his recent profession. They were also very useful in revealing the same information about the

Salem, Massachusetts. These records were taken from a transcript of the originals made in 1885. The originals are housed at the Peabody Essex Museum. These land deeds are also part of a larger series of town records published in the Essex Institute, Historical Collections. In addition, Sidney Perley, using these deeds, published an extensive list of land transactions for Salem covering the late seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century. See Sidney Perley, "Salem in 1700" in Essex Antiquarian 13 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1897-1909), I-XXIII.

⁵⁵ The family papers and account books of eight merchant shipowners were examined. They were the George Corwin Account Books, 1658-1664, 1663-1672, Curwin Family Papers, 1641-1902; the Philip English Account Books, 1664-1708, 1678-1690, 1699-1718, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851; William Pickering Account Book, 1695-1718; John Touzel Account Book, 1711-1727, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851; Joseph Orne Account Books, 1719-1744, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899; Timothy Orne Account Books, 1738-1758, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899; Miles Ward Account Books, 1736-1745, 1745-1753, 1753-1764, Ward Family Papers, 1718-1945; and Richard Derby Family Papers and Accounts, 1757-1776. All are housed in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

father, and this in turn offered an important clue to the shipmaster's social and financial origins. In addition, they were of great help in deciding whether a shipmaster had rural or urban roots, or whether he came from an agricultural, labouring, artisan, or merchant family. Finally, examining the probate records of a shipmaster's father-in-law provided clues to the financial and social status of the family into which he married.

One of the most useful sources in generating an economic history of these men was the Salem tax lists. For any shipmaster, father, or father-in-law who was a Salem resident, the tax lists allowed one to construct an excellent history of his financial successes or failures throughout his life. In turn, this gave a fairly accurate indication of his social position within the community. More importantly, it also offered an unique opportunity to compare his social origins with his later economic status - that is, it offered a good indicator of social mobility.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ An adjunct to the tax lists were the state government records which helped to clarify the tax structure of the colony. At times they also explained some of the legal and legislative problems shipmasters encountered during their working lives at sea. These records have been edited and published. See John Noble and John F. Cronin, eds., Records of the Court of Assistants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, 1630-1692, 3 vols. (Boston, 1901-28), and Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 5 vols. (Boston, 1853-1854).

The use of the Salem tax lists needs some explanation. For the years 1683, 1690, and for each five year period following up to 1765, the taxes of every inhabitant within the town were listed in a database and sorted in descending order according to value. Each list, (that is, each year examined), was then divided into deciles with the decile designated as 1st referring to those taxes belonging to the wealthiest ten percent. The names of eighty-four shipmasters were found amongst the names of the taxable inhabitants for the entire period from 1683 to 1765. Some appeared as many as eleven times and others appeared as seldom as once. By calculating the taxes which each paid, the decile rating of each shipmaster for any year he paid taxes was easily determined by referring to the list for that year and looking up the decile to which his taxes belonged. In this way his relative economic position within the community was revealed for as long as he paid taxes.⁵⁷

Included in a study of the economic and social history of shipmasters was a history of their working lives. Again many of the same sources were examined. Land deeds, for example, frequently listed the occupation and place of residence of the principals, revealing information on their

⁵⁷ For a more extensive discussion on the tax lists see Appendix A.

working lives and possible career changes. Or merchant account records were often valuable in identifying shipmasters and listing any change in their occupations over time. The accounts were also important in that they were one of the few sources which said anything about the position and role of shipmasters' wives. In particular, they revealed in some small measure the activities of shipmaster widows.

To determine the length of a shipmaster's career at sea some additional sources not previously examined were consulted. Because Salem traded heavily with most British colonies in the Western Hemisphere an examination of the naval officer shipping lists of these colonies revealed numerous voyages for many of the 132 Salem shipmasters that had not turned up in the other sources.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ See Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Antigua. Colonial Office Files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Bahamas. Colonial Office Files CO 27/12; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Barbados. Colonial Office Files CO 33 13-16 and T 64/47; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Bermuda. Colonial Office files CO 41/6; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for New York. Colonial Office files CO 5 1222; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Jamaica. Colonial Office files CO 142 14; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Maryland. Colonial Office files CO 5/749; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Massachusetts. Colonial Office files CO 5 848; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Mountseratt. Colonial Office files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Nevis. Colonial Office files CO 187/1-2; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for St. Christophers. Colonial Office files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Virginia. Colonial Office files CO 5/1441.

Finally, a file was constructed which focused on the relations between shipmaster and shipowner, and between shipmaster and crew. The most important source for this research was the court records from 1636 to 1720. Any legal dispute between any of the three players were usually acted out in this theatre. These court records provided useful insights into the structure of relationships between shipowners and masters, and between masters and their crews. Because court records sometimes listed the occupations of the principals involved in any case, they were useful in shedding light on the careers of some shipmasters long after their last recorded voyages, and after they had left the sea.

Other sources occasionally provided similar information. The Essex County notarial records sometimes gave an indication of the type of relationship which existed between mariner and crew. Account books and business records also hinted at the evolving relationship between master and shipowner.

Before concluding the discussion on methodology, a few points need to be made about gathering and interpreting data on the working lives of shipmasters. One claim of the thesis is that the work lives of most masters was multi-occupational, that is, they were defined by a variety of careers occurring concurrently. The most frequently used

sources for this part of the study were the probate records of the estates of deceased shipmasters. On occasion these documents yielded up later occupations directly, but in the majority of cases the determination of other lines of work was obtained by an examination of the inventory of their estates. For example, if a deceased was owed money from a West Indies merchant or had a bill of exchange on London, this would be evidence of his involvement in overseas business transactions, and the classification of merchant would be given as one of his professions. If his inventory listed the goods in his "shop" this would tell us he was a shopkeeper.⁵⁹ If it included farm implements and some acreage of land it indicated he was involved in farming in some measure, however small.

Probate records, however, were limited in that they revealed the person's possessions and occupational title only at the time of his death. For those whose death date was not far removed from the date of the last recorded voyage this was not a problem. In fact, where a master mariner died within five years of his last recorded voyage, he was given the title of shipmaster as a later career. But mariners who lived for many years after their retirement

⁵⁹ The term "merchant" used in this thesis includes not only those in the wholesale and overseas trades but shopkeepers in the retail trade, as well. Five shipmasters who were or became shopkeepers were classified as merchants.

from the quarter deck may have had several careers during their lives and an examination of their inventories would not reveal them. This problem was often resolved by examining court records, merchant accounts, and town records, especially land deeds, each of which sometimes listed the person's profession or trade. Overall, these documents yielded a surprisingly rich amount of information which filled in these career gaps.

Finally, it is important to note that an examination of the lives of shipmasters did not end at 1720. Information on some of these men were found as late as 1762. Only those shipmasters who had actually been masters of vessels before 1720, however, were included.

Chapter 2

The Origins and Lives of Salem Shipmasters, 1640-1690

One of the earliest recorded voyages by a Salem master was that of Joseph Grafton in 1641. Having arrived in Salem by 1636, he built and sailed his own small ketch, delivering supplies to communities along the coast of Massachusetts. A merchant in later life, he was elected to the town council in 1671 and again on at least two other occasions.¹ Grafton was one of the earliest and more successful examples of the independent maritime entrepreneur that characterized so many of Salem's pre-1690 shipmasters.

Through the seventeenth century, and especially between 1660 and 1690, Salem grew in size and wealth, and anyone with ambition and ability could prosper economically and socially along with the community. The town focused on

¹ The inventory of Joseph Grafton has been lost. But Perley, who examined it, stated that it included £500 New England money, 362 pieces of eight, and shares in two ketches. Grafton died in 1681. See Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, 3 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1924-1928), II 128, 401, III 31.

supplying many of Britain's New World colonies with the less exotic goods and foodstuffs that these colonies did not care to produce themselves.² Fish, timber, staves, horses, and cattle were among the more important goods which Salem exported in its own vessels. In this way the town actively participated and shared in the economic benefits of an emerging British Empire.

This chapter examines the shipmasters who played such an important role in the town's expansion before 1690. It inquires into their social origins from 1640 to 1690, addresses the question of how well they integrated themselves into Salem society, and explores to what degree they achieved economic and social success. During the entire period before 1690, recruitment to the quarter deck came usually from successive waves of immigrants. Although a significant minority came from the ranks of those who had been locally born, the majority of master mariners of this period were outsiders who began arriving after the original settlement was established. These men played an essential role in establishing and developing the town's trade links with the Atlantic world over two fairly distinct phases.

² The economies of most British possessions in the New World were specialized, usually growing only one product for export. For example, Barbados specialized in the growth and export of sugar; Virginia concentrated on the growth and export of tobacco.

Before 1660 they generally concentrated on developing trading connections with the British colonies from Connecticut to Maine. Following 1660, they became very involved in establishing trading links with the southern colonies and West Indies.

The careers of shipmasters during these two distinct periods in the expansion of Salem's trade, followed somewhat different courses. Those whose careers began before 1660 tended to work in two businesses - shipping goods and fishing for cod. They followed this pattern throughout their careers, regardless of how late into the last half of the century they sailed. Those shipmasters whose careers began after 1660, by comparison, focused almost exclusively on shipping, and on the whole, they achieved much greater economic success than those shipmasters who had arrived before the Restoration.

Salem was originally populated by people who socially and economically belonged to the middling ranks of English society.³ Generally prosperous, they had brought with them a strong Puritan ethic characterized by a belief that the family was the basic unit of society, that the head of the household was responsible for its protection and spiritual

³ Salem, located in Essex county, Massachusetts, was the county's most important town and seaport during the period under study.

growth, and that a degree of independence was needed to maintain and manifest a covenant with God.⁴ Independence was largely defined by land. The aim of the town's founders was to grant to each church member sufficient land to achieve that goal. Yet the Puritans also believed in a hierarchically structured society defined as in England by gradations of landed wealth. The amount of land owned both determined and reflected the wealth and status of the owner and it was the portioning out of grants that determined and reflected the social status of the original settlers of Salem.⁵

The colony, however, continued to be dependent upon England for many of its goods. That it had few products to trade in return, created a balance of payments problem, the solution of which later in the century changed and ultimately undermined the power of the Puritan hierarchy within the town. For the first eleven years of its existence, the colony was able to meet its debt to the mother country from funds that newly arriving settlers brought with them. In 1640 civil war broke out in England

⁴ Much of the following discussion on Salem can be found in Richard P. Gildrie, Salem, Massachusetts, 1626-1683: A Covenant Community (Charlottesville, Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1975), and in Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1964).

⁵ Gildrie, Salem, Massachusetts, 1626-1683, 70.

abruptly halting the flow of immigrants and creating a balance of payments crisis. At the same time, because the war had disrupted the British fishery in the New World, diminishing it in Newfoundland and completely eliminating it in New England, it created an opportunity for the colony to develop a fishery of its own. From 1640's onward New Englanders, including those from Salem, began to catch cod off their coast and market it in Southern Europe, stepping into the void left by the English. As markets in the West Indies began to develop in the second half of the century, not only fish but timber became an important Salem export. At first, these goods were carried in English ships, but New Englanders soon began to construct their own vessels and market their own products overseas.⁶ Salem and coastal New England entered the maritime world.

The Puritan landed gentry represented the leadership of Salem for the first twenty years of its life. But beginning in the 1650's, as mercantile elements began to grow in wealth and prominence, tension between this old leadership and the merchants of the harbour front emerged. Increasing over the next twenty years, it finally reached a crisis in the early 1680's and was only settled when the merchant element wrested control of the town from the original

⁶ Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century, 75-86.

Puritan leadership. There were several reasons for this tension and change of leadership. First, most merchants were not members of the original Puritan settlement, and with some not wishing to integrate themselves into the church, their presence and their wealth began to upset the economic and social equilibrium of the community. This factor was not overly serious in the beginning, since the majority of those merchants who became community leaders also became members. But as the century moved on, fewer joined the church. Even those who did join did not embrace the church with the same passion as had the first immigrants. Where religious conviction and the experience of conversion were central to the lives of the original settlers, it was often absent from the lives of later Puritan merchants. Second, since the majority of new immigrants of other social and economic levels did not join the church, church members became a minority in the community. Finally, the population had expanded rapidly throughout the period so that the town quickly ran out of land. New immigrants who remained in Salem could not achieve that degree of independence which had originally been envisioned. Chiefly wage labourers, they did not share the same loyalties to the Puritan ideals as the independent farmers. The energy of Puritanism in Salem, which had

already been undermined by the restoration of Charles II in 1660, was withering by the 1680's.⁷

Salem merchants began to see status and wealth as a value in itself - something to be pursued for its own sake. Where the original leading men of the community believed in frugality despite their wealth, the new leadership led ostentatious lives. More importantly, the wealth of the mercantile world quickly outstripped that of the landed gentry. Where the richest farming estate of 1681 was appraised at £800, the richest merchant in town by 1684 left an estate of £5000. And at the turn of the century one merchant left over £30,000. This new wealth did not consciously conspire to overthrow the landed establishment. Merchants simply had different goals from the landed gentry, and it was the desire to see these goals realized that precipitated the change. Salem began the transition in 1640 from a farming community to a seaport town, a transition which by some estimates was completed by the late 1680's.⁸ The town became a seaport of merchants, artisans and mariners and remained so throughout the inter-colonial

⁷ Ibid., 134-141.

⁸ This is Bailyn's thesis. See Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century, 83, 168.

period.⁹ In its development Salem followed a different route from that taken by some other Puritan towns in New England. Many of the farming communities in the interior remained faithful to their Puritan ideals well into the 18th century. In Salem, however, the influence of trade changed the players who occupied the top of the economic and social order. Along with Boston, Salem was one of the first towns that the Puritan landed gentry lost control. Yet, although the passion for the Puritan ideals withered, paternal and fraternal relationships continued to flourish. In fact, as will be shown later in the thesis such relationships played an important role in recruitment.

⁹ R. Gildrie, Salem, Massachusetts, 1626-1683, 155-169, and James G. Lydon, "Fish for Gold: The Massachusetts Fish Trade with Iberia, 1700-1773," The New England Quarterly, LIV (1981), 539-582. For a variety of viewpoints on the development of several New England towns see Byron Fairchild, Messrs. William Pepperrell: Merchants at Piscataqua (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954); Philip Greven, Four Generations: Population, Land and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970); Christine Leigh Heyrman, Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts 1690-1750 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984); Stephen Innes, Labour in a New Land: Economy and Society in Seventeenth-Century Springfield (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Christopher M. Jedrey, The World of John Clevealand: Family and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979); and Darrett Rutman, Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630-1649 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1965).

During the early years of Salem's connection with the sea her mariners alternated between fishing the waters as far north as Sable Island and shipping goods along her coasts. The first traders serviced the fishery and from 1640 onwards sent their vessels north and east trading as far as Newfoundland. The town's maritime experience grew out of its initial involvement with the fishery, and it was from that involvement that her growing fleet of small ketches ventured from fishing into shipping. This early marriage resulted from the opportunity for Salem fishing vessels to service the growing communities along the Massachusetts coast, especially along the North Shore, on their way to and from the fishing grounds. Bringing supplies to these communities on their voyage out and carrying to Salem or Boston the fish and other commodities which these towns produced on their voyage back became a routine part of the activities of these vessels. Some of these fishing ketches would then be used to carry fish outside the colony. And although a clearer distinction between a fishing skipper and a shipping master emerged over time, throughout the colonial period some skippers fished in the warmer months and then made a voyage in the winter with a freight of fish and lumber sometimes to southern Europe or

more frequently to the southern colonies and the West Indies.¹⁰

For twenty years following 1640 most Salem masters combined shipping and fishing activities, often on the same trip; they dedicated only a few voyages to shipping alone. When they did, they most frequently traded with the northern colonies from Connecticut to Maine. By the early sixties they became more heavily involved in shipping, especially to the south. Their first ports of call were Maryland and Virginia where they often sold supplies to the plantations and then loaded tobacco for Britain. Once this route was established the southern colonies became their most important destination for some time. There were direct voyages to and from Salem and Britain as early as 1651 but this route never became an important one for the town. Nor, in fact, did the trade with southern Europe matter much during this period. Although some of the fish assembled in Salem for shipment to Spain and Portugal travelled in Salem vessels, most of it was carried in vessels belonging to Boston or to British ports. Later in the century Salem

¹⁰ There also appeared small vessels which specialized in carrying goods along the coast. The men that handled such craft became known simply as coasters. Interestingly, before 1680 few of these vessels and men came from Salem but rather belonged to communities along the North Shore. In the Essex County Quarterly Court records Newbury and Ipswich were most frequently mentioned when the residences of coasting masters was given.

began carrying a greater share of this trade but it would take another fifty years before the majority of her own fish shipped to southern Europe went in her own vessels.¹¹

By the late 1660's Salem vessels were regularly visiting West Indian ports, and these voyages increased over the next ten years as the fortunes of the Caribbean sugar islands grew. During the 1670's this commerce could not compare in importance to the coastal trade with the North American colonies, but after 1680 the West Indies became the most common destination for Salem vessels, and this remained true to the end of the colonial period.¹²

¹¹ James G. Lydon, "North Shore Trade in the Early Eighteenth Century," American Neptune, XXVIII (1968), 261-274.

¹² Before 1661 only eleven trading voyages were found. Of these three were to the southern colonies or the West Indies. Between 1661 and 1690 seventy-nine voyages were found of which forty-seven or 60% sailed to these areas. The data not only showed where Salem shipping vessels were sailing, it also offered a comparison of the extent of trade during these two periods. In arriving at these conclusion, voyages found in the custom records (Naval Officer Shipping Lists) of all colonies except Massachusetts were excluded from the calculation, because their inclusion would naturally bias the results in favour of those areas of the Atlantic world to which they belonged. The sources used in the calculation of these voyages included the Massachusetts customs records, Essex County Quarterly Court records, the account books and business letters of Salem merchants, and the Massachusetts notarial records. For Massachusetts custom records see Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Massachusetts. Colonial Office Files CO 5 848; For Quarterly Court records see George F. Dow and Mary G. Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 9 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1911-1975). The account books

From the beginning Barbados was the focus of this traffic, and the island became one of the most frequently visited ports of call in the Atlantic for Salem vessels.¹³ Of all the recorded voyages to the Caribbean by Salem masters from 1680 to 1720, for example, Barbados was the destination for over 80% of them.¹⁴ The heyday of this

examined were the George Corwin Account Books, 1658-1664, 1663-1684, Curwin Family Papers 1641-1902; and the Philip English Account Books, 1668-1708, 1678-1690, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851. These account books are housed in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. For the notarial records see "Essex County Notarial Records, 1697-1768," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, XLI-XLVII (Salem, Massachusetts, 1905-1911).

¹³ On average it took six weeks and 3800 miles for a vessel leaving New England to reach Barbados. Departing its home waters the westerlies forced the master to run his vessel due east, all the while veering as far south as the winds and currents permitted. Near mid-ocean he turned southeast and south until he found the trade winds. He then continued on a southerly course until he was satisfied he was windward of Barbados at 30° latitude. He then turned west and followed this line until he reached Bridgetown. If by some misfortune he missed the island it could take him as long as three weeks to circle back because the dominant winds and currents took him west and north. He was usually forced to make a large circle that would bring his vessel close to Bermuda before he could turn for another try. For an extensive discussion on the trading routes and communication links between the Caribbean and New England see Ian K. Steele, The English Atlantic 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 21-40.

¹⁴ In calculating these figures voyages from the customs records of the southern colonies and the West Indies were included. Because only the Barbados customs records are close to complete for the period the data can only be used to indicate a trend. But in defence of this trend, during those years when the entrances and clearances of any other

trade was in the 1680's. More than a third of the 330 Salem to Barbados voyages recorded for the 1640 to 1720 period took place in this decade.¹⁵ By the last decade of the seventeenth century the major trading routes had been established, and despite the many wars in which Britain and her colonies became embroiled these routes remained virtually unchanged over the next eighty years.

From 1640 until 1690 the majority of shipmasters who sailed these routes were immigrants to Salem either from overseas or from other colonial towns.¹⁶ Little is known

West Indian island could be compared to those of Barbados, the latter was the most visited on all occasions. For customs records of these areas see Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Antigua. Colonial Office Files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Bahamas. Colonial Office Files CO 27/12; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Barbados. Colonial Office Files CO 33 13-16 and T 64/47; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Jamaica. Colonial Office files CO 142 14; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Mountseratt. Colonial Office files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Nevis. Colonial Office files CO 187/1-2; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for St. Christophers. Colonial Office files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Virginia. Colonial Office files CO 5/1441.

¹⁵ With the outbreak of war in 1689 and the decimation of the Salem fishing fleet by the French over the next several years, Salem had little fish to offer Barbados and few vessels to transport the goods she had. As a result the number of visits to the island in the 1690's dropped to almost half the number of the previous decade. By the turn of the century the entrances of Salem shipmasters into Barbados again began to rise but they never achieved the levels of the decade prior to 1690.

¹⁶ From 1640 to 1690 the records document 210 voyages made by 66 Salem shipmasters. Of these, 38 immigrated to Salem. These figures were derived from the naval officer

about the origins of many of them.¹⁷ Their surnames indicate that most had their roots in the British Isles, with some Jersey and even a few Portuguese names appearing as well. Others may have come from other parts of Massachusetts or New England and a few seem to have emigrated from farther down the British colonial coast or from the West Indies. Some spent several years in Salem, appearing in a court or church record before departing, occasionally to Boston or sometimes to the smaller ports along the Massachusetts North shore. Some left merely an account of a voyage or two and then disappeared. The majority, however, made Salem their home.

That shipmasters on Salem vessels often appeared for the first time in the colonial records as master mariners suggests that most must have had some experience of the quarter deck before arriving. Because of the Puritan emphasis on independence, and the association of that independence with land, shipowners had a difficult time attracting local men to a career afloat. Going to sea was alien to the thinking of most Puritans, and for some living among sailors was tantamount to living among the damned.

shipping lists, court documents and account books.

¹⁷ The genealogical sources say little and other than the association of their names with a voyage the public documents are often silent.

Being a sailor carried with it a stigma which many Puritans did not want attached to them.¹⁸

The sons of farmers were never attracted to the sea. The farmer saw land as the means to independence and in the seventeenth century he usually had a farm large enough to leave to each of his sons sufficient land for them to be comfortably independent. The promise of such an inheritance kept the sons home to work the land which they hoped would one day be theirs.¹⁹

An examination of the names of seamen who signed on Salem vessels uncovered only a few local men. Although data on crew recruitment is fragmentary before the end of Queen Anne's War, the account books of Salem shipowners and merchants show that before 1690 the majority of seaman were new immigrants to the town. For example, all but one of the Salem resident mariners listed in the 1666 to 1678 account books of George Corwin, a prominent Salem merchant, were first generation immigrants. Usually young, most had only

¹⁸ Daniel F. Vickers, "Work and Life on the Fishing Periphery of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1675," in David D. Hall and David Grayson Allen, eds., Seventeenth Century New England (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1984), 83-117.

¹⁹ The best discussion on the use of sons as a source of farm labour can be found in Daniel F. Vickers, Farmers & Fisherman: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1830 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 64-77.

recently immigrated before signing on for a voyage.²⁰ However, although over two-thirds of these men continued to dwell in Salem for an extended period, they appeared in later shipping voyage accounts only rarely. Instead, they showed up in the fishing records of various fish merchants. What brought many immigrants to the area in the 1660's and 1670's was the high price of cod and the hope of finding employment in the industry, and therefore it is not surprising that Corwin's mariners were also involved in the fishery.²¹ A wealthy merchant heavily involved in the fishery, Corwin likely recruited these young men with the promise of credit to establish themselves as fishermen. These scattered merchant voyages they undertook merely to supplement their income. More importantly, of the twenty-six men studied in the Corwin accounts only three left a

²⁰ See the Corwin Account Books, 1667-84. Information on twenty-six men was gathered. Of these, sixteen had settled in Salem, four had settled in the neighbouring towns of Beverly and Marblehead, with three others likely living there, one resided in Ipswich, a coastal town north of Salem, one in Lynn, a coastal town between Salem and Boston, and the residence of one mariner was unknown. Of the sixteen that settled in Salem, seven lived there for at least twenty years and four for at least ten. Of the five who stayed under 10 years, three had died while still residents.

²¹ For a discussion on the recruitment of fishermen during the period see Daniel F. Vickers, "Work and Life on the Fishing Periphery of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1675," in David D. Hall and David Grayson Allen, eds., Seventeenth Century New England (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1984), 101-103.

record of a shipping voyage as master. That few of those recruited for the forecastle went on to become masters further supports the argument that many of Salem's first generation masters came with experience on the quarter deck. Before 1690 Salem merchants and shipowners likely recruited the majority of their shipmasters (and crews) from outside the town.²²

Despite the Puritan disdain for a career afloat, especially among the original settlers, a small number of shipmasters were the sons and grandsons of earlier settlers. The majority of the fathers of these local shipmasters had some link with the sea, and almost all belonged to the town.²³ Since the sea was not a part of the town's economic picture before 1640, fathers who arrived before that date were not usually involved in sea-related occupations. Surprisingly, however, few were involved in agriculture. Salem had been founded by settlers who had intended to establish an agricultural community, but only three shipmasters had farming roots and the father of two of them had also been a fisherman for much of his working career.

²² A similar pattern of recruitment occurred in the Gloucester fishery. See Vickers, Farmers & Fisherman, 196-197.

²³ The occupations of the fathers of twenty-two shipmasters were found of whom fourteen had some connection with the sea.

Almost without exception, local men were recruited from the harbour front area. What were the professions of the fathers of the urban mariners? To separate fathers into sharply defined occupational segments was not simple. What characterized the careers of both the fathers and their shipmaster sons, and likely all of Salem society, was the plurality of professions and trades into which they entered, often simultaneously. We find merchants, for example, who were also craftsmen, shoremen, mariners, farmers, and of course, shipmasters. Only craftsmen appeared to have usually focused on one livelihood alone.²⁴

²⁴ Career information was found on eighty-six shipmasters from 1640 to 1720. Of forty-one who died while still pursuing a career at sea, a mere sixteen were involved in the single career of shipmaster. By comparison, fifteen combined their role of shipmaster with that of merchant; three were also fishermen; three kept inns; two were also craftsmen, and two more were farmers on the side. Of those forty-five shipmasters left records of their later careers after retiring from the sea, twenty-one continued to pursue the role of or became merchants, and eleven recorded fishing voyages. In addition, there were six craftsmen, four farmers, and three innkeepers. In all, listing the eighty-six careers according to their primary occupations if retired or their secondary occupations if they were still sailing, there were thirty-six merchants, fourteen fishermen, eight craftsmen, six farmers, and six innkeepers. Only sixteen mariners pursued the sole career of shipmaster.

The eleven men who had later careers as fishermen were categorized as such because we have records of them fishing after their last recorded shipping voyage. In all probability, however, they pursued both careers simultaneously. The role of shipmaster was one which supplemented their fishing income and was a part of an annual cycle of catching cod and transporting it with other cargo to Mediterranean and West Indian markets. Retiring from fishing they left only scattered records of any later

Of those fathers who had maritime connections, over half were or had been merchants or shopkeepers. Often active members of the community, they regularly appeared as constables, members of committees, and town councillors. Some were heavily involved in trade, others practised it on the side. These fathers had often been able to establish themselves as merchants because of the connections they had made in other colonial and foreign ports.

Like the fathers of locally born shipmasters, the fathers-in-law of both immigrant and local masters were drawn from many of the different occupations within the town. However, the one significant trade which was absent from the list was that of fisherman. Even those shipmasters whose fathers were fishermen married into families who were not directly involved in the fishery, a sign that ambitious men of any social level within the town could move upward socially. In contrast with the small group of in-laws who were fishermen, a significant number were farmers.²⁵ In general, however, there was virtually no correlation between

careers ashore even though they continued to appear in account books, court records, and tax lists.

²⁵ The records revealed the occupations of twenty-seven fathers-in-law for the pre-1690 period, eighteen of whom had daughters married to first generation shipmasters. There were nine tradesmen, seven farmers, four merchants, four merchant shipmasters, one shipmaster farmer, one shipmaster, and one mariner. There were no fishermen.

a father's career and that of the father-in-law. Although the sample is extremely small, it was still surprising to discover that only one merchant's son married into a merchant family.²⁶

Although local masters were recruited from all levels of Salem society, some class patterns did emerge. Over forty percent of the fathers of locally born shipmasters were involved in mercantile activities at some level and another twenty percent were tradesmen. Over seventy percent of fathers were in one way or another directly involved with the sea. That the majority were shipmasters, small merchants, or tradesmen indicates that most local masters came from the middle ranks of Salem society. Tax records, for example, reveal that more than fifty percent belonged to the upper half of Salem society. The taxable wealth holdings of pre-1690 locally-born masters placed them, on average, in the fourth decile, and close to two thirds of them paid more than the median tax when their tax payments are averaged over their lives.²⁷

²⁶ Of the five shipmasters whose fathers were merchants, one married a merchant's daughter, two married into farming families, one married the daughter of a carpenter, and one married the daughter of a shipmaster.

²⁷ See Appendix A for an explanation of the tax lists and their separation into deciles. Of eleven locally born shipmasters before 1690 whose decile ratings are known two were in the top decile, three were in the second, one in the third, three in the fifth, three in the seventh, and one in

It is not at all clear what accounted for this middle class bias. In some cases, sons were simply following in the trade of their fathers. Just as rural sons were becoming farmers like their fathers, urban sons were following their fathers to sea. With so many locally born masters coming from middle income families with a direct relationship with the sea, a tradition of seafaring may have been developing early in Salem's history. Another reason may be connected with the original settlement patterns. Those who had originally settled Salem came from the middling ranks of English society and maintained that status upon arrival. Most of the fathers of these shipmaster sons had immigrated to the town before 1640 and belonged to these ranks. Both father and son were known, established and likely trusted by the merchants and shipowners of the town. Finally, shipowners and merchants may have had few other local men from whom to choose. The only sons drawn to a career afloat may have been those whose fathers were in some way connected with the sea.

Very few shipmasters, however, sailed in vessels owned by their fathers. Most merchant fathers were petty traders, and the probated wealth of the fathers of all Salem masters before 1690 averaged under £320. A few sons did sail as

the eighth.

masters of their fathers' vessels, but these men usually belonged to some of the town's richest and most successful families and they generally sailed for only a few years before returning ashore to become involved in their father's business or run their own.

The first locally owned vessels operating out of Salem participated in the fishery and were involved in shipping goods usually while en route to and from the fishing grounds. Very often the masters of these vessels partly or wholly owned the ketches in which they sailed, as Joseph Grafton had. Most shipmasters before 1660, regardless of whether they were immigrants or locally born, devoted themselves to both fishing and trading. As owner/operators they attempted to employ their vessels in any profitable enterprise. Before 1660, and the growth of other New World colonies, there was simply not enough business in shipping to keep the Salem fleet of ketches fully employed moving freight. This habit of combining both trades persisted among these early shipmasters throughout their careers. Even though they tended to follow the expanding trade routes south both to the tobacco colonies and to the West Indies, they maintained their earlier interests in fishing. Shipmasters who had been fishing as well as shipping goods along the coast in the 1640's and 1650's continued to leave

records of such activities in the 1670's. Over thirty-seven percent of the voyages of these early mariners was connected to the fishery and they continued as late as 1679.²⁸

Only a minority of these early masters achieved the economic success of someone like Joseph Grafton. Despite the growth in Salem's economy, operating a vessel was a very risky business, particularly within the fishery. Some were only marginally successful while others fell into debt and insolvency. The difficulties of Richard Hollingworth are a case in point. In 1635, at the age of four, Hollingworth came to Salem from London with his family. His father, Richard sr., had been a successful shipwright who left a fairly substantial estate when he died in 1654.²⁹ As a master, Richard jr. partly or wholly owned a small vessel by 1660 and was sailing to Barbados and Virginia as part-owner of a ketch no later than 1671.³⁰ In 1673 he went fishing "to the east," but when the voyage failed and he was unable to pay off the debts he incurred in outfitting the vessel,

²⁸ See footnotes 12 and 14 in this chapter for sources.

²⁹ The father's estate was valued at £327 sterling and included sixty-five acres and several ketches under construction. See Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, I, 349-350; Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, I, 306; and the Essex Institute, Historical Collection, I, 12.

³⁰ Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, IV 169, 389-390, V 348.

he was sued by his creditors. Found liable in all actions brought against him, he was forced to turn over a part of his dwelling as payment.³¹ In the same year, discouraged over his financial collapse, he applied to the Massachusetts Legislature for a grant of land in order that he "might leave the sea" and was granted five hundred acres where he could find it. This may seem generous, but by this time there was little land left in and around Salem, and Hollingworth had to look for unclaimed land elsewhere.³²

He never recovered from the financial setback of this voyage. Although he maintained some connection with Salem as late as 1680, he failed to appear in any voyage or fishing records from 1673 onward. Dying at the age of sixty-four, he did not leave a will nor was his estate inventoried.³³ This may have meant he had left Salem before his death, but more likely it meant he simply fell into

³¹ Ibid., V 348, 437, VI 37, 42, 235, VIII 61.

³² Hollingworth didn't find anything suitable in the area for it was not until 1709, long after his death that the Massachusetts Legislature laid out five hundred acres of land to Richard Hollingworth and assigned it to a Samuel Prince. This was on the Ware River, well away from Salem. See "The Acts and Resolves Public and Private of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, Vols 6-9, being Vols 1-3 of the Appendix containing Private Acts, 1692-1780," in Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed. Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. 5 vols. (Boston, 1853-54), IX 10, 403.

³³ Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, I 306.

poverty for the remainder of his life. He had a married daughter living in the town and had given to her husband a lot of land and a house as a wedding dowry in 1661.³⁴ He may have spent the remainder of his life partially or wholly dependent upon them. Hollingworth's situation, although extreme, mirrored the difficulties that many pre-1660 shipmasters encountered. On average, these independent seafarers left only limited wealth at their deaths.³⁵

By 1660 with the restoration of Charles II a different sort of person began coming to Massachusetts' shores. The colony's growing economic promise was beginning to attract men interested more in achieving material and social success, and less in the Puritan ideals that had founded the colony.³⁶ Many of the shipmasters who arrived in Salem from the 1660's onward belonged to this new breed. They focused almost exclusively on trade, were heavily involved in

³⁴ Sidney Perley, "Salem in 1700," Essex Antiquarian, (Salem, Massachusetts, 1897-1909), IX 168.

³⁵ The probated inventories of all masters who began their careers before 1660 averaged under £170 sterling. Before the average was calculated the value of individual probated inventories was converted to pounds sterling using Table 3.1 in McCusker's Money and Exchange in Europe and America. See John J. McCusker, Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775: A Handbook, (Kingsport, Tennessee: Kingsport Press, 1978), 138-142. All probated values throughout the thesis are in pounds sterling and are derived from this table.

³⁶ See Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century, 110.

merchant activities, and were more committed to community affairs than their predecessors. Unlike earlier Salem masters only three percent of their voyages were connected with fishing, and on trading voyages they sailed as much as possible to the same regions. Lewis Hunt, for example, over a career that spanned twenty-four years sailed almost exclusively to the Caribbean. There were no fishing voyages and only one voyage to a destination other than the West Indies.³⁷

Heavily involved in trade, these shipmasters routinely acted as the shipowners' business agents, obtaining freight for their vessels in several ways. On occasion, the ship was chartered out to a third party, in which case, the only responsibility for the master and the shipowner was to ensure that the vessel was delivered safely to its destination. But most colonial New England shipowners were also merchants, and regularly shipped their own goods in their own vessels.³⁸ More frequently, therefore, the

³⁷ Hunt, who divided his career between Boston and Salem, first appeared as a master abroad a Salem vessel in 1681. In 1713 he was lost at sea while on his twenty-eighth voyage. Because of the delay in having him legally recognized as dead, Perley gave his death as 1717.

³⁸ There is a strong body of evidence which illustrates the link between New England shipowners and merchants. See James B Hedges, The Browns of Providence Plantations, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952) I; Byron Fairchild, Messrs. William Pepperrell: Merchants at Piscataqua (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954);

shipmaster shipped goods on the owner's account, in the hope of finding a market for it in the ports to which he was destined. In some harbours an owner had agents or, on occasion, he employed on his vessels a supercargo to manage his affairs while the ship was in port. But usually he left the responsibility for marketing the merchandise to the shipmaster. In the West Indies trade this could involve sailing from island to island in the hope of getting the best possible price.

For the voyage home, the shipmaster at times shipped a cargo for third parties but more frequently purchased and shipped freight on the owner's account.³⁹ Letters from shipowners and merchants, which always accompanied the master, outlined the prices he was to get for the commodities on board, described the goods he was to buy and indicated the prices he was to pay for them. Some letters

Bernard and Lotte Bailyn, Massachusetts Shipping 1697-1714 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); Bernard Bailyn, The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1964); W.T. Baxter, The House of Hancock: Business in Boston 1724-1775 (New York: Russell & Russell Inc, 1965); Christine Leigh Heyrman, Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts 1690-1750 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984).

³⁹ A good example of the business responsibilities which an English merchant captain was required to perform in the 18th century can be found in the journal of Samuel Kelly. See Samuel Kelly, Crosbie Garstin, ed., Samuel Kelly: An Eighteenth Century Seaman (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925).

contained only general comments, and some tried to cover every contingency. The problem was, of course, that goods were rarely bought or sold in a way the owner anticipated and often the master was required to make his own judgments and decisions on what was the fair market value for any item.

Despite this handicap the merchant frequently endeavoured to maintain some control. In examining some of these letters for both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it is apparent that the amount of detail varied according to the degree of confidence which the merchant had in his captain. An example of the flavour of this correspondence can be found in an 1697 letter which the Salem merchant Philip English gave to Captain John Henderson, as he was preparing to leave on a coastal voyage to Rhode Island and Long Island Sound. Wishing Henderson a safe voyage and hoping that "it please God to bring you safe" to port, he requested that the captain sell the freight for cash and buy a cargo of pork. If he was not able to obtain cash then he was to barter the freight for as much pork as possible. He was not to contract any debts, and he was to leave any unsold goods with a particular merchant from whom he was to obtain a firm receipt. The letter attempted to define the parameters under which Henderson was to work, but regardless of how detailed

English attempted to make the instructions, he kept having to insert "or sell for my best advantage."⁴⁰

Conversely, in 1738, Captain James Brown, merchant of Providence, R.I. sent his younger brother Obadiah as captain of the sloop Rainbow to the West Indies. The instruction to Obadiah read "when you are Arrived, do with your Cargoe as you think will be most to my advantage, if you think best Sell there, but if not goe Else where."⁴¹

In many cases the success or failure of a shipping endeavour and in some cases the survival of a business, rested on the ingenuity of the master mariner. This skill was defined not only by his seamanship but also by his business acumen, which required that he act as astutely as the owner in ensuring the success of the voyage. This competence was not always present, and when it was lacking the owner paid the price. Because the merchant was held responsible for any debts incurred by his shipmaster, it is not surprising that a shipowner often retained a good captain throughout the latter's career.

⁴⁰ Philip English Account Book, 1668-1708, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851 in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts. The letter was dated December 15, 1697.

⁴¹ In Hedges, The Browns of Providence Plantations, I 6.

By handling the business affairs of the shipowners and merchants in the ports to which they sailed, post-1660 shipmasters were able to create business links for themselves. Thirty-eight percent of shipmasters who arrived after 1660 established themselves as merchants, often while continuing a career at sea. They traded regularly on their own account selling and buying goods for their own shops in Salem. Because of their direct connection with buyers and sellers in the ports they visited, a master mariner had an advantage in setting himself up as a merchant. Although most never made it beyond the level of a small shopkeeper or shrank back to that level once they retired from the sea, a few built upon their advantages and became very successful in Salem.

Neither pre-1660 shipmasters nor local shipmasters who sailed after 1660 could match the wealth of the post-1660 immigrant shipmasters.

Table 2.1: Average Probate Values of Three Shipmaster Groups

Shipmaster Group	Probate
All Salem shipmasters whose first voyage was before 1660.	£166 (7)
Heirs of pre-1660 immigrants whose first voyage was after 1660.	£267 (10)
Immigrant shipmasters whose first voyage was after 1660.	£500 (13)

Sources: Dow, George F., ed. The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81 3 vols. Salem, 1920; Massachusetts Archives. "Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts from 1681 to the present." Boston, Massachusetts; Perley, Sidney. The History of Salem, Massachusetts. 3 vols. Salem, 1924.

Notes: Numbers in parentheses indicate the size of the sample.

Evidence from probated inventories (see Table 2.1) demonstrates this clearly, especially when the wealthiest inventories of each group are compared. The richest post-1660 immigrant master, Deliverance Parkman first appeared in Salem in 1673, the year he married Sarah Veren, the daughter of a small Salem merchant and shipmaster. He had moved to Salem from Boston, and had likely emigrated from England with his family several years previously. Little else is known about the family except that his father may have been involved in business in some way. His voyage records extended over an eight year period beginning in 1680, and as early as 1684 he had shares in a ketch. Records also show he owned shares in eight other vessels from 1696 to 1714.

He appeared in the second decile of the 1683 tax lists and from 1690 until his death he ranked among Salem's wealthiest ten percent. By 1689 it seems he was able to leave the sea and install himself as a merchant on shore. In 1692 he was so well established that he was elected to the town council as a selectmen. Parkman died in 1715 possessed of an estate valued at £1607.⁴²

Ebenezer Gardner, on the other hand, was the richest post-1660 Salem-born master. His father, George, had been a very successful merchant and farmer and when he died in 1679 his inventory, valued at £1329 sterling, included four hundred acres of land, one-eighth share in a corn mill, and business assets in Connecticut. In 1681 at the age of

⁴² Information on Parkman's life came from Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, II 7, 9, 184, 357, 363, 403, III 65, 128, 252, 302, 303, 318, 319, 320, 326-7, 367; Perley, "Salem in 1700," Essex Antiquarian, II 171, IV 102, VII 167, VIII 24-25, XI 115; Archie N. Frost, comp., Verbatim Transcriptions of the Records of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-1694, 57 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1939), file 56_26_1, housed at the Peabody Essex Museum; Massachusetts Vessel Registrations, 1697-1714, Massachusetts Archives VII 93-4, 158, 310, 361, 493 housed at the Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts. His tax records were obtained from Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, IX 351-355. The records from 1689 to 1776 were found in Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9. All microfilm references are to the microfilm copy in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

twenty-four Ebenezer married Sarah, daughter of Henry Bartholomew, another successful merchant. Both their lives, unfortunately, were very brief. Sarah died in the following year and Ebenezer died in 1685. His estate, including seventy-five acres of land and a vessel valued at £200, was inventoried at £712. Although it is not entirely certain, it appears Ebenezer had inherited most of his wealth from his father, and had received much of the remainder as a dowry from his prosperous father-in-law. It is revealing that the most successful locally born shipmaster had obtained most of his wealth because of what had been given to him. This is not to deny intelligence and ability to Gardner, and had he lived he might have been very successful. Yet no other local shipmaster before 1690, regardless of how long he lived, could match his affluence.⁴³

The greater level of wealth among the post-1660 immigrant shipmasters may have been tied to their motivation or to the resources and connections they brought with them.

⁴³ Information on Gardner's life came from Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, I 68-9, 392, III 303, 329; Dow and Thresher eds. Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, 1636-1686, VII 403, VIII 371, IX 73, 351-355, 372, 378, 510-512; George F. Dow, ed. The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81 (Salem: Essex Institute, 1916-1920), III 326-328; and Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, IV Part 2, 137.

These men likely shared much of same outlook as middle-class people in Britain - a passion for worldly comforts after twenty years of Puritan denial. Concerned with material well-being, they looked to the New World colonies as sources of economic opportunity. It is unlikely local shipmasters would have chosen their careers with the same passion or committed themselves to obtaining material comforts with the same fervour as this new breed of British immigrant.

It is unknown what financial resources they brought with them or what business connections they had made with English traders before they emigrated. Probably, they came from the middle levels of English society and so must have brought some material resources. Because the overwhelming number of their voyages was directly to and from the West Indies and Salem, most of the surviving documentation deals with this trade. Little evidence has survived to show to what extent they maintained business connections with London.⁴⁴

These immigrant shipmasters intended to make Salem their new home. They integrated themselves into the area, often marrying local daughters. Suggestive of their intention to establish themselves within the community was

⁴⁴ Of 111 voyages where the destination was known 71 were to the West Indies. That only fourteen voyages originated or ended in Northern Europe indicated that a few of these men maintained a connection with the Old World.

found in the support many of the most successful gave to a 1680 petition in favour of a new Puritan meeting hall or church, a petition signed by many of the town's "most prominent citizens."⁴⁵ That they were invited to sign their names suggests they had adopted the established church in Salem as their own. More importantly, their support reveals their desire to take what they felt was their rightful place within the hierarchy of the church. The seating arrangements within the hall were pre-determined, rigidly adhered to, and reflected the status and hierarchy of each member within the church.⁴⁶ The seating arrangements, however, did not necessarily reflect the new economic and social order of the town. In 1673 when a new meeting hall

⁴⁵ See Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, III 153-156.

⁴⁶ According to Perley at a meeting of the selectmen of the town in June of 1657, the seats in the meeting house were assigned to prominent persons for the first time. For example, as a sign of their importance William Browne, George Corwin and William Hathorne sat together in the magistrates seat. The wives were correspondingly seated in equally prominent seats on the women's side of the house. Later in the spring of 1658 other seats were assigned to other notable but less important figures. In 1673 when the new meeting house was opened the selectmen and the minister again assigned seating arrangements. The process of assigning a seat or rearranging the seating arrangement happened on several occasions throughout the century but why this was so, Perley never explained. Likely it meant that a pew had become available because of the death of a member or his or her departure from the town. Who replaced the departed individual in the vacant pew was a matter taken seriously by the membership. See Perley, The History of Salem Massachusetts, II 228, 431-434; III 192, 233, 244.

had been constructed it had from the first proven to be too small for the town's expanding population.⁴⁷ Many had to stand or sit on the floors, and this group must have included some members of the new mercantile wealth of Salem. It was in their interest then to petition for a new and larger hall in the hope of receiving a seat which reflected their economic and social position within the community.

Strikingly, another petition was signed by a much smaller number of people against the construction of a new hall. It had the names of several shipmasters, as well, but all were locally born men.⁴⁸ On a practical level, these men had already established themselves within the hierarchy and likely saw in these newcomers a threat to their position and status. The opposing petitions and the men who signed them reflected the tension between this new ambitious breed who both supported and were the instruments of change within Salem and those descendants who supported and represented the town's traditional structure.

The maritime community within the town during this period exhibited an independent spirit which stands in stark contrast to the popular image of Puritanism. A sense of this independence can be gleaned from sampling a few court

⁴⁷ Perley, The History of Salem Massachusetts, III 153.

⁴⁸ Ibid., III 156.

cases. It was the law of the colony that all members attend church services regardless of their personal beliefs.

Sarah, wife of Robert Stone sr., a successful shipmaster and shoreman, resolutely refused to obey the ordinance.

Sometimes yearly, sometimes on several occasions throughout the year she would be summoned before the court to explain her refusal and fined as much as £5/summons. Her indifference to such summonses was such that she regularly refused to even appear before the magistrates and would often be fined for that, as well. For over twenty years from her first summons Sarah Stone ignored the courts and never attended a Puritan meeting.⁴⁹

A more striking example of the independence of mind within Salem's maritime community can be found in the court records concerning Mordecai and Edith Cravett. Mordecai was a shipmaster, fisherman, and small merchant. In March 1663, in order to finance a fishing voyage, he mortgaged out to Thomas Savage of Boston his house, barn, thirty eight acres of land and his shares in two barks, one of which was his completely and the other of which he owned half. Unfortunately, the fishery was a complete disaster for

⁴⁹ Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, II 265, 315, 341, III 19, 21, 116, 183, 343, 381, 386, 435, 463, 467. The cases in these two volumes cover the years 1660 to 1667.

Cravett that year, and the mortgage was foreclosed. Savage apparently was able to take possession of the vessels, but over the next several years both Mordecai and his wife, Edith, tenaciously resisted every effort to have them evicted from their land and house. In June 1666 after repeated court actions and counter actions, both parties referred the case to arbitration.⁵⁰ Unfortunately for the Cravetts the arbitration panel sided with Savage. Forced to vacate the property, Edith threatened to put it to the torch. On the night of Sept 10 1666, after the property had been in the possession of Savage for several months, the house burned to the ground and Edith Cravett was arrested. Brought before the court on the charge of arson she remained defiant and asserted her innocence. Although there was much suspicion against her there was little hard evidence and she was found innocent.⁵¹

A final example involves one of the more colourful characters of Salem early history. Richard More had come

⁵⁰ During one the court hearings her outspoken behaviour was such that she was charged with "abusing the Worshipful members of the Court and for her unruly speeches." See Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, III 386.

⁵¹ The drama between Savage and the Cravetts can be found in Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, III 75, 104-105, 222, 256, 260-263, 296, 330-334, 338, 344, 352-353, 383, 386, 420-421.

over on the Mayflower in 1620 when he was about eight or ten years old. It is not certain when he came to Salem but in 1653 he owned property in the town. By 1657 he had a wharf and warehouse, and by 1659 he had 1/2 shares in a ketch. His career as a businessman, however, was a failure. In 1671 he applied for a licence to sell liquor and in 1674 he was licensed to keep an "ordinary"⁵² because according to the town's selectmen "by the province of God, Captain More is brought very low." There was a record of its renewal in 1676, but by 1682 he had lost this privilege for in that year he was fined for selling drink without a licence. In 1687 he was forced to sell his wharf and next year he sold the western part of his house and some land. What added spice to his personal history, however, took place in 1688. Approaching eighty, More was caught in a hay loft fondling a Mrs. Elizabeth Wilkinson, apparently to Mrs Wilkinson's delight. It was extremely embarrassing to the leadership of the community that an older citizen had been caught in such an act. Charged over the incident More was given a reprimand. He died in 1696 and his grave can still be found in the old cemetery in Salem.⁵³

⁵² A tavern or eating house serving regular meals.

⁵³ Information on More's life was taken from Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, III, 80; Dow and Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, I 283, III 257, V 400, VI 1,

With whatever type of personality the Puritan heartland may have been filled, the maritime community along Salem's wharves was peppered with people of independent spirit who did not hesitate to confront both law and orthodoxy when it suited them. And much of this activity was directly related to the buoyant economic atmosphere that existed in the colony at the time.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century the sources of recruitment underwent a shift as the ratio of immigrant to locally born shipmasters dropped dramatically. By 1700 substantially more locally born men were found on the quarter decks of Salem vessels. With trading links and patterns firmly established, immigrants arriving after 1690 found opportunities limited and quickly moved on. By 1689, moreover, England was at war against France, disrupting Salem's trade altogether. From 1690 until 1694 there was a remarkable drop in the number of recorded voyages by all Salem masters.⁵⁴ In 1690 Massachusetts invaded French

VII 75, VIII 346, IX 368, 370; and Frost, comp., Verbatim Transcriptions of the Records of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-1694, XLVI 114, XLIX 74.

⁵⁴ Where the number of voyages from 1680 to 1684 and 1685 to 1689 had been 79 and 70 respectively, the number from 1690 to 1694 dropped to 31. More importantly from the beginning of 1692 to the end of 1694 only seven voyages were found. These numbers were extrapolated from the voyage file constructed from data found in the court records, account

Canada, but the undertaking was a complete failure and a financial disaster. The enormous tax load levied in 1690 and 1691 to pay for the invasion seriously depressed the colony's and the town's trade for the next several years.⁵⁵

books, notarial records, and especially the naval officer shipping lists for virtually all of Britain's New World colonies.

⁵⁵The ratio between one year and another was determined by comparing the number of single country rates charged to Salem. During 1689 and 1690 a single country rate equalled £60 in New England money. When the Massachusetts Legislature decided upon the revenue needed for the year, each town was assigned a number of single rates and these rates were, in turn, broken down for each ward. The constables of each ward then determined the amount each household was required to pay to satisfy the taxes demanded. Each family head was charged a poll tax for himself and for any son or dependent over the age of 16 living at home. In addition, he was required to pay real estate and personal taxes proportional to the amount of wealth he held. Because money was often scarce in New England, the payment of taxes was only partially made in specie. Most payments, called "taxes in pay," were in produce, usually wheat or some other grain. In 1689 Salem was taxed six single rates, with one rate of £60 in money, and five rates of £300 in pay. By comparison, in 1690 the provincial taxes were assessed on the colony twice during the year. In May Salem was required to pay ten single country rates (whether in money or in pay, it was not stated), and in August it was assessed another 22.5 single country rates, 2.5 of which were in money and twenty in pay. In all the town was assessed 32.5 single rates in 1690 or 5.4 times the 1689 rate. These rates were found in letters to the Salem town council from the Legislature in Boston placed at the beginning of each year's tax list. See Ruth Crandall, comp., *Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776*, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), roll 8. The rates were not always clearly stated on the tax lists for some other years. In such cases they were found in the Acts of the House. See Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England. 5 vols.

Following on the heels of this disaster came the Salem witch hysteria of 1692. War, taxes, depression, and witchcraft in combination forced many of the town's inhabitants to leave. The tax lists taken in the spring of 1693 (see Table 2.2) show that the tax-paying citizenry had declined by half since 1690, and many of these immigrants were merchants and masters. Some of these families did not again show up until 1694, and others never returned.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ It may have been that those missing from the lists were present in Salem but were not counted simply because of the confusion and fear. However, this would not account for the absence of names in 1693 and to a lesser extent in 1694. That less were missing each succeeding year, suggests they were slowly returning to Salem. At the very least, it suggests that, if they had remained in Salem, their economic livelihood was so completely disrupted that it took several years for their lives to return to normal.

Table 2.2: Number of Taxable Household Heads in Six Salem Wards from 1689 to 1695.

Year	Wards						Total
	W	M	A	C	F	V	
1689	125	94	90	83	89	109	590
1690	99	111	95	101	90	113	609
1691	81	75	86	91	92	114	539
1692	58	62	72	71	61	116	440
1693	24	50	41	56	56	107	334
1694	52	51	57	70	62	140	439
1695	49	51	57	71	65	132	425

Sources: Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9.

Notes: The figures for 1693 were taken from a special spring tax assessment. All other figures were taken from the annual fall tax lists. From 1692 onward V ward was split into two separate wards, but for the purposes of comparison their figures were recombined. For identification of the wards by name of the constables see Appendix B.

Significantly, the war and the trials affected the wards in different ways. V ward, which included Salem village and the farming area around it was the least affected in numbers by the unsettling events. Indeed, by 1695 the number of taxable heads was the highest it had ever been. In contrast, W ward, almost entirely made up of the waterfront area where much of the commercial endeavours of Salem were undertaken, had a dramatic decrease of almost seventy-five percent over the same period. Because W ward housed numerous mariners, these figures are entirely consistent with the drop in the number of voyages for the period. Likely, the destruction of the fleet, as well as the

hysteria, contributed to the decision of many in this area to seek a life elsewhere. By 1695 W ward had only regained about half of its 1690 number.⁵⁷

By 1695, however, Salem merchants, despite their diminished numbers, began reasserting themselves in the business affairs of the community. Although Britain remained at war until 1697, a return to more normal trading patterns was taking place by 1695. This was reflected in the sixty-nine voyages from 1695 to 1699. Recent immigrants and first generation mariners of the waterfront, upon whom the shipowners of Salem depended, however, had departed in great numbers. Henceforth, as will be seen in Chapter Three, young locally born Salem men came to dominate both the forecastle and the quarter deck.

That so many mariners forsook the town, in comparison to other residents, lends support to the Davis/Lemisch/Rediker thesis that those who manned English and colonial vessels belonged to a transient proletarian sub-culture unconnected to landward society. That so many

⁵⁷ The disruption caused by the war, and the hysteria which came to affect other areas beside Salem, seriously affected the revenue producing ability of the colony. This was reflected not only in increased taxation but in the number of occasions taxes were levied upon the inhabitants. To raise sufficient revenue, the legislature was forced to levy provincial taxes in the spring of 1693, again in the fall, once again during the winter of 1693-1694, and on three occasions from August to October 1694. It also levied taxes twice in 1695.

had departed and did not return supports the argument that their connection to Salem was tenuous and easily broken. Yet their names had originally appeared on the Salem tax lists only because they were heads of households and resident within the town. To be a householder and resident implies commitment. In some cases the determination may have been weak, but it seems likely they had originally arrived with the intention of staying. It must also be remembered that although W ward had suffered the greatest decimation of people during the war, all wards save the farming ones lost large numbers of households that had not returned by 1694. In essence, because of the complete disruption of trade, all the urban wards were seriously affected. If any subgroup of transient mariners had been materializing along the Salem waterfront by the end of the 1680's, they virtually disappeared during the 1690's. By 1700 recruitment and promotion aboard Salem vessels was dominated not by a transient waterfront proletariat, but by locally born men.

In summation, Salem shipmasters who sailed before 1660 regardless whether they were immigrants or locally born appeared to have looked upon the role of master as a profession in and of itself and chose not or could not push their careers beyond this role. Sailing before many of the

trade routes had been established, they spent much of their time and energy finding work for themselves as best they could. They fished on one voyage, freighted along the coast on another, and took a voyage south or to the Caribbean whenever the opportunity permitted.

Those who sailed after 1660 participated in the great expansion of Salem's trade by devoting themselves to the establishment of trading connections in Britain's emerging colonial empire on behalf of their employers and themselves. The successful ones then maintained these connections throughout their sailing careers and for the remainder of their lives. Both local and immigrant masters participated in this expansion but distinctions emerged. Although some demonstrated mercantile interests the careers of many locally born men were still limited to commanding vessels. Immigrant masters, on the other hand, were very aggressive in furthering their careers and generally saw the role of shipmaster as a point of entrance into the mercantile world. Their ambition was to establish themselves as successful merchants within the community, and generally, those who succeeded stayed, while those who failed left.

For fifty years following 1640 Salem vessels were captained by both local and immigrant shipmasters. By the beginning of the next century the dominance of immigrant masters disappeared as the industry came to depend upon

local youths who began their careers in the fore-castle and worked their way up to the position of master. With the establishment of this trend Salem entered into a pattern of recruitment and promotion which would remain unchanged in its important aspects until the American Revolution.

Chapter 3

The Origins and Lives of Salem Shipmasters, 1690-1720

Habbakuk Gardner was born in 1682, the son of Thomas Gardner, a successful Salem merchant.¹ In 1696,

¹ The story of Habbakuk Gardner's life was extracted from a variety of sources. See Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts 3 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1924-1928), I, 69, 441, III 308, 309, 310, 316; Sidney Perley, "Salem in 1700," Essex Antiquarian (Salem, Massachusetts, 1897-1909), II 172, VIII 27, XI 16; "Essex County Notarial Records, 1697-1768" Essex Institute, Historical Collections (Essex Institute, Salem, Mass., 1868-1947), XLI 184, 191-192, 383, XLII 156, 160, 245, XLIII 43, 50; Massachusetts Vessel Registrations, 1697-1714. Massachusetts Archives (Boston, Massachusetts) VII 83, 142, 188, 206, 282, 339; Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Barbados. Colonial Office Files CO 33 13-15; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Massachusetts. Colonial Office files CO 5 848; the Philip English Account Books, 1664-1708, 1678-1690, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851, 94; Joseph Orne Account Books, 1719-1744, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899, 99, 101, 102, both accounts housed in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts; Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts; Melinde Lutz Sanborn, ed. Essex County, Massachusetts, Probate Index, 1638-1840 2 vols. (Boston, Massachusetts, 1987), 356, 358; George F. Dow and Mary G. Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 9 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts,

aboard the ketch Prosperous, he made his first voyage as a master and the following year he married Ruth Gedney, the daughter of a local shipwright. Already involved in trade by the year of his marriage and investing in privileges and adventures aboard the Prosperous, he was also shipping fish in other vessels to the West Indies. About the same time he opened a shop in Salem.

Habbakuk sailed continuously as a master for the next twenty-two years. Yet for the first ten years of his marriage he and his family rented rather than owned their own home and it was not until 1707 that he was able to purchase a house and shop. Despite his best efforts he was unable to rise above the middle levels within the town's economic hierarchy.² The struggle was disheartening enough

1911-1975), 351-355; Ruth Crandall, comp., *Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776*, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9. Microfilm reference is to the copy in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

² During his entire working life, he never paid taxes in any tax bracket higher than the fourth decile. In fact, in a highly unusual pattern, for over thirty years he continued to pay taxes in the fourth decile with the exception of the 1710 where he dropped to the fifth. See Ruth Crandall, comp., *Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776*, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9. All references are to the microfilm copy in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

that in 1711 he moved to Boston in the hope of improving his fortunes. Four years later, however, he returned to Salem where once again he joined the middling ranks of Salem society. At his death in 1733 Gardner was still operating his shop, but only on a small scale. He owned a house, two rights of commonage and a pew in the meeting house. After years of struggle he was only able to leave his family a modest estate.³

That Gardner was never able to rise above the middle levels of the town's economic hierarchy placed him among the majority of shipmasters who sailed after 1690. He was a member of a settled waterfront community which had emerged in Salem at the very end of the seventeenth century. The majority of these masters came from the community itself and those who did not came from the neighbouring towns along the coast. However, their ability to advance up the social hierarchy of Salem had lessened. Complicated social interactions based as much on marriage ties as on seafaring or business ability came to determine the level of financial and social success that individuals achieved. The decline of social mobility compared with the pre-1690 period created an economic and social gap between a few masters of

³ His probated inventory totalled £225 sterling and included "sundry goods in the shop" valued at under £30 sterling. He was a literate man as the inventory also contained not only a Bible but other books as well.

significant wealth and the majority of Salem shipmasters such as Habbakuk Gardner. Opportunities for Gardner and others had diminished because the rapid growth of trade had ended for the town by the last years of the 1680's. Salem had settled into a stable pattern of trading which offered fewer opportunities for men such as Gardner to exploit. This arrangement would remain virtually unchanged until the eve of the American Revolution.

The patterns of Salem's trade remained stable from the last decade of the seventeenth century onward, but the volume of trade to individual trading partners fluctuated widely as a result of the various wars between Britain and France from 1689 to 1713. The most affected area was the West Indies. In 1693 and 1694 trade to the area had virtually disappeared and during Queen Anne's War the number of voyages was again severely curtailed. Privateers based in the French islands of the Caribbean had played havoc with British and colonial shipping and there were no recorded voyages there from 1707 to 1709.⁴ With the return to peace

⁴ See Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Antigua. Colonial Office Files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Bahamas. Colonial Office Files CO 27/12; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Barbados. Colonial Office Files CO 33 13-16 and T 64/47; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Bermuda. Colonial Office files CO 41/6; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Jamaica. Colonial Office files CO 142 14; Naval Officer Shipping

in 1713 Salem's trade mushroomed. Catering to renewed demand, voyages to the other colonies doubled from 1713 to 1714, and doubled again from 1714 to 1715.⁵ And it was to the West Indies that the greatest increase occurred.

During all this tumult important changes had taken place in the recruitment process. The ratio of immigrant to local shipmasters dropped almost immediately to under one quarter and lingered there until 1720. It then rose again to just over a third and remained at about that level to the end of the colonial period.⁶ Very few of the non-Salem shipmasters, however, came from overseas; almost all were

Lists for Maryland. Colonial Office files CO 5 848; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Mountseratt. Colonial Office files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Nevis. Colonial Office files CO 187/1-2; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for St. Christophers. Colonial Office files CO 157/1; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Virginia. Colonial Office files CO 5/1441; and "Essex County Notarial Records, 1697-1768" Essex Institute Historical Collection (Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts), XLI-XLVII.

⁵ See Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Massachusetts. Colonial Office Files CO 5 848.

⁶ For example, in the portledge bills of several Salem merchants accounts from 1724 to 1765 fifty-seven masters were listed. Of these 37 or sixty-five percent were at least second generation residents of the town. For a list of these accounts see the footnote below. See John Touzel Account Book, 1711-1727, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851; Joseph Orne Account Books, 1719-1744, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899; Timothy Orne Account Books, 1738-1758, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899; Miles Ward Account Books, 1736-1745, 1745-1753, 1753-1764, Ward Family Papers, 1718-1945; and Richard Derby Family Papers and Accounts, 1757-1776.

from the neighbouring coastal towns of Essex county and elsewhere in Massachusetts.⁷ After 1694, moreover, virtually all shipmasters on Salem vessels were promoted from the forecastle. Notarial records, portledge bills, and colonial custom records - from the turn of the century to the eve of the American Revolution - point to a transformation in the pattern of recruitment since 1690.⁸ Although the data extends beyond the time boundaries of this study an examination of the lives of the mariners listed in these documents sheds light on the sources of recruitment and the patterns of promotion from the forecastle into the

⁷ With few opportunities remaining open for the ambitious immigrant from overseas, immigration of the type of person who had characterized those coming out from Restoration England disappeared.

⁸ See "Essex County Notarial Records, 1697-1768" Essex Institute, Historical Collections (Essex Institute, Salem, Massachusetts, 1868-1947), XLI-XLVII. Portledge bills were extracted from the family papers and account books of six merchant shipowners. They were the George Corwin Account Books, 1658-1664, 1663-1672, Curwin Family Papers, 1641-1902; English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851; Timothy Orne Family Papers and Accounts, 1719-1899; Miles Ward Family Papers and Accounts, 1718-1945; Richard Derby Family Papers and Accounts, 1757-1776 and the Goodhue Family Papers, 1762. All are housed in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass. For a list of custom record sources before 1750 see footnotes 1 and 2 above. For custom records of vessels that entered and cleared Salem between 1750-1769 see Harriet Silvester Tapley, ed. Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750-1769, (Salem, Massachusetts: The Essex Institute, 1934).

quarter deck, and reveals stability both in the recruitment process and in Salem society throughout the period.

Salem vessels were manned primarily by young Salem men, drawn to sea for a number of reasons.⁹ One powerful factor was the opportunity for promotion. Salem vessels, on average, carried a crew of six men.¹⁰ With two of the crew made up of a master and a mate, a third of the mariners sailing out of Salem were officers, and if officers were recruited from within the town's maritime community then a good many of these seamen had an opportunity for promotion.¹¹ Almost all promotions were confined to Salem men, and a man from another community even within Essex county had little chance of success. An outsider might hope

⁹ Daniel F. Vickers, "Why Were Seamen Young?" Paper delivered to The Centre of early Modern History, Minneapolis, Minn, May 1994.

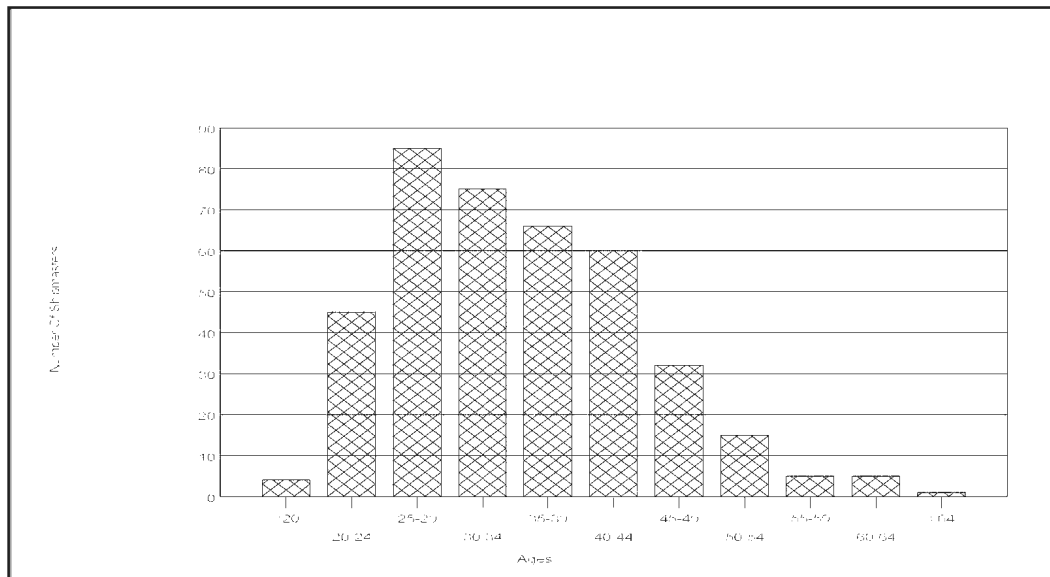
¹⁰ The crew size in the eighteenth century portledge bills of Salem merchants ranged from four to eleven men depending on the destination of the vessel. Vessels destined for the northern colonies were smaller in size and carried a crew of from four to six men. Those going to the southern colonies usually carried a crew of five, while those going to the West Indies had six or seven mariners. Vessels crossing the Atlantic to Northern or Southern Europe carried anywhere from eight to eleven mariners. A sample of fifty voyages recorded in the portledge bills from 1711 to 1765 had an average crew size of 6.2 men.

¹¹ If there was a crew of six and two were officers, then when both officers retired or died, because officers were promoted from the forecandle, two men from the remaining crew of four would fill the vacancies. Ideally under such circumstances each had a 50% chance of promotion.

to obtain a mate or master's position in another New England port but his chances of promotion on a Salem vessel were slim. Only sixteen percent of master mariners were non-residents at the time they appeared in the portledge bills.¹² This again increased the theoretical likelihood of advancement for Salem seamen and further increased the attraction of a career at sea. In reality, because the careers of master mariners were usually longer than the foremast crew, the possibility of promotion was somewhat less, especially to the rank of master. An examination of those masters who had begun their careers before 1720 reveals that although some retired or died early, the majority continued to sail until into their forties (See Figure 3.1 below). Sailing was a career which most Salem shipmasters pursued, if possible, into middle age.

¹² Four out of twenty-five master mariners were non-residents when they first appeared in the portledge bills.

Figure 3.1: Age Distribution of Salem Shipmasters, 1640-1720



Sources: George Francis Dow and Mary G. Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 9 vols. (Salem, Mass., 1911-1975); Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists. Colonial Office files CO 5/749, CO 5 848, CO 27/12, CO 33 13-16, CO 41/6, CO 142 14, CO 157/1, CO 187/1-2, T 64/47; Essex Institute. Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to 1849. 6 vols. (Salem, 1916); Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts. 3 vols. (Salem, 1924).

Notes: The graph was constructed from the ages of shipmasters who sailed on 393 voyages between 1640 and 1720.

Despite the extended careers of shipmasters, however, a large number of Salem seamen achieved the position of master mariner during their lives. By comparing the names of Salem resident seamen in the portledge bills to the names of masters listed in the custom and notarial records it was found that twenty-nine percent of these seamen appeared as

masters at some later date, and another nine percent appeared as mates.¹³

Another factor influencing local recruitment was the tradition of seafaring that had developed among many of Salem's families after 1690. The majority of Salem resident mariners who sailed before 1700 had sons, nephews, grandsons, or grand-nephews who appeared on the portledge bills a generation later. The descendants of some families who made the adjustment to seafaring in the 1640's continued as seamen and masters well into the nineteenth century. The Gardner family offers an excellent example of such a tradition. Thomas Gardner had arrived in New England sometime around 1624. Originally appointed by the Dorchester Company as overseer of their plantation at Cape Ann, he moved to Salem with Roger Conant in 1629 and took up farming. Gardner fathered a large family of sons two of whom, John and Samuel, turned to the sea to earn a living. By the time Habbakuk Gardner, a fourth generation New Englander, began his career as a mariner a seafaring

¹³ Of immense help was the published volume of custom records of vessels that entered and cleared Salem between 1750-1769 edited by Harriet Tapley. See Tapley, ed. Early Coastwise and Foreign Shipping of Salem: A Record of the Entrances and Clearances of the Port of Salem, 1750-1769. Because mates did not usually appear in the custom records, the percentage of seamen who were promoted to the position of mate was likely higher than the 9% recorded. However, at the moment the actual percentage remains uncertain.

tradition had been well established in the family. The Gardner name would continue to appear in the local portledge and custom records until well into the nineteenth century.¹⁴

Of course, Salem vessels were not manned by long-time Salem families alone. Throughout the colonial period many new names appeared as well. A few were in-migrants from elsewhere along the Massachusetts North Shore who made Salem their home; others were the sons of fathers who had arrived in Salem as labourers or tradesmen and settled in the town; and still others were the sons of long time Salem families who were the first of their name to venture to sea. Almost none came from overseas. The main source of recruitment in eighteenth Salem was the seaport itself and its immediate vicinity.

Still another factor influencing recruitment was the strength of paternal and fraternal relations between masters and crew. Sager has argued that the relations on board nineteenth-century Canadian coastal vessels and fishing schooners were derived from land-based relations which in turn were defined by the paternalism and fraternalism of the family and household. He argued that the small vessel was a type of working household with the master as its head.

¹⁴ See Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, I, 68-78.

There existed an "ethic of egalitarian relations" where the skipper was merely the senior man.¹⁵ Relationships similar to these existed aboard Salem's fishing and merchant vessels. Young Salem men going to sea even for the first time took with them the knowledge and lore which they had been hearing since they were boys. These men did not come from the hinterland with no knowledge of the sea. They grew up along the waterfront of the town and smelled the salted fish drying on the shore, or as it came in on the wind from Winter Island, or as it lay on the docks to be shipped to colonial or foreign ports. Daily these boys listened to tales of their fathers, uncles, older brothers, and neighbours. They became familiar with many of the ropes and lines on any ketch, schooner, or sloop. They heard talk on navigation, on the best and safest way to get to any port Salem vessels frequented. More importantly, they grew up in the same neighbourhoods as the masters under whom they would one day sail and each knew or knew of the other.

These close neighbourhood connections were again reflected in the tax lists. Almost without exception Salem

¹⁵ See Eric W. Sager, Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914 (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 47-52. Basil Greenhill argued that similar relationships existed among late nineteenth and early twentieth century British schooner men. See Basil Greenhill, The Merchant Schooners (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988).

born masters and mariners belonged to families that lived in one of the four urban wards. Indeed almost fifty percent of the seamen whose wards we know sailed with a master who resided in the same ward. On some voyages every Salem born crew member resided in the same ward as the captain.

The fraternal relationships which existed between master and crew were plainest on fishing voyages. On Salem vessels fishing off the coast or on the Grand Banks the master received only the same share as the other full sharemen. Furthermore, any one of the sharemen on one voyage might show up as master on another. Not only did this demonstrate the fraternal relationships that existed on a Salem fishing craft, it clearly revealed that the art of navigation was not the exclusive preserve of the master.¹⁶ How much of this knowledge was transferred from experienced fishermen to the young men who sailed on merchant voyages is uncertain but any knowledge of navigation, even if limited, helped to close the social distance that might have existed between a master and his crew.

¹⁶ An example of this type of share system can be found in the William Pickering Account Ledgers. See William Pickering Account Book. 1695-1718, Salem, Massachusetts: ERIC Document Reproduction Service. ED 014 900. (1972), 80, 89, 91, 92. All references are to the microfilm copy in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

On shipping voyages the great majority of vessels that trekked out from Salem over the period were ketches, sloops or schooners of 35 to 40 tons. Such a vessel did not allow for much physical separation of master and crew and because much of the work was shared there was little social separation as well. Because each vessel usually included only a master, mate, a boy, and two or three seamen, the master and one seaman often handled one watch and the mate and the second seaman handled the other watch. Such a small crew must have required the master to manually participate in the some of the functions of running the vessel such as handling the wheel or making adjustments to the sails, and in so doing it would have reduced the social distance between master and crew.

The existence of fraternal and paternal bonds connecting master to crew is also suggested by the decided lack of legal disputes between them. Rediker has asserted that the central plan of capitalism during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century was to shift as many of the risks and costs of an expanding maritime economy onto the shoulders of the common seaman. To enforce this transition merchant captains were given extraordinary and autocratic powers backed by Admiralty law. As a result, tension and conflict which over time became increasingly "vicious" defined the relationship between the master and

seaman.¹⁷ In arriving at these conclusions he relied heavily on admiralty court records. Since Admiralty courts were not in place in Massachusetts until 1719, maritime conflicts in the colony before that time were played out in the Quarterly Courts and the Courts of Common Pleas.¹⁸ If there were conflicts on board ship examples of such tensions should show up in these records. The Essex County Quarterly Courts from 1640 to 1694, the Court of Common Pleas from 1694 to 1720, and the Massachusetts Vice-Admiralty Courts from 1718 to 1747 show only scattered cases where either a Salem master or seaman took the other to court.¹⁹ Far more

¹⁷ Marcus Rediker, Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹⁸ The Quarterly Courts of Massachusetts existed from 1636 until 1694 when they were replaced by the Court of Common Pleas. The James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts houses the verbatim transcripts of the Quarterly Court files for the years 1636 to 1694. See Archie N. Frost, comp., Verbatim Transcriptions of the Records of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-1694, 57 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1939). In addition, the Quarterly Court records of Essex County for the years 1636 to 1686 have been published. See George F. Dow and Mary G. Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 9 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1911-1975). Also housed at the Peabody Essex Museum are the complete records for the Court of Common Pleas. See the files of the Essex County Inferior Court of Common Pleas, property of the Supreme Judicial Court, Division of Archives and Records Preservation, on deposit at the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

¹⁹ See the Records of the Court of Admiralty of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, 3 vols. (1718-1747), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. All references are

frequent were suits between masters and merchants. The court records revealed that during the entire period from 1640 to 1720 there were seven cases between Salem masters and seamen and seventy cases between Salem masters and merchants. In none of the seven master/seamen cases was there any charge of coercion or brutality. Furthermore in neither the county courts nor in the Vice-Admiralty Courts from 1719 to 1750 was there recorded a single case of a Salem seaman deserting from a Salem merchant vessel.²⁰

Not only were local men attracted to a career afloat, Salem's shipowners chose local mariners over outsiders for several reasons. One reason was the New Englander's dislike of strangers, often reflected in legislation passed by the colony throughout its early years. As early as 1650 shipmasters or mates who brought strangers into a

to the microfilm copy in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

²⁰ In fairness to Rediker it must be pointed out that there were numerous cases in the local courts to 1720 and in the Vice-Admiralty courts from 1719 to 1750 involving disputes between British masters and their crews sailing in British vessels. Common among these court cases were wage disputes and cases of desertion. In fact, there was in the Vice-Admiralty courts, a significant number of disputes between Boston masters and their crews. Whether these crews were local or international in composition is unknown. The argument in this thesis does not intend to dispute Rediker's claim. Rather, it aims to amend it by showing that in the generally smaller vessels manned by local masters and crews that sailed from the smaller communities along Massachusetts coast, such aggression did not exist as Rediker claims.

Massachusetts port were required to present them before the governor, deputy governor or two other magistrates.²¹ More than other North American colonists, the Puritans were very fearful about any stranger spiritually contaminating their community or becoming a charge on the public purse and did everything within their power to avoid this problem.

Puritan charity did not extend to strangers. A sad example of their insensitivity to outsiders was found in the way the residents of the area around Salem treated an unwanted visitor. In the winter of 1719 a mariner by the name of Thomas Crook came as a passenger from Ireland and landed somewhere in Maine. He arrived in Salem from Casco Bay in Maine sick and penniless but was turned out of doors wherever he went seeking help. Eventually, he managed to trudge his way to Lynn, a community to Salem's south, where he was unable to proceed any further because of his "perishing condition." The town, forced to put him under the care of the local doctor for six weeks, refused responsibility for the medical costs and petitioned the colony to reimburse the doctor for his services. That Crook

²¹ Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 5 vols. (Boston, 1853-54), III 205.

was not held responsible for the debt probably means he died from his illness.²²

But shipowners did not employ locals only because of the community's desire to avoid contact with strangers. It was in the self-interest of all concerned to hire local men. Most Salem merchant vessels did not carry a supercargo and the numerous letters which merchants and shipowners gave to their masters in regard to the disposal of their exports and the purchase of imports testify to the role the shipmaster played as supercargo as much as navigator. Merchants did not rely on kin to command their ships; instead they chose local men they knew.²³ In turn, a shipmaster who had such responsibility wanted a crew on whom he could rely.

With numerous desertions from British and foreign ships, Salem and all of New England easily could have tapped into a ready supply of cheap labour. Yet Salem masters and shipowners preferred to recruit from the local labour pool because of the amicable relations that generally prevailed

²² This story came from the appendix of The Acts and Resolves Public and Private of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, IX 658, in Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England.

²³ The importance of the shipmaster's role as supercargo is further supported in the court cases between merchant and shipmaster. The majority of suits and counter-suits were disputes over freight.

there.²⁴ This harmony depended on the paternal and fraternal bonds which defined the relations between shipmaster and crew. Employers in the Salem maritime labour market were willing to pay a premium to obtain what they considered to be more reliable labour.²⁵

The importance of paternalism in this particular seaport society does not sit easily within the dominant paradigm for early eighteenth century maritime history constructed by Marcus Rediker. Nor does it fit with the emphasis on class divisions within colonial seaports argued by Gary B. Nash and his students. Nash has argued that early in the eighteenth century colonial urban dwellers were coming to identify themselves with separate economic groups

²⁴ Although there may have been many instances where deserters were not prosecuted, in almost every case when tried before the local courts they were returned to their vessels. In examining both the Essex County Quarterly Courts and Court of Common Pleas from 1640 to 1720 and the Vice-Admiralty Courts from 1719 to 1750, very few deserters won their cases. In contrast, well over ninety percent of mariners, whether local men or foreigners, won when they prosecuted their employers for wages. Generally, and almost without exception, mariners won wage disputes but lost when taken to court for desertion.

²⁵ Heyrman has argued that interactions between merchant and mariner/fisherman in early 18th century Marblehead were also defined by paternalistic relations, and that local crews almost entirely manned the town's vessels. Marblehead was located on the opposite side of a peninsula from Salem, a distance of only several miles. See Christine Leigh Heyrman, Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts 1690-1750 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984), 348-354.

that shared few common goals. Accordingly, they began to behave in class-specific ways in response to events that impinged upon their well-being and manifested ideological points of view and cultural characteristics peculiar to their rank. He goes on to say that the changing social relations and the emergence of new modes of thought among the urban population from 1690 to 1776 and the origins and meaning of the American Revolution can be more fully understood if horizontal rather than vertical divisions were emphasized.²⁶ Salem was smaller than Boston or New York, but it was a seaport, and one in which paternalism dominated.

By far the majority of those who shipped out of Salem in the eighteenth century grew up in this type of society. When they began their careers afloat, local seamen were young, single and usually dwelling with parents or other guardians. An examination of the tax lists shows this pattern clearly. Although any male over the age of sixteen of sound mind and body was charged a poll or head tax, it was the normal practice for the head of the household to pay the poll for any son living at home. The tax lists show

²⁶ Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), viii-xi. See also Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," William and Mary Quarterly., 3rd Ser., XXV (1968), 371-407.

that the father often paid the poll tax for an extra head, sometimes two. In the case of a widow, exempt from paying any poll herself, the list might even explicitly state that she paid the tax for her son. A Salem mariner below the level of mate usually had his taxes paid for by one or other of his parents.

Parents paid a working son's taxes because as long as the son remained single and lived at home his parents normally received his wages.²⁷ At times, it was explicitly stated in the portledge bill that the wages of the son were to be paid to the father or to the mother if a widow. Such a relationship commonly continued until the son married and started his own family; his appearance in the tax lists indicated he had taken a wife.²⁸

The arrival of a Salem son in the tax lists might not only indicate a recent marriage, but could at times serve as

²⁷ Parents often became heavily dependent upon the income of their sons. In account books from the 1650's until well into the 19th century wages of the son frequently appeared on the credit side of his father's account. Daniel Vickers, studying Essex county fishermen for the same period, has shown that in the town of Marblehead parents commonly came to rely on their sons for financial support. See Daniel F. Vickers, Farmers & Fisherman: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1830 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 186.

²⁸ On average, Salem seamen married in their mid-twenties. The average marrying age of sixty-seven mariners from the portledge bills was 24.9 years.

an indicator of promotion. In fact, promotion, with its increased income, may have been a catalyst to encourage the mariner to begin a family. Men who never went on to become masters and mates, however, only appeared in the tax lists after they had disappeared from the portledge bills. Clearly these men had gone to sea for several years and returned to work ashore. Some decided they did not like the sea, others discovered that promotion was not open to them, still others went to sea with the intention of leaving it after several years. In addition, their disappearance from the portledge bills and their appearance on the tax lists again often coincided with their marriage.

What they did when they returned to shore is not entirely clear, but once their names surfaced on the tax lists they usually remained for years afterwards.²⁹ The majority of these men were themselves the sons of Salem residents, and even most of those of unknown origin continued to dwell in the port and pay taxes.³⁰ That so

²⁹ Presently at Memorial University of Newfoundland an extensive database is in the process of being created by my distinguished colleague Dr. Daniel Vickers, to address the question of post-marine careers. Thus far in an attempt to answer this and other questions over two thousand New England seaman have been listed covering the period from 1640 to 1850.

³⁰ A random sample of 160 Salem resident mariners was taken for the period 1710 to 1760. Of these only 18 appeared in the tax lists for less than five years.

many settled in Salem upon retirement indicates they had maintained strong connections to the town even while seamen. They were not the social outcasts of Lemisch, nor did they belong to any separate cultural community like that which Rediker described. Clearly, as Alexander argued, these mariners were landsmen who had gotten wet.

There is little evidence they had rural roots. The majority grew up in an urban world and if few came from the farms of Massachusetts even fewer returned there. The Salem tax lists were divided into wards and until 1752 the area that became the farming community of Danvers made up four of the eight wards. Yet in the entire period from 1683 until 1752, only four mariners of any rank were found who came from this area.³¹ All other Salem mariners discovered in the Salem merchant account books, Essex County court records, or the Essex County Notarial records, regardless of the generation to which they belonged, came from the four urban wards of the town. And all non-Salem mariners whose home towns were traceable came from the ports towns of Massachusetts.

³¹ In his genealogical footnotes, Perley listed a number of mariners who came from some of these four rural wards. It appears he found their occupations from an examination of land deeds. However, to be classified as a mariner in this thesis required that their names had to have been found in a voyage record at least once. Such references in Perley, therefore, could not be used to identify mariners unless corroborated by a record of a voyage.

What were the social origins of those mariners promoted to the quarter deck of Salem vessels? Salem shipmasters came from the entire economic and social strata of Salem society. Their fathers were craftsmen, farmers, merchants, fishermen, mariners and shipmasters. Some were wealthy and some were poor. Almost thirty percent of these fathers were shipmasters themselves, and another fifteen percent were fishermen. Significant numbers were also merchants and shopkeepers, usually operating on a small scale as they traded and retailed the goods they shipped on their own account. Although a sizable number of fathers were farmers, most combined agriculture with other work - coasting, fishing, or curing cod. The few who appeared to farm exclusively were mostly husbandmen working a few acres within the town's boundaries, and it is very likely they hired themselves out for wages whenever the opportunity arose. Large numbers of fathers were craftsmen, especially in such sea-related trades as blockmaking, carpentry and shipbuilding, but also in shoemaking, hat making, weaving and other non-maritime trades. What all Salem shipmaster fathers shared in common was their residence. Almost all dwelt within the four urban wards of the town; few, if any, lived in the surrounding countryside.

In the hierarchy of wealth merchant fathers were the wealthiest of all and when their taxpaying histories are

averaged out over their lives they usually occupied the top three deciles of the lists. Tradesmen, farmers, and innkeepers occupied the middle levels of the lists averaging anywhere from the fourth to the sixth decile. The poorest were those involved in the fishery, who on average occupied the sixth to eighth decile levels. There were no fathers, however, whose financial condition placed them persistently in the bottom twenty percent of Salem's society.

Of those shipmasters' fathers who had also been Salem shipmasters themselves, the majority occupied the middle deciles, but there was a great deal of financial mobility within their ranks. Some had begun their careers in the ninth or even tenth position and had made their way into the upper deciles at the time of their death. Others had achieved significant financial success and were then struggling to maintain their enterprises when they died. Some inherited considerable wealth; others began their careers within the middle ranks of Salem society and remained there throughout their lives, moving only within a narrow decile range.

With the stabilization of trade routes and the establishment of control over them by the Salem elite, the opportunities for shipmasters to move upward within the social hierarchy of the town diminished. Before 1690 much

of Salem's maritime society was socially mobile with many shipmasters involved in mercantile activities to one extent or another. Almost every master mariner who specialized in shipping goods between British, colonial and foreign ports, traded on his own account and frequently had a shop of some kind in Salem.³² They may not always have been successful but they were immersed in the mercantile world and routinely entered into business agreements.

Business activity was less evident among the professional lives of many shipmasters between 1690 and 1720. Fewer mariners were committed to establishing themselves as merchants, and those who did were often connected by blood or marriage to the community's merchants of the previous generation. The most successful shipmasters-turned-merchants of early eighteenth century Salem were either the sons or more importantly the sons-in-law of those merchants who had arrived in the town between 1660 and 1690.

To further clarify the social origins and status of Salem shipmasters after 1690, both pre-1690 and post-1690 masters were grouped into four major categories based on the number of occasions each master occupied particular tax decile positions. The categories clearly brought the

³² Probates of many shipmasters regularly listed "sundry goods in the shop."

differences in the economic and social lives of shipmasters into relief and helped explain the patterns of wealth and the possible reasons behind them. And they clarified the change in the social structure that took place following 1690. The first group was composed of affluent shipmasters who paid taxes in the top decile for at least three taxable years.³³ This group represented the richest segment not only of Salem shipmasters, but also of Salem society as a whole. The second group was filled by economically comfortable shipmasters who payed taxes in the top two deciles at least twice but who were not as successful as the affluent. The third group consisted of shipmasters who economically belonged to the middle ranks of Salem society and who paid taxes in one of the top three deciles at least once but who were not wealthy enough to belong to either the affluent or comfortable groups. The fourth group was filled with those shipmasters who were only modestly successful and who never in their taxable careers advanced to the third decile or higher.³⁴

³³ Again it must be pointed out that with the exception of 1683 consecutive taxable years were five years apart.

³⁴ Any shipmaster who paid taxes in the top decile for any two taxable years, or who occupied the top decile in one year and the second decile in another, or who paid taxes in the second decile for two or more years would be included in the comfortable group. Any shipmaster whose taxes placed him in the first or second decile on only one occasion would be included in the middling group. One limiting condition was

What sort of wealth did each group possess? Before 1700 the data is sketchy, but from the turn of the century onward, clearer trends emerged.³⁵ The affluent group almost always owned vessels, warehouses, wharves, slaves, larger houses, and rental property. The shipmasters of the comfortable group often had shares in vessels, owned merchandise or a shop, and were in possession of entire houses. In comparison to the affluent, however, they had few slaves and usually lacked warehouses. Middling group members sometimes had a share or two in a vessel; a few had some merchandise and a small shop; but even more had neither. Those in the modest group did not own shares in any vessels, did not have any merchandise, shops or slaves,

placed upon all groups. Because their decile rating may not have accurately reflected their wealth over their previous careers, those who appeared only on the 1683 lists were excluded. In contrast, the appearance of a shipmaster on the tax lists for only one decile year at a later date offered important information, namely, that he came and remained in Salem for only a short period of time. Such a conclusion could not be made for someone who appeared in the lists for 1683 only.

³⁵ The following conclusions are based on data obtained from probate records, land deeds, and the tax evaluation list for 1771. Probate records were obtained from George F. Dow, ed., The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81, and the Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, Massachusetts Archives, Boston. Land deeds came from Perley, "Salem in 1700," Essex Antiquarian; The tax valuation list came from Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, ed., The Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771. (Boston; G.K. Hall & Co., 1978).

and none owned an entire house. Some owned a half or even only a quarter of a house, and many rented dwellings or parts of dwellings.

Modest group households spent their incomes as most people did and still do in any society and in any period; they struggled to obtain the necessities of life, namely food, clothing and shelter. The probates, deeds, and tax valuation lists clearly indicate that anyone in the middle of the third decile or lower was limited to the possession of a lot, house and contents, or a portion thereof. Any extra money was usually spent on providing an extra coat, blanket, bed, some other necessity, or occasionally some creature comfort. Only when a resident had reached the upper half of the third decile, was there any indication he or she invested some of his or her wealth.³⁶

The affluent group consisted of nine men who achieved the highest economic and social success among all shipmasters examined. Several distinctive patterns emerged within the group. First, only two of the nine sailed as

³⁶ How many post-1690 shipmasters in the middling and modest groups traded in adventures is not at all clear. As stated earlier, shipmasters in the pre-1690 era showed an aggressive interest in handling merchandise on their own account as indicated by the mention of goods in their probates. This level of activity was curiously absent from most of the post-1690 shipmasters in either of the bottom two groups.

masters before 1690, and both were immigrant residents of the town. Strikingly, the remaining seven, all of whom began sailing as masters after 1690, were native born. Their sailing careers averaged around sixteen years, generally as long as the masters in the other groups, and their destinations were also very similar to comfortable, middling, and modest groups. Over seventy-five percent of their voyages were to the West Indies with the remainder fairly evenly divided among Southern Europe, the southern British colonies in North America, and the North Atlantic rim.³⁷ But the size of their vessels was decidedly larger than any other group, averaging over seventy-three tons. Again there were differences between the pre-1690 and post-1690 masters within the affluent group. Those before 1690 averaged forty-eight tons and sailed entirely in ketches. Post-1690 masters averaged seventy-five tons and sailed in a variety of vessels, the most common of which were brigs, followed by ships. Less than a third commanded ketches, sloops or schooners. All were successful merchants in their later careers and a few were also gentlemen farmers. Almost all lived longer lives than most of their counterparts in the other groups, dying on average at the age of seventy-two. At their deaths they were the richest of all

³⁷ The North Atlantic rim included Canada, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Great Britain, and Northern Europe.

shipmasters, with probated inventories averaging over £1400 sterling.

The members of the comfortable group were moderately wealthy. Consisting of seven members, only two were post-1690 masters. All seven sailed primarily to the West Indies in vessels whose average size was a little over sixty-two tons.³⁸ Before 1690 they sailed most frequently in ketches but by 1700 they usually commanded ships and brigantines. All the men of this group were merchants in their later careers, but unlike those of affluence three of the seven were still sailing at the time of their deaths. The comfortable group members usually died before sixty and within six years of their last voyage.³⁹

³⁸ Voyages to the West Indies accounted for seventy-nine percent of their voyages. The remaining twenty-one percent was divided fairly evenly between Southern Europe, Northern Europe, the Southern Colonies in North America, and the North Atlantic rim.

³⁹ The average age of the deaths of those shipmasters whose age was known was sixty-five years, but this figure must be used with caution. It was impossible to obtain a birth date for three of the seven men, all three of whom were first generation and two of whom were masters at the time of their deaths. Knowing something of the lives of two of them, it is almost certain both were under sixty and one was likely under fifty years of age. One of the three, Lewis Hunt, had been sailing for twenty-nine years. The average first voyage age as master for all mariners in the study was twenty-five. If we accept this figure for Hunt then he would have been fifty-four at the time of his death. Another, Benjamin Allen had two daughters who were in their mid and late teens when he died. The average age of marriage for all mariners in the study was also twenty-five years. If we assume Allen's wife gave birth to their eldest daughter one

Would they have achieved affluence if they had lived longer lives? Two factors need to be examined in answering this question. First, how long did each sail? Second, did the taxes the members of the comfortable group pay indicate progressively increasing wealth, and was the pattern similar in any way to the taxes paid by the affluent masters? The average age of retirement of those of affluence was forty-three years whereas the average age of retirement for those who were comfortable was much higher at approximately fifty-three years.⁴⁰ The members of the latter continued to sail for up to ten years longer than their affluent counterparts. Examining the decile ratings of each it appears that with the exception of one mariner these men had already ceased to move higher economically.

If one plots the average decile rating for each of the four groups against their average age at five year intervals the career patterns of each group appear more distinct (see

year after their marriage, he would have been around forty-four at the time of his death. The third shipmaster had been retired from sailing for at least eight years when he died but few conclusions as to his age at death can be drawn. If the assumption is made that the average age of death for the three mariners was fifty years then for the group as a whole the average death age drops to just under fifty-nine years. This figure is probably more representative of their actual average age when they died.

⁴⁰ This figure was arrived at by subtracting the average number of years retired, i.e., 28.8 years, from their average death age, i.e., 71.9 years.

Figure 3.2).⁴¹ The affluent group clearly followed a pattern of increasing wealth, reaching the top decile early in their careers and maintaining that status throughout most of their remaining lives. All had reached the top decile by the age of forty-two. Only very late in life did they tend to drop out of the top decile ranking.

Comfortable group members showed a similar rise early in their careers but were unable to maintain it. Several never reached the top decile even once and those who did quickly dropped back.⁴² This may also explain their longer careers at sea, since successful alternatives had not opened up for them on shore. To maintain the level of wealth they had achieved as merchant shipmasters they had to remain at sea. Once they retired ashore in their early fifties they

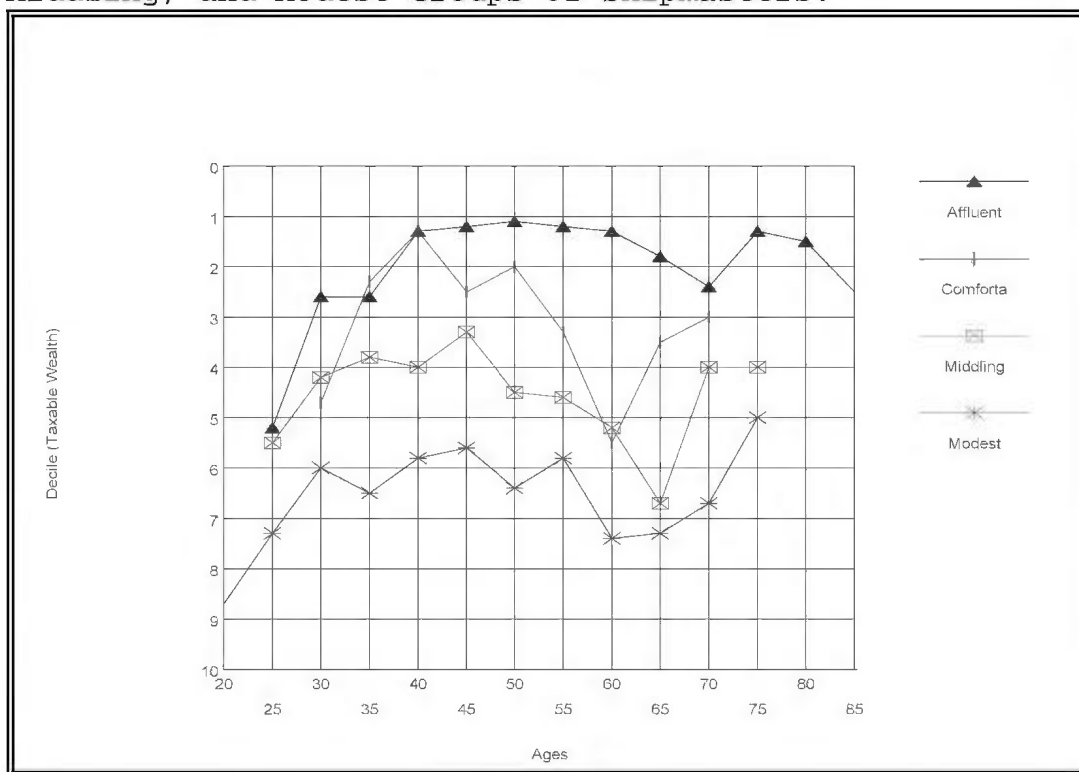
⁴¹ The list below contains the number of shipmaster decile ratings used in calculating the average decile rating of each age bracket for each group in Figure 3.2.

Age	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85
Grp 1	0	5	7	8	9	9	9	9	8	8	5	3	2	2
Grp 2	0	0	3	4	3	4	3	3	2	2	1	0	0	0
Grp 3	0	6	9	9	10	12	8	5	5	3	1	1	0	0
Grp 4	7	23	24	24	22	16	14	8	7	4	3	2	0	0

⁴² When comfortable group members first appeared in the tax list they averaged thirty years of age, which was older than either of the other three groups. This pattern could be due to two factors. One, since most began their careers as masters before 1690 some may have begun paying taxes before 1683, the earliest date that the tax lists are available. Second, most were immigrants and they may have arrived in Salem at a later age.

underwent a dramatic decline in their taxable wealth, probated inventories averaged only £519 sterling, less than forty percent of that left by the affluent group.

Figure 3.2: Wealth Trends of the Affluent, Comfortable, Middling, and Modest Groups of Shipmasters.



Sources: Essex Institute. Salem Tax Lists for 1683. In Essex County Quarterly Court Records, Vol 9; Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9; Perley, Sidney. The History of Salem, Massachusetts. 3 vols. Salem, 1924.

The third group of shipmasters, the middling group, generally experienced little increase in wealth throughout

their taxable lives. The graph above reveals that they began and remained in the middle decile ranks. Yet the wealth trends of individual members fluctuated noticeably. Unlike the other three groups, individual members of the middling group did not fall into any easily discernible pattern. The most important distinction between this group and the two above it was the low percentage of members who became merchants. Of the twenty masters who belonged to the middling group, only four were involved in trade on their own account. All four were native born; three were sailing at the same time as they were merchants.⁴³ But these four were only marginally successful in their careers; two never reached even the second decile during their taxable lives and one achieved it only once. The last, a merchant shipmaster, had reached the top decile for the first time just before his death and it is likely he would have been very successful had he lived.⁴⁴ The sailing careers of this group averaged sixteen years, the same as the affluent group, and they sailed to similar destinations

⁴³ The careers which they followed after they left the sea or at the time of their deaths were as follows: eight were shipmasters, three were merchant shipmasters, three were tradesmen, two were innkeepers, one was a merchant, one was a small farmer (likely a husbandman), and one was a fisherman. The later career of one was unknown.

⁴⁴ Benjamin Pickman jr. died in Salem from an undisclosed illness at the age of forty-eight. His probated inventory was the highest of any member of the middling group at £795.

as both the affluent and comfortable groups and in the same proportion. The average tonnage of vessels they commanded - chiefly ketches and sloops was fairly consistent for both pre-1690 and post-1690 masters, but was typically less than forty-five tons. Middling group masters died at fifty-five, having been retired on average for under ten years. Eleven members (fifty-five percent) were still sailing at the time of their deaths.

The modest group, comprising the largest number of masters with fifty-two, represented the least successful of the four. Mostly native born and belonging to the post-1690 era, only fourteen were immigrants and only fifteen began their careers before 1690. As in the middling group, many were still seafaring at the time of their deaths. Over forty percent were still shipmasters and another twenty percent were also fisherman. This high percentage of fishermen, however, stands in stark contrast to the other three groups. With the exception of one master in the middling group it was only among the members of the modest group that later careers as fishermen and shipmaster/fishermen were found. And they generally were its poorest members.⁴⁵ The modest group, despite containing the greatest number of men, had the least

⁴⁵ Of the later occupations of the remaining twenty-two men three were innkeepers, three were tradesmen, three were merchants (two of whom were also shipmasters), two were mariners, one was a small farmer, and ten were unknown.

number of merchants. On average they sailed for under ten years, were retired for twelve, and died at the age of fifty-two. Their probated inventories averaged a mere £109 sterling.⁴⁶ The tonnage of their vessels, ketches before 1690 and sloops after 1700, was the smallest of all four groups, averaging under forty tons. Their most frequent destination was also the West Indies but it accounted for only sixty-two percent of their voyages, much less than for any other group. Almost twenty seven percent sailed either to the southern colonies of British North America or northward toward Canada, Nova Scotia or Newfoundland. The remaining eleven percent went overseas, primarily to Southern Europe to deliver fish.

An analysis of these four groups (see Table 3.1) points to a growing stratification within Salem society after 1700.

Before 1690 the majority of Salem masters occupied the comfortable and middling groups. However, after 1690 the wealth of most placed them in either the affluent or modest groups. There was a widening gap between a small minority of very successful shipmasters and a large majority of Salem

⁴⁶ As a percentage the modest group left the least number of probated inventories. All members of the affluent group were probated, as were all but one member of the comfortable group. Beginning with the middling group, however, there was a dramatic drop to sixty percent. But this was still higher than the modest group where only forty percent were probated.

masters who were barely able, if at all, to achieve sufficient wealth to reach the middle levels of Salem society. Where substantial numbers of shipmasters had been able to achieve a level of wealth that placed them in the comfortable and middling groups during the era of Salem expansion, their sons had been able to achieve only a modest level of wealth once that expansion had ceased. By 1700 the opportunities for economic and social advancement were becoming less frequent for the majority of shipmasters in Salem.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Shipmasters Among the Four Groups.

	Pre-1690 Period	Post-1690 Period
	No.	No.
Affluent Group	2	7
Comfortable Group	5	2
Middling Group	15	6
Modest Group	15	37

Sources: Essex Institute. Salem Tax Lists for 1683. In Essex County Quarterly Court Records, Vol 9; Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9;

There was amongst shipmasters a direct correlation between wealth and longevity. Within each of the four groups the wealthier members tended to out-live the poorer. In figure 3.2 the rising decile position of each group from approximately age sixty onward reflected increasing average

wealth because poorer members were dying off. And affluent group members, the wealthiest, lived the longest. The wealthier the shipmaster the longer he tended to live. Furthermore, it shows that those shipmasters of Salem who had some wealth, no matter how little, tended to keep it even into old age. However, much of this wealth, especially that of the members of the middling and modest groups, derived from the income of their children.

Occupational plurality also helped set the members of the two economically lower groups apart from those who were affluent or comfortable. The occupations of those shipmasters who belonged to the affluent and comfortable groups, were generally defined by a single profession. Beside the original occupation of shipmaster, most had only a single other career. In the middling and modest groups only a minority fit this category. The majority had two and at times even three occupations throughout their working lives.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Occupations were obtained from George F. Dow, ed. The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-1681, 3 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1916-1920); the Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, Massachusetts Archives, Boston; George Francis Dow and Mary G. Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 9 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1911-1975); Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts; Sidney Perley, "Salem in 1700," Essex Antiquarian, 13 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1897-1909); the George Corwin Account Books, 1658-1664, 1663-1672, Curwin Family Papers, 1641-1902; English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851; Timothy Orne Family Papers and Accounts, 1719-1899; Miles Ward Family Papers and Accounts, 1718-1945; and Richard Derby

How did Salem shipmasters after 1690 compare in their wealth holdings to the rest of the town? From the beginning of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the American Revolution Salem remained a stable economic community. The wealth trends of the community as a whole throughout the period reveal this clearly. Salem never achieved the importance of Boston and although there were a few Salem families who may have approached the wealth of Boston's elite, the local merchants remained relatively poor cousins of the larger maritime community to the south. Nor did the Salem master mariner of colonial times achieve the wealth from his voyages around the Atlantic that his children and grand children would when they sailed to the Far East at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Salem's trading patterns remained stable up to the eve of the American Revolution, and as long as this continued so did its patterns of wealth. These patterns emerge upon further examination of the tax lists. Comparing the taxable wealth of the median value of the top decile to the median value of the lower deciles (see Figure 3.3) revealed a remarkably consistent pattern among the top nine deciles from the

Family Papers and Accounts, 1757-1776, all housed in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Mass.

beginning of the century to 1765.⁴⁸ The line labelled Ratio 1/10 reveals the comparative taxable wealth of the bottom five percent to the top five percent of Salem society. It shows a violently fluctuating but ever increasing gap in wealth not only between the lowest and highest segment but between the lowest segment and the rest of Salem society. However, this particular ratio must be used with caution. Many of the taxes relegated to the lower half of the tenth decile did not always reflect the wealth of the person paying it. At times these taxes merely represented real estate taxes alone, paid by an owner who was not a resident of the ward or even of the town. As a result, such values artificially lowered the median value of the tenth decile. Whether such taxes could account for the majority of taxes in that range is unknown.

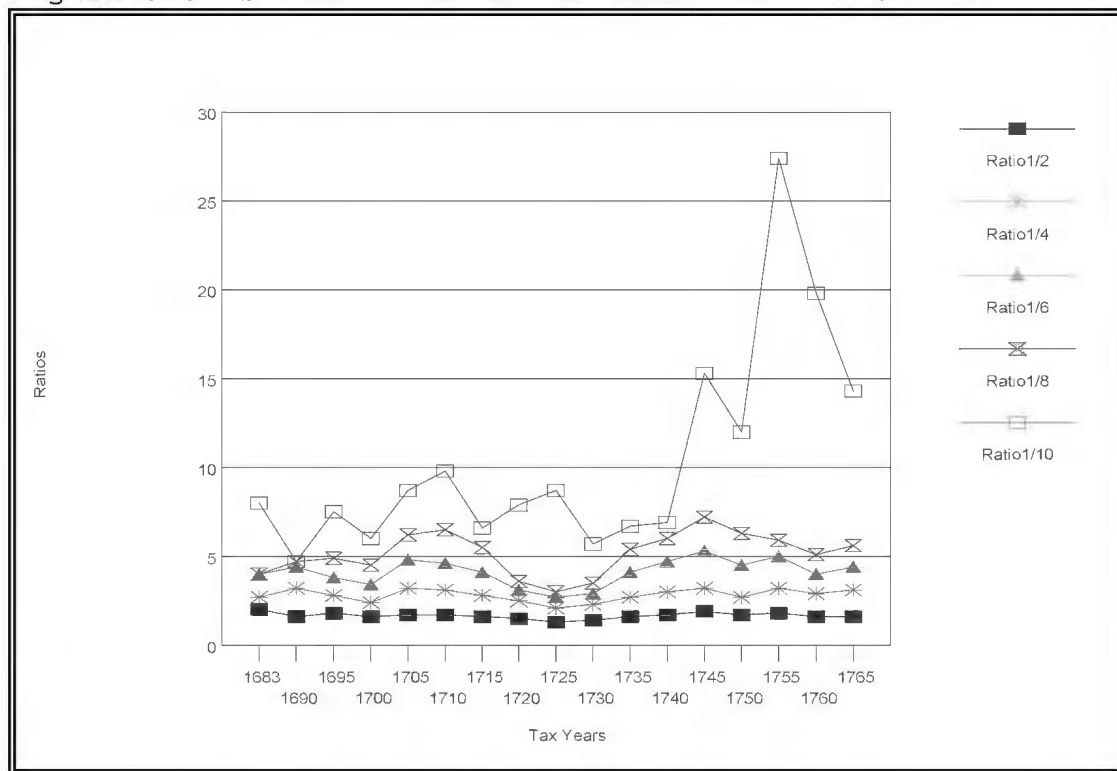
However, even adjusting for this limitation, the ratio must reflect a steadily worsening economic condition for this segment of Salem society. One large group making up this portion were people on fixed incomes such as widows receiving

⁴⁸ The graph was constructed by tabulating the median tax of each decile for each year (see Appendix C), and then calculating a ratio by comparing the median tax of Decile 1 to each of the median values of the lower deciles, i.e., Decile 1/Decile 2, Decile 1/Decile 3 etc. for each year. These ratios can be found in Appendix D. Figure 3.3 presents a graphic representation of five of the nine comparisons from 1683 to 1765.

a stipend set by the probate courts.⁴⁹ Gary Nash, in discussing the same period for Boston has argued that an economic gap between the top five percent and the remainder of Boston's society widened as the eighteenth century progressed.

⁴⁹ Chapter Four will examine social lives and conditions of widows in more detail.

Figure 3.3: Selected Ratios of Median Decile Values



Sources: Essex Institute. Salem Tax Lists for 1683. In Essex County Quarterly Court Records, Vol 9; Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9;

The most heavily affected groups, he argued, were mariners and widows who made up the majority of the population occupying the lowest thirty percent of Boston's economic hierarchy. According to Nash many of Boston's difficulties stemmed from the burden imposed upon the town from the several wars it had engaged in on behalf of Britain from 1689 onward. Depreciation of the colony's currency, rising inflation, and the burden of public relief in the support of the many widows and children who had lost husbands during the various conflicts helped create the deteriorating conditions within Boston.⁵⁰

Even if Salem was not spared this distress entirely, the stable ratios between one decile group and the next indicates that most of the town shared the burden proportionally. The only exception appears to have been the bottom five percent. This segment grew progressively poorer in relation to the rest of the town, particularly from 1745 onward. Nevertheless, because of the stability of wealth distribution in the top nine deciles, the social patriarchal structure of the town endured, and it is this stability which helps explain the stable recruitment patterns throughout the period. The widening gap between those few shipmasters-turned-merchants

⁵⁰ Gary B. Nash, The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 62-65.

who reached the ranks of the wealthy and the majority of Salem shipmasters who did not cannot therefore be taken as a indication of increasing disparity between the prosperous and the rest of Salem society. Rather because of a decline of trading opportunities, the majority of post-1690 shipmasters lost their economic and social position within an otherwise economically stable community.

As the eighteenth century advanced, connections with people of status became a significant pre-condition of financial and social success for any ambitious Salem shipmaster. But this did not necessarily mean that the right connections guaranteed success. Many successful merchants had very unsuccessful sons.⁵¹ Ability was still absolutely essential. Yet, unlike those who had established themselves in the 1660 to 1690 period, ability generally was not enough. Following 1690 the financial success of shipmasters was in large measure determined by their social connections to the merchant community of the town, constructed particularly through marriage. The inventories of those with merchant links through birth or marriage was significantly higher,

⁵¹ See Appendix E. It lists the names of the sixty-three probated shipmasters who are sorted in order of decreasing wealth converted to pounds sterling. Also included in the list were columns showing the generation to which each mariner belonged, the date of his first recorded voyage, his later occupation, and a code column which indicated in what manner he was connected to the merchant community.

regardless of later occupations, than for those who were not connected by marriage with merchants. Those with such relations left inventories averaging £572 sterling; those without averaged only £261 sterling (see Appendix E).⁵² It was also possible to classify those shipmasters with merchant connections according to whether they were related by birth or by marriage.⁵³ The most successful shipmasters when sorted by the value of their inventories, were those who had achieved their social connections through marriage. The average probated wealth of a shipmaster connected by marriage, or by birth and marriage, was £799 sterling. The average probated wealth of a shipmaster connected to the merchant community by birth alone was a mere £209 sterling.

Furthermore, sorting all available inventories according to wealth showed that nine of the top twelve positions were occupied by men whose wives were members of merchant society.⁵⁴

⁵² Twenty-six of the sixty-three shipmasters were connected by birth or marriage to the merchant community.

⁵³ Sixteen were connected by marriage, and ten by birth alone. Six of the sixteen were connected by both birth and marriage.

⁵⁴ Appendix E reveals several other points of interest. First, of those three in the top twelve who were not connected to the merchant society of Salem in any known way, two began their careers before 1690. Second, eighteen of the top nineteen shipmasters became merchants at some point in their lives. Finally, it shows that the highest ranking of a shipmaster whose only connection to the merchant community was through his father was eighteenth, not near as high as one connected through marriage.

In contrast, men who were connected by birth alone were scattered throughout the list.

Finally, marriage into colonial Salem society normally preceded rather than followed the accumulation of wealth.⁵⁵ The average decile position of these mariners in the last 5 year period before marriage was 5.4, the average position in the first 5 year period following was 2.8, and their average position during their careers that followed was 2.1. Financial success came after marriage, not before.

A clear example of the importance of marriage connections in advancing one's financial and social position can be seen in the career of Joseph Grafton jr.⁵⁶ Grafton, born in 1682,

⁵⁵ The average marrying age of Salem shipmasters connected by marriage to the merchant community was 25.6 years.

⁵⁶ The story of Joseph Grafton's life was extracted from a variety of sources. See Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, I 153, 435, III 150; Great Britain. Public Record Office. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Barbados. Colonial Office Files CO 33 15-16; Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Massachusetts. Colonial Office files CO 5 848; Salem, Massachusetts. Naval Officer Shipping Lists for Mountseratt. Colonial Office files CO 157/1; Joseph Orne Account Books, 1719-1744, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899, 70, 73, 112, 116, 124, 126, 131, 132, Timothy Orne Account Books, 1738-1758, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899, 3, 18, 24, 35, 48, 79, 104, 162, 201, 240 and the Philip English Account Books, 1668-1708, 1678-1690, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851; Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts; Melinde Lutz Sanborn, ed., Essex County, Massachusetts, Probate Index, 1638-1840 (Boston, 1987); George F. Dow and Mary G. Thresher, eds., Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County, Massachusetts, 9 vols. (Salem, Massachusetts, 1911-1975), 351-355; Ruth

was the son of a common mariner.⁵⁷ His rise to social prominence began slowly. Although his first recorded voyage as a master took place in 1706 when he was twenty-four, it was not until 1711 that he appeared in the tax lists. Until that year his wages went to his father and then to his widowed mother. In 1715 at the age of thirty-three he married Elizabeth, daughter of Walter Palfrey, a Salem sailmaker. Palfrey's taxable wealth which moved between the fifth and seventh decile throughout his life placed him among the poorer inhabitants of the town. While married to his first wife, Joseph's financial position did not improve.⁵⁸ In 1717, however, Elizabeth died and the following year he married Mary Orne. With that marriage he made his fortune. Mary was the daughter of Joseph Orne, a successful merchant, and more importantly, the sister of Timothy Orne, one of the most successful merchants and shipowners of Salem during the mid-

Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9. Microfilm reference is to the copy in the possession of the Maritime History Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland.

⁵⁷ The financial fortunes of Grafton sr. fluctuated widely during his life. Ranking as high as the third decile in the 1683 tax lists, he dropped as low as the eighth by 1695 before climbing back to the fifth decile at the time of his death in 1709.

⁵⁸ On average, his taxable wealth placed him in the fifth decile.

eighteenth century. Over the next fifteen years Grafton's wealth steadily increased until by 1735 he was among the wealthiest members of the town. Thereafter his taxable wealth remained at or near the top until his death in 1766. His probated inventory, valued at almost £2100 was the highest of any probated shipmaster for the period.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that Grafton lived a life of leisure from 1720 onward. Rather he laboured as hard as any other shipmaster, possibly harder. He continued to sail overseas until at least as late as 1744 when he was sixty-two, and when not sailing to Europe or the West Indies, he shipped goods and traded along the Massachusetts coast. He was certainly a storekeeper by 1731 and he was called a merchant by his brother-in-law in 1746. Yet he was still styled a mariner as late as 1753. Grafton was an example of a hard working merchant shipmaster who succeeded because he was able to establish and draw on the support of important mercantile connections. And this had been made possible because of his marriage into an important merchant household. It was this marriage that distinguished him from other able and hard working masters such as Habbakuk Gardner.

Following 1690, connections with merchant society, played a significant role in the opportunities shipmasters encountered for financial and social affluence while at sea

and ashore. The example of Salem shipmasters, who began their careers as fishermen and ended them in poverty, showed that the later fate of a master mariner was, at times, foretold by the route he took to the quarter deck. But a shipmaster's later success could also be foretold by the route he took to the altar. Skill in trade was an essential ingredient but social skills in dealing with the community elite were another equally and possibly more important factor. The mariner who was fortunate enough to marry into the upper classes of society saw his chances of financial success increase dramatically.

How do the conclusions on the Salem maritime community bear on the arguments of such maritime historians as Rediker or Morison? Clearly, mariners who sailed aboard Salem vessels were not social outcasts as Davis and especially Lemisch and Rediker have argued. Their connections to the community were not severed by their time at sea. These men were strongly linked to the town and to their families, and remained residents once they retired. That even outsiders aboard Salem vessels often settled within the town after they came ashore for good, argues that berthing aboard a Salem vessel actually increased their social connections to the port. From such behaviour it is difficult to believe in the development of a separate cosmopolitan cultural identity for these mariners.

Nor were Salem's mariners entirely like the people

portrayed by Morison. These were not the farm boys who left their fathers' farms, only to return several years later with enough money to buy some land and independence for themselves. They were young urban men recruited mostly from the town of Salem and to a lesser extent from the other port towns of Massachusetts. In one important aspect he was correct; shipmasters aboard Salem vessels were promoted from the fore-castle. Promotion came up through the hawse-hole and not in through the quarter deck. Finally, among the Davis/Lemisch/Rediker camp there is an implied assumption that promotion to the quarter deck was synonymous with upward movement in British and colonial society. In regards to Salem shipmasters, at least, that assumption needs revision in light of the examination of their economic and social lives. By the beginning of the eighteenth century much more complicated factors determined economic and social progression within Salem society than the mere promotion to the rank of shipmaster.

Chapter 4

Wives and Widows

A Salem shipmaster could easily be away at sea for as much as six months or more out of the year, yet his business and social affairs at home still required attention. His wife often handled such responsibilities. In 1698, for example, John Beal while in the West Indies sent a "sight draft"¹ home to his wife, Martha, with instructions to cash it immediately. She attempted to do so but Joseph Tyler, the person who had signed the draft, refused to see her. On the second attempt to gain entry to his presence she took with her two prominent male members of the community as witnesses. In consequence, and on behalf of her husband, she was forced to bring a suit against the man in order to obtain credit against the draft.² In 1719 John Cabot of Salem, the owner of one-eighth of a

¹ A draft payable upon presentation.

² See "Essex County Notarial Records, 1697-1768," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, XLI, 382.

share in the brig, Friendship, became involved in a dispute with the other owners over fitting out the vessel. At the time of the dispute Cabot was out of the district and his wife acted on his behalf. The other partners attempted to force Cabot's wife to cover one-eighth the cost of outfitting, but she refused to be bullied.³ Such examples illustrate the competence with which wives managed their husbands' affairs, and the confidence that husbands had in their wives.⁴

Wives played an important role in the social life of their shipmaster husbands, and they deserve attention. A major difficulty, however, in studying the lives of such women is that because of their limited legal status they rarely appeared in the historical record even when conducting the business affairs of their husbands. We know of the separate events surrounding Martha Beal, and the wife of John Cabot only because of protests filed in the Essex County notarial records.⁵ Laurel Ulrich, examining women in northern New

³ Ibid., XLIV, 151.

⁴ Similar abilities were cited by St. John de Crevecoeur in his description of Nantucket wives for the period before the American Revolution. See J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Letters From an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth Century America, ed. Albert E. Stone (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 157-158.

⁵ The example of the Beal family also shows some of the limitations under which a wife had to work. Because Martha lacked legal status, she was obliged to have several leading male citizens of the community accompany her as witnesses in order to give credibility to her suit.

England between 1650 and 1750, attempted to sidestep this problem by an imaginary reconstruction of their lives.⁶ The problem with her effort is that it relies too heavily on inference.⁷

It may be possible, however, to learn something of the lives of shipmasters' widows, for as widows they emerged more frequently in the documents of the period. Not only does such information provide insights into their later lives (of value in and for itself), it may reveal information about their earlier years as wives. Widows frequently showed tremendous energy in coping with the unsettling status of widowhood. In all likelihood they learned these skills, not overnight, but rather from the experiences they had gained while their husbands were still living. It is partly through such an indirect, albeit limited and imperfect, approach that this

⁶ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England 1650-1750 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). Of particular relevance was her discussion of Hannah, wife of Joshua Grafton, a mariner and close relation of Joseph Grafton jr. a shipmaster discussed in Chapter 3. See *ibid.*, 24-30.

⁷ In reconstructing the life of Hannah Grafton, for example, Ulrich relied entirely upon the probated inventory of her husband, the genealogical references in Sidney Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, 3 vols. (Salem, 1924) I, 435, 441, and the pocket map of Salem in James Duncan Phillips, Salem in the Seventeenth Century (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933), H-6.

chapter attempts to offer some insights into the lives of the wives of shipmasters.

In particular, this chapter explores the marriage patterns of the maritime community of Salem and compares these patterns to that observed in the agricultural world of eastern Massachusetts. Such a comparison sheds light on the similarities which the Salem maritime community shared with the rest of Massachusetts and reveals aspects which were unique to the waterfront of a Massachusetts port town. It also examines in some detail the lives of shipmasters' widows. By so doing it offers important insights into the difficulties that maritime widows encountered, and it indirectly reveals something of the character of these women as wives.

Alexander Keyssar, studying the agricultural community of Woburn, Massachusetts, argued that certain long-standing assumptions regarding wives and widows needed to be revised.⁸ In particular he suggested that seventeenth and eighteenth century New Englanders married in their mid-twenties rather than in their teens as had traditionally been believed, that individual households tended to be nuclear rather than extended, that marriages broken by an early death of one of the spouses were the exception rather than the rule and that remarriage was not nearly as widespread a phenomenon as had

⁸ Woburn was about twelve miles to the northwest of Boston.

been believed.⁹ Basing his position on an examination of Woburn's tax lists he also found the tradition that widows remarried rapidly and were at a premium because of their wealth to be generally inaccurate. He suggested that relatively few young women with young children had to face the problems associated with the death of a husband. Most widows, he concluded, were mature in years and "widowhood, as a social issue, involved the accommodation of middle-aged or elderly women to a set of new roles in the family and society."¹⁰ In conclusion, he argued that although these patterns could not be ascribed to all of New England or even Massachusetts they were representative of a great many eastern New England towns in the first half of the eighteenth century.¹¹

Although some of what Keyssar described for Woburn accurately reflected patterns of marriage among the Salem maritime community, many of his conclusions are not applicable.¹² The average age of marriage for Salem

⁹ Alexander Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts: A Problem in the History of the Family," Perspectives in American History (1974), 83-119.

¹⁰ Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," Perspectives in American History, 90.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹² To find comparative data for Salem shipmaster wives and widows the chapter drew on tax lists, court records, vital statistics, and probate records.

shipmasters and their wives compared very closely with that presented by Keyssar, but the patterns of remarriage were decidedly different. Young widows were far more common in Salem than in Woburn, and there was a stronger correlation between age and the frequency of remarriage. Most shipmasters' wives widowed under forty remarried within two years, and women widowed in their forties or later remarried only rarely. Widowed shipmasters were likely to remarry regardless of their age.

Table 4.1: Marriage patterns of Woburn.

	Men	Women
Avg. age of 1st. marriages	26.5 (na)	23.6 (na)
Avg. age if one spouse widowed	42.6 (12)	28.9 (2)
Avg. duration of all marriages		23.9 yrs. (37)
Avg. marriage dur. when men died 1st.		25.8 yrs. (22)
Avg. marriage dur. when women died 1st.		20.6 yrs. (15)
Avg. age of men when wives died 1st.	na	
Avg. age of women when men died 1st.		55.4 yrs. (15)
Avg. death age of Woburn men		60.1 yrs. (na)
Avg. death age of Woburn women		50.6 yrs. (na)

Sources: Alexander Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts: A Problem in the History of the Family." Perspectives in American History (1974), 83-119.

Notes: Numbers in parentheses indicate sample size.

Table 4.2: Marriage patterns of Salem shipmasters and wives.

	Men	Women
Avg. age of 1st. marriages	25.0 (64)	22.9 (53)
Avg. age if one spouse widowed	36.7 (15)	31.8 (10)
Avg. duration of all marriages	21.0 yrs. (58)	
Avg. marriage dur. when men died 1st.	22.8 yrs. (42)	
Avg. marriage dur. when women died 1st.	12.1 yrs. (12)	
Avg. age of men when wives died 1st.	39.4 yrs. (8)	
Avg. age of women when men died 1st.	46.6 yrs. (32)	
Avg. death age of all shipmasters	56.4 yrs. (80)	
Avg. death age of all shipmasters' wives	59.7 yrs. (32)	

Sources: Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to 1849. 6 vols. (Salem, 1916); Dow, George F., ed. The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81 3 vols. (Salem, 1920); "Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts from 1681 to the present." Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts; Perley, Sidney. The History of Salem, Massachusetts. 3 vols. (Salem, 1924).

Notes: Numbers in parentheses indicate sample size.

A comparison of marriage patterns between Woburn and Salem serves to highlight the special characteristics of family life in a maritime setting (see Table 4.1 and Table 4.2). Keyssar's claim that remarriage happened only rarely in eastern new England must be amended for mariners.

From a sample of eighty-three marriages, fifty-seven husbands died first as opposed to twenty-five wives. Only in the first ten years of marriage did more wives die than husbands (see Table 4.3).¹³ Eleven of the fifty-seven

¹³ Totals did not add up to 83 because although the records often indicated who died first they did not always reveal when the husband or wife died. As a result it was not

shipmaster widows remarried and, on average, did so within 3.9 years of their husbands' deaths. Twenty-one of the twenty-five shipmasters remarried, and did so usually within three years of their wives' deaths.

Table 4.3: Number of Deaths in Relation to Years of Marriage for Salem Shipmasters and their Wives.

Husband Died 1st	Wife Died 1st	Yrs Married
7	8	1-10
16	2	11-20
9	0	21-30
6	1	31-40
5	1	41-50
1	0	>50

Sources: Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to 1849. 6 vols. (Salem, 1916); Dow, George F., ed. The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81 3 vols. (Salem, 1920); "Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts from 1681 to the present." Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts; Perley, Sidney. The History of Salem, Massachusetts. 3 vols. (Salem, 1924).

Although the percentage of marriages terminating in the death of a husband in both the Salem and Woburn samples agreed fairly closely with each other, there were significant differences in the ages of Salem widows compared with those from Woburn at the time of their husbands' deaths. In particular, there were many more young widows among Salem's maritime community. More importantly, remarriage was strongly

always possible to know how long the couple had been married.

correlated to a widow's age (see Table 4.4).¹⁴ The estimated ages strongly reinforced the patterns which emerged from the table of known ages. On average, husbands who remarried were widowed at thirty-two. Their wives had died at twenty-nine and they had been married under seven years. Setting aside one mariner who remained widowed for fifteen years before he remarried, these shipmasters remarried within 1 3/4 years of their spouses death. Of the eleven widows who remarried the widowed ages of five were discovered. These women, on average, were widowed at 30.6 years of age and remarried at 31.3 years of age.

From Table 4.4 below and the other data presented earlier a pattern clearly emerges. Both widows and widowers remarried and remarried quickly up to middle age. But from the age of forty onward the pattern completely reverses itself for widows. Almost all over forty remained widows for the remainder of their lives. But the rate of remarriage among

¹⁴ Because the sample for some years was small, the known plus the estimated ages of spouses when their partners died were included in separate columns and in brackets. These additional figures were arrived at by estimating the age of a widowed spouse from the known age of the deceased. For example, if a husband was known to be thirty-two when he died and the wife's age was unknown her age was estimated based on the average difference in ages between the two which (calculated from Table 4.2) was 3.1 years. Her age, then would be estimated at 29 years at the time of her husband's death. Including estimated ages in the table fleshed out some age brackets that would otherwise have been very bare.

widowers followed a different pattern. Rather than dropping abruptly after forty, as happened with widows, the rate decreased more gradually. Widowers married less often after forty but most eventually took a new wife. Only four of twenty-five widowers failed to remarry.

Table 4.4: Widowed and remarried ages of Salem shipmasters and wives.

Age Widowed (Wife)	Remarried		Remained Widowed		Unknown	
	Knw	(Knw+Est)	Knw	(Knw+Est)	Knw	(Knw+Est)
20-29	3	(5)	0	(0)	1	(2)
30-39	5	(5)	1	(2)	2	(2)
40-49	0	(3)	5	(7)	1	(1)
50-59	0	(0)	6	(9)	0	(1)
60-69	0	(0)	4	(5)	0	(0)
70-79	0	(0)	4	(6)	0	(0)

Age Widowed (Husband)	Remarried		Remained Widowed		Unknown	
	Knw	(Knw+Est)	Knw	(Knw+Est)	Knw	(Knw+Est)
20-29	2	(2)	1	(1)	0	(0)
30-39	4	(9)	0	(0)	0	(0)
40-49	3	(3)	1	(1)	0	(0)
50-59	1	(1)	0	(0)	0	(0)
60-69	1	(1)	1	(1)	0	(0)
70-79	0	(0)	0	(0)	0	(0)

Sources: Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to 1849 6 vols. (Salem, 1916); Dow, George F., ed. The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81 3 vols. (Salem, 1920); "Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts from 1681 to the present." Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts; Perley, Sidney. The History of Salem, Massachusetts. 3 vols. (Salem, 1924).

Notes: Known and Estimated are abbreviated Knw and Est.

These patterns stands in stark contrast to Keyssar's experience with the widows of Woburn. One reason centres around the high percentage of early deaths for shipmasters. Forty-one percent of the one hundred thirty-two shipmasters examined during the period from 1640 to 1720 died while still pursuing a career at sea. The majority of these men were still under fifty at the time of their deaths with a sizeable number in their twenties and thirties. Keyssar's farmers did not appear to have experienced as high a mortality rate in the same age range. On average Woburn men were over sixty and their wives over fifty before either died.¹⁵ The wives of Woburn became widows at a much later age. Many mariners' wives widowed with young children must have been under great pressure to find new spouses to provide an income for themselves and their children. Generally they remarried without serious difficulty.

The high percentage of shipmaster deaths might have been due to the rigors associated with sailing. That such a high percentage of mariners' wives should die young in relation to Keyssar's sample is significant and suggests a high seaport mortality. Because Salem mariners were in regular contact with people in hundreds of Atlantic Ocean ports Salem may have been more exposed than the rural farming communities of

¹⁵ Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," Perspectives in American History, 89.

Massachusetts to a variety of diseases.¹⁶ Another explanation may be the longer time frame of the shipmaster sample compared with that of Keyssar's. The shipmaster data covered the entire period from 1640 to 1720 while that of Keyssar covered only ten years. The Salem data may have more accurately balanced out any fluctuations that Keyssar's shorter period would not have done.

Regardless of the reasons for a higher proportion of early deaths among the Salem sample, the most important reason for the high proportion of remarriages among widowed shipmasters or shipmasters' widows was connected with the peculiar pattern of economic behaviour of the maritime community. Both widows and widowers in a farming community generally retained a portion or all of the farm to maintain themselves. They were essentially independent commodity producers. Shipmasters, unless they operated a business or took up farming, were by and large, wage earners and once they died or retired from the sea the source of income which had maintained the family disappeared. As has been demonstrated by the discussion on recruitment in chapters two and three, mariners were often heavily dependent upon their children to maintain them upon retirement and into old age. Children

¹⁶ Further discussion on this question can be found in Maris A. Vinovskis, "Mortality Rates and Trends in Massachusetts Before 1860," Journal of Economic History, XXXII (1972), 184-213.

played an important part in the economic life of the maritime community. Within this society women of child-bearing age possessed an important asset. They could reproduce offspring who would eventually help maintain the parents later in life. Therefore, a widow under forty would still be in demand. In addition, if she had children she brought with her a ready or potential asset. In turn, she found a source of immediate income for herself and her family.

After forty, some of the children were likely producing income and in such situations the need to find a new mate would not be as strong. This economic circumstance would be very relevant in a wage earning community and explains why so many young widows remarried into the maritime world. It was within such a group that her ability to have children carried the type of importance it did.

It is obvious that the central problem for widows was the need for economic support and they chose a variety of means to survive and raise their families. Shipmasters at times established themselves as shopkeepers and small merchants within the town. Widows of these men often continued to run the family business. In several cases they simply took over the accounts of their deceased husbands. Mary, widow of Joseph Grafton, for example, had the debits and credits of her husband transferred to her account which she began after her

husband's death in 1766.¹⁷

The majority of shipmaster widows, however, did not have this option open to them. Their main source of wealth usually derived from the portion of the estate they received upon their husband's death. When a householder died intestate the widow was guaranteed by law one third of her husband's personal property forever and one third of his real estate during her lifetime. The personal property she could do with as she pleased, but the real estate she held in trust for her children the true heirs of the estate. She was permitted to make full use of the real estate to maintain herself and her children, to improve the property and use any profits, but she did not have any right to sell it.

These dower lands, however, were free from claims by any of her husband's creditors while she lived. In the distribution of insolvent estates, therefore, her portion was safeguarded. Only after her death were creditors allowed to lay claim to any part of the estate to cover past debts.¹⁸ In

¹⁷ See Timothy Orne Account Books, 1738-1758, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899, Vol 2, 162, housed at the Peabody Essex Museum. At times single women also maintained themselves as shopkeepers. Grafton's sister, for example, who remained single all of her life, had an account with Orne in which her occupation was given as shopkeeper.

¹⁸ See Massachusetts Acts and Resolves, Vol I "An Act for the Equal Distribution of Insolvent Estates," 48, in Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," Perspectives in American History, 101. However, until 1710 a widow's third of her husband's personal property was not

cases where a husband left a will these common law rights were accepted as a minimum standard and it became accepted practice for a widow to choose her common law dower if the will failed to meet them. A one-third portion was considered a minimum amount, and in the case of poorer households where the authorities believed that one third would not be sufficient to provide for a widow and her children a larger percentage was often awarded by law.¹⁹

Keyssar believed most widows held real estate in trust rather than in outright ownership. Thus they did not possess any forms of property that would act as an incentive to potential new spouses, and this rendered the idea that widows were in high demand untenable. This limitation certainly applied to widows who were given one-third of the estate as a trust under common law or in their husbands' wills. At times, for example, a husband might explicitly state in his will that his wife had use of the lands only until she remarried, at which time the land would be given to an heir. In many cases, however, a wife was given outright ownership of property to do with as she pleased. Numerous land transactions involving

protected against creditors of her husband's estate. After that date essential items such as bedding and utensils were also free from any claims of creditors. See Massachusetts Acts and Resolves, Vol I "An Act in Addition to, and For Explanation of the Act for the Settling and Distribution of the Estates of Intestates," 652, in *ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

widows and female children of the deceased testify to the large numbers of women who owned property and who bought or sold real estate as they pleased. Although Keyssar did not present any data on the number of Woburn widows who owned land outright, he implied there were only a few. If his analysis is correct then a higher proportion of shipmasters' widows in Salem than rural widows in Woburn had outright ownership of property.²⁰ Such widows would undoubtedly be sought by suitors.

Widows were often the executors of their husbands' estates and took over the responsibility of their running until the heir or heirs came of age. This responsibility included estates of substantial value. In 1719 Benjamin Pickman jr. died at the age of forty-eight and named his thirty-eight year old widow, Abigail, executor of his estate. Valued at £795 sterling, his holdings included two vessels, a

²⁰ Support for many of these land transactions can be found in Perley's "Salem in 1700." In some cases, a widow applied to the state to be allowed to sell land entrusted to her on behalf of the deceased heirs in order to pay off debts and provide for the children, and it might be argued from such examples that many land transactions involving widows were really property entrusted to them in which they had been given permission by the courts to sell. However, no reference or evidence was found in the state or court papers that such permission was sought by any of those widows mentioned in Perley who were selling property. These women appeared to own these properties outright. See Sidney Perley, "Salem in 1700." in Essex Antiquarian (Salem, Massachusetts, 1897-1909).

shop, warehouse, and £202 sterling worth of goods.²¹ The thirty-three year old Benjamin had married Abigail who was ten years his junior in 1704, the same year that his first wife had died. She was the daughter of Timothy Lindall, a successful Salem merchant, and the brother of James, who became one of the most successful merchants in Salem during the first half of the eighteenth century. Benjamin was the son of Benjamin Pickman sr., a Salem shipmaster and small merchant. Benjamin sr.'s own father, a carpenter, had emigrated from Bristol with his wife and children by 1645 when the older Benjamin was nine years old. Benjamin sr., however, had proven resourceful in marrying Elizabeth, daughter of Joseph Hardy, a successful mariner and merchant of the town.²² His son was even more successful in his choice of Abigail. The younger Benjamin had divided his time and career between sailing out of Salem and Boston but following his father's death in 1709 had settled permanently in Salem.

Following her husband's death in 1719 Abigail proved

²¹ Probate for Benjamin Pickman jr. from probate records 22029 and 22031 of the Salem Probate records located in the Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts.

²² Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to 1849, 6 vols. (Salem, 1916), II 174-176, VI 143-144; Perley, The History of Salem, Massachusetts, I 287, II 298; James Savage, A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England, 4 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1860), III 425; probate record #17477, Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts.

herself to be a capable administrator. She immediately sold off one and likely both vessels owned by her husband and concentrated on maintaining and enhancing the estate entrusted to her by becoming a small merchant.²³ The goods she offered included everything from dry goods such as stockings, coats, and fish hooks to grocery items such as cheese, butter, sugar and rum. To what extent, if any, she was involved in the importation and exportation of goods is not at all certain, but likely she confined herself to a retail business. Although she dealt with men employed in many occupations, it is not clear whether she accepted other goods or only cash in payment for the debts owed to her. Some fishermen, for example, brought their fish to export merchants, and then used some of the credit they had built up with these men to pay off their debts to Abigail. The account books of Joseph Orne reveal just this. In 1723, for example a John Cookes was debited £3 2s. 11d on Orne's account in order to pay Abigail for sundry goods he had purchased from her. Orne's accounts are peppered with such transactions involving Abigail Pickman from 1723 until the end of 1729.²⁴

²³ On July 30, 1719 she sold the schooner Benjamin, forty-one tons, to John Ruck. See "Essex County Notarial Records, 1697-1768," Essex Institute, Historical Collections, XLIV, 327.

²⁴ Joseph Orne Account Books, 1719-1744, Orne Family Papers, 1719-1899, 18, 25, 38, 57, 61, 79, 86, 87, 88, 99, 100, 108-113, 118-123, Orne's account books are housed in

From 1719 until 1730 the tax lists demonstrated her ability to manage the estate's affairs successfully. For the entire period "Benjamin Pickman's estate" never dropped below the second decile. That her efforts were successful can also be gleaned from the success which her son and grandson, both named Benjamin, achieved in the years following. The son took over the estate in his own name by 1730, and building on the foundation his mother had laid went on to become a very successful merchant in the middle years of the eighteenth century. Her grandson became one of the most successful business and political figures within the town during and following the American Revolution. By 1784 he was a congressman in the United States Senate.²⁵ Much of the success of the Pickman family in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries rested on the foundation which Abigail had laid while managing the family affairs following her husband's death.

Although widowed at thirty-eight she never remarried. There was no need. By successfully managing her husband's estate she was able to provide for herself and her family and leave her son a solid foundation upon which to further develop

the Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

²⁵ Another of her sons, the Hon. Samuel Pickman, Esq., was at one time, Governor of the West Indian island of Tortola. See Vital Records of Salem, Massachusetts to 1849, VI 142-144.

the family's fortune. She died in 1738 at the age of fifty-seven.

Abigail likely gained much of her experience in running a business while her husband was still living. And she had other important resources to call upon after his death. Her brother-in-law Joshua Pickman had connections with several merchant families within the town, and she was strongly connected to the established mercantile community through her own family.²⁶ These ties must have aided her in maintaining connections with the merchants and establishing a line of credit. The strong ties that existed between her and the Orne family, for example, continued on between her son Benjamin and the Orne family throughout the 1730's and 1740's.

Few widows who carried on their husbands' shops or established themselves in business achieved, however, the success of Abigail Pickman nor did many have the opportunity to do so. The majority of widows were forced to rely on other means to sustain themselves.²⁷

²⁶ Joshua Pickman, brother of Benjamin jr., had married Abigail Willoughby, daughter of a local merchant.

²⁷ Frequently, they took in boarders or performed laundry duties for those who could afford it. Eleanor Hollingworth, for example, turned her home into an inn after her merchant husband died insolvent. She managed her affairs well enough to leave an estate of a little less than £200 sterling when she died in 1696. See English Family Papers MSS 11, 3 of the Manuscript Collection Register, CUR-E, and the Verbatim Transcripts of the Essex County Quarterly Court Records 49_52_1, both housed in the James Duncan Phillips

Many, if not the majority, became dependent upon their children following the death of their spouse. On occasion, the elderly, whether couples, widowers, or widows signed over a portion or all their wealth to a son or a daughter's husband in return for a guarantee they would be supported for the remainder of their lives. In 1706, for example, William Pickering received from his mother-in-law property valued at £200 on condition that he and his wife care for her for the remainder of her life.²⁸ In another example George Emery conveyed his house and lot to his married niece, Elizabeth Tawley, in return for her and her husband caring for him during the remainder of his life.²⁹ That a parent would enter into a agreement with a son-in-law rather than a daughter again reflected a woman's uncertain status. Often in wills sons-in-law would be referred to as sons and property would be left directly to them rather than to their wives. Until the end of the colonial period most land transactions involving unmarried women would refer to their first name and then state whose daughter they were. Only toward the end of the eighteenth century did unmarried women have their full name mentioned in any significant numbers, followed by the novel

Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

²⁸ Perley, "Salem in 1700," Essex Antiquarian, VIII 161-162, IX 170.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, III 65.

title of "singlewoman."³⁰

There is little evidence maritime widows owned vessels for extended intervals. Even Abigail Pickman, who as executor of her husband's estate had assumed the responsibility for the running of two vessels, quickly sold them off. In the registration of Massachusetts vessels from 1696 to 1714, few women were listed as owners. When they did appear it was often immediately after the deaths of their husbands, and the records suggest that such ownership was quickly terminated.³¹ In light of the discussion on securing economic support for herself, the quick sale of such assets by a widow should not be surprising. Her purpose was to find a secure means to maintain herself and her family, and it is hard to consider a more perilous investment than a vessel. Even Abigail Pickman, who was better able to endure such ventures than most widows, recognized the folly of such an action. The aim of a shipmaster's widow, as it was for any widow, was to maintain what wealth she might have, and this did not mean hazarding it

³⁰ See Essex County Deeds, Bound Transcriptions, vols. I-XX, Registry of Deeds and Probate Record Office Building, Salem, Massachusetts.

³¹ Of over two hundred voyages in which the vessel's shipowners were known, only four were owned in whole or in part by women, all of whom had been widowed under two years. That so few appeared is indicative of how few held shares in vessels. That all were recent widows also indicates they sold off these assets as soon as possible after their husbands' deaths.

in ventures which might well end up on the rocks. The logic of a widow's economic condition argued against such an investment.

Once a wife became a widow she was at a decided disadvantage economically. The income of the household could evaporate unless she was able to run some form of business or she could rely on the income of a son or daughter. In addition, her level of wealth was usually and immediately reduced, often to one-third of what it had been. This reduction in wealth is supported by an examination of the tax lists. The majority of widows never showed up in such lists but when they did it was usually soon after their husbands' deaths and, with few exceptions, the rates they paid were much less than what their husbands had paid when alive. That so few widows appeared on the lists indicates the limits of their taxable wealth and how dependent they were upon others to maintain them, either their children, new husbands, or, if all else failed, the state.

Many impoverished widows of ordinary seamen were forced to seek the help of the state in maintaining themselves. The clearest evidence of this lies in the petitions of those who lost husbands aboard colonial naval ships during the several wars in which the colony was embroiled on behalf of Britain. The poverty of these widows was pitiful. The acts and

resolves of the Massachusetts legislature contain many of their petitions asking for support because of injuries or death of their husbands or sons in the colonial wars. Often these widows were forced to petition just to obtain the unpaid wages of their deceased spouses.³²

Shipmaster widows did not often appear in such petitions. Even if they never remarried, never operated a business, nor had the support of another family member, there was one other resource they could rely upon, particularly if they had outlived their children, namely the periodic sale of real estate assets. Nine out of ten real estate transactions involving women involved of widows selling off lots or parts of lots and houses or parts of houses. These widows owned their property outright. But even those widows who held an estate in trust for their children regularly petitioned the courts to be allowed to sell such property in order to provide for their children, and the courts routinely agreed to such requests.³³ On occasion a widow might obtain long term credit with the estate as collateral. In 1692 Abigail, "very old"

³² See the "The Acts and Resolves Public and Private of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, Vols. 6-8, being Vols 1-3 of the Appendix containing Private Acts, 1692-1780," in Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 5 vols. (Boston, 1853-54). For some specific examples see Acts VII 225, IX 85, 87, 88, 94, 100.

³³ Examples of such petitions can be found in Acts IX 95, 259, 274, 291-2, 296-7.

and the widow of George Dill, asked the court to permit her to sell the house of her former husband to pay of her debts and maintain herself. The estate had originally been left in her trust for Dell's children but all were deceased by the time of the petition, and so the court granted her petition.

The selling of property by a widow may have been necessary, but unless she had a number of assets it was often a one-time solution. Once the proceeds of such a sale dried up she could be left destitute. Most widows who were forced to resort to such practices were often in the same situation as Abigail Dill. They had outlived their children and had no one upon whom they could rely for support in their old age. A case in point was that of Mary, widow of Andrew Woodbury. He died in 1685 and twenty-three years later the records state that she was considered old and in "extreme poverty."³⁴ Widows who outlived their children often faced a very uncertain future. Without any annual income they were forced to eat up what economic resources they had, and in such cases the older a widow grew the poorer she became.

Only the wealthier shipmasters were able to leave any significant amount of real estate to their wives. Those whose decile levels were in the middle or lower tax brackets usually owned little if any real property. Widows of these families

³⁴ Perley, "Salem in 1700," Essex Antiquarian, IX 170.

were very dependent upon either finding a new mate or on having children to support them. If neither of these alternatives was available their situation became extremely severe.

Overall, only a minority of widows had the option of earning an income by running a business. And such opportunities became rarer after 1690. As was suggested in chapters two and three, in the expanding economic conditions of the town before 1690, masters had opportunities to set themselves up at least as shopkeepers or small merchants. After 1690, however, such opportunities lessened as the merchant community gained control over the town's commercial life. One reason for Abigail Pickman's success was due to her connections to this established merchant elite. Those who had assets to sell were also in a minority particularly after 1690 as the majority of shipmasters began to linger in the middle and at times lower decile ranges.³⁵ Few husbands who occupied these economic confines had any great amount of wealth to leave for the support of their wives.

Depending upon age and financial status, a widow followed one or more of four courses to maintain herself and her family - remarriage, continued management of her husband's estate, financial support from grown children (particularly

³⁵ See the discussion in Chapter Three for a further elaboration of this point.

sons) or the periodic sale of estate assets. The majority of widows, however, were limited to only two of these choices. For those who were still of child bearing age remarriage allowed them to obtain some measure of financial security. For those over forty, the vast majority relied on their children for support. This pattern did not apply only to widows; it was true for widowers too. The wage-earning maritime community leaned on their children in old age. John Collins's situation was not an exception when the account he had with the merchant Philip English was partly balanced by the wages his daughter Betty received as a servant.³⁶ Nor was it unusual to see that Daniel Webb sr. paid off his debts partly by teaching a student the "art of navigation," and partly from his son's earnings as a fisherman.³⁷ If any or all of these resources failed it usually fell to the town to support a widow or widower in old age.

Both rural and maritime families often relied upon their children for support in old age. But the farm widow had an important asset which the port widow often did not, namely,

³⁶ The Philip English, Account Books, 1668-1708, 1678-1690, English/Touzel/Hathorne Papers, 1661-1851, 91, housed in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

³⁷ William Pickering Account Book, 1695-1718, 20, housed in the James Duncan Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts.

agricultural land. She had the use of at least a portion of a valuable and lasting asset after the death of her husband. So long as she was able to maintain the land and utilize it she had a source of income to maintain her for the remainder of her life. But the major source of maintenance for a Salem maritime family was generally the wage labour of the husband. With his death his widow lost her most important source of support. The wages of the children at times became the only defense against poverty. It is difficult to overemphasize the importance of children, especially sons, to the welfare of widows in Salem's maritime community. When a son was lost at sea or died abroad, it created not only personal grief but financial tragedy. In the end, old age was an aspect of life which many widows in the maritime world regarded with fear.

Chapter 5

Conclusion:

When the Puritans arrived in the New World their intention was to establish a new England. They envisioned a world of manor lords, servants, husbandmen, and comfortably independent yeomen, and an economy built upon their agricultural efforts. The reality they encountered was a land incapable of supporting such a society.¹ Very early in Salem's history the town turned to the sea to find the wealth that agriculture could not provide. Fishing along its coasts, hewing timber in its hinterland, and shipping goods in locally constructed ketches and sloops became the means whereby the townspeople were able to pay for the goods they needed or desired from England. In a way that many had never expected,

¹ Daniel F. Vickers, Farmers & Fisherman: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1830 (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 10, 28-29.

the Puritans were forced to look to the sea to sustain themselves in their new home.

The first serious attempt at capturing the ocean wealth was the fishery. Reluctant at first to work at sea themselves, Puritan immigrants began by hiring outside labour to man their boats.² Soon, however, local men were promoted to captain these vessels, which not only fished but traded along the coast. These early shipmasters eventually took voyages farther afield, trading and fishing in Nova Scotian and Newfoundland waters, and venturing south to Maryland and Virginia and into the Caribbean. They even, on occasion, sailed overseas, sometimes to England but more frequently to southern Europe, where there was a market for their fish. Almost without exception, however, these early shipmasters remained wedded to the fishery, and it was a combination of fishing and shipping that defined their careers at sea.

After 1660 a new wave of immigrants moved into Salem from Britain, more materially motivated than the Puritans who had arrived thirty years earlier. Those among them who were promoted to shipmaster saw their position on the quarter deck, not as a career in itself, but as a stepping stone to

² Daniel F. Vickers, "Work and Life on the Fishing Periphery of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1675," in David D. Hall and David Grayson Allen, eds., Seventeenth Century New England (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1984), 83-117.

financial and social success in the New World. Not involved with the fishery, except insofar as it was a commodity to be traded, these men served as business agents for the shipowning merchants whose vessels they commanded. More importantly, they used the connections in the ports to which they sailed as an avenue to trade on their own accounts and to establish themselves in business. Business activity as much as maritime knowledge defined post-1660 Salem shipmasters.

The vibrancy and optimism that flourished in Salem's waterfront community was abruptly halted by the outbreak of King Williams's War in 1689 and was shattered by the events between 1690 and 1692. The economic cost of the disastrous invasion of French Canada by Massachusetts in 1690, and the social cost of the witch hysteria in 1692 decimated the Salem fleet and disorganized the maritime community.

The seaport was able to rebuild by 1700, but the waterfront society which emerged from this reconstruction was much different than that which had existed before 1690. Most mariners in the forecastle of Salem vessels were now born in the town itself, and the majority of the rest came from the neighbouring port towns of Massachusetts. Only a minority of immigrants from overseas now crewed the town's vessels. The great majority of shipmasters were also locally born and promoted from the forecastle.

The economic opportunities for Salem shipmasters had greatly changed. Until the late 1680's Salem was a growing community, and those with ambition and ability could move upward economically and socially. After 1690 such economic opportunities diminished for all immigrants and for most locals. Where the majority of shipmasters had earlier traded on their own account while conducting business on behalf of their employers, masters now focused most of their attention on managing the business affairs of the merchants for whom they sailed. The number of shipmasters involved in their own successful business ventures dropped off dramatically. By 1700 an economic and social gap emerged between a few very successful shipmasters-turned-merchants and the average Salem master mariner. The fortunate few who managed to cross this gap, moreover, depended for their success as much on their ability to marry into merchant society as they did on their own ability to trade or navigate successfully.

There is an assumption in maritime folklore that the pre-industrial shipmaster was identified with a higher social class or quality than the crew that served under him. Such assumptions have made their way, even if only implicitly, into the writings of some maritime historians. Ralph Davis, for example, by asserting that most seamen were drunk and wild, simple souls fit for nothing other than a life of labour

afloat, implied a distinction of this kind between common seamen and masters. By asserting that connections were as important as ability in obtaining promotion he further hinted at class distinctions between captain and crew.³ Marcus Rediker, arguing that the shipmaster aligned himself with the shipowner, implied that the two parties shared a common purpose in their exploitation of the common mariner.⁴ This may have been so on the larger ships that sailed out of the largest ports of the British Empire, but these class distinctions are simply not apparent within the waterfront society of colonial Salem. For the majority, promotion to the quarter deck did not constitute any great rise in status. And those masters whose careers involved both fishing and shipping often lived in the lower half of Salem's economic hierarchy. Becoming a shipmaster likely conferred prestige, but it generated little social distance between a master and his crew and only raised his position within the community to a small degree. Those few captains who really climbed into Salem's trading classes did so through social intercourse on shore. The ability to marry into a merchant household played a

³ Ralph Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry (London: MacMillan & Co. Ltd., 1962), 114-122.

⁴ Marcus Rediker, Between the Devil And The Deep Blue Sea (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 121, 151, 161, 208-209, 292.

particularly important role in aiding the ambitious shipmaster in his quest for success.

The lack of social distance between captain and crew revealed itself in the paternal and fraternal relations between them. Just as such relations defined the interactions between captain and crew on Canadian and Newfoundland fishing schooners and coastal vessels of the nineteenth century, so did such relations define the interactions between master and mariner aboard Salem vessels of the eighteenth century - vessels that roamed the entire North Atlantic.

The average Salem master achieved only minimal financial success throughout his career at sea. As a result, he and his family were upon his retirement often dependent upon the income of their sons. And the surest way for a son to obtain a wage was to go to sea. By such means not only was the family able to sustain itself, but the community was also able to obtain a ready supply of new recruits to man its vessels. Because of these particular financial constraints, the marriage patterns of the port society of Salem were often different from that of the countryside. The most significant distinction was the higher frequency of remarriage among mariner widows than among the widows of farmers. In farming communities the chief source of wealth came from the produce of the land and the land remained after the death of the husband. So long as the widow could obtain sufficient labour

to utilize her husband's estate she had a ready source of income for herself and her family. In Salem's maritime community the largest single source of income came from the labour of the husband, and that source disappeared upon his death. Unless a mariner's widow had a son or daughter old enough to contribute to the support of the family she had to look about for a new spouse to help her replace the lost income of her deceased husband. Widows who did not remarry often grew heavily dependent upon their adult children, and the death of an only son could mean severe hardship for the mother.

This thesis has argued that the early colonial shipmasters of Salem lived different social lives from what much of the literature has described for the master mariner under sail. Neither the shipmaster nor the mariner of Salem belonged to the ranks of the dispossessed, as some maritime historians have suggested, but were connected to the town socially and culturally through ties of blood and marriage. Generally, they had urban rather than rural roots and came from all levels and occupations of Salem society. The relationship between shipmaster and mariner was defined by one of paternal and fraternal bonds and cut along vertical lines of community rather than along horizontal lines of class. In the public documents of the period, the seafaringmen of Salem

were termed mariners, whether masters or common seamen. In this seaport anyway, the gap between them was never as broad as some historians have imagined.

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Appendices

Appendix A: An Explanation of Salem Taxes and Deciles

The first recorded tax legislation for the Massachusetts Bay Colony took place in November 1645. It stated that "every male within this jurisdiction, servant & other, of the age of 16 years & upwards, shall pay yearly into the common treasury the sum of 20d, and so in proportionable way for all estates, viz.: that all and every person that have estates shall pay one penny for every 20s. estate, both for land and goods, & that every labourer, artificer & handicrafts man usually takes in summer time above 18d./day, shall pay per annum 3s. 4d. into the treasury over and besides the 20d. before mentioned, and all others not particularly herein expressed, as smiths of all sorts, butchers, bakers, cooks, victuallers, & company, according to their returns and incomings, to be rated proportionably to the produce of the estates of other men..."

(Nathaniel B. Shurtleff, ed., Records of the Governor and Company of the Massachusetts Bay in New England, 5 vols.

[Boston, 1853-1854] III 088). This legislation, however, contained a major weakness. Because landholders held the most visible estates they were more heavily taxed compared with merchants whose riches, in the form of trade goods, were often not as accessible for valuation. In an attempt to remedy this discrepancy the colony enacted a law in 1651 "that all merchants, shopkeepers, and factors shall be assessed by the

rule of common estimation, according to the will and doome of the assessor in such cases appointed, having regard to their stock and estate, be it presented to view or not, in whose hands soever it be, that such great estates as come yearly into the country may bear their proportion in public charges..." (Shurtleff IV 038).

For a while this legislation seemed to have quietened real estate holders, but by 1668 they were complaining again, this time over the question of taxing imported commodities. To satisfy their concerns a new law was enacted in that year to ensure a fairer distribution of taxes. It ordered that two persons were to be appointed in the seaports of the colony "who from time to time in their several towns shall repair to all warehouses, or other places where any foreign goods or commodities are put on shore in any of our harbours, or are sold or retailed on board any ship, shallop, or other vessel, & require of the merchant, owner, or other retailer thereof the sight of his invoices or other just & true account of their goods imported by them... [the commissioners] are authorized and empowered to assess such merchant or other trader or traders ... and accordingly shall give warrant to the constable of the town to levy on them one penny per pound to be paid into the public treasury, as the law requires" (Shurtleff IV 364). This legislation seems to have satisfied those concerned for there were no other significant changes in

the tax laws of the colony for the remainder of the period under study.

Each male resident of the colony 16 year of age or older was required to pay three kinds of taxes to the province - a poll or head tax, a real estate tax and a personal tax. The real and personal taxes were assessed based upon the real estate and personal wealth a person owned. The poll tax, however, was assessed to all equally.

Until 1697 the tax lists were required to show only the sum of these three taxes and therefore the yearly lists showed only one column for the total taxes paid. In 1697, however, the colony enacted legislation requiring those who collected the annual taxes to divide the lists into four columns; one for the poll tax, one for the real estate tax, one for the personal tax, and one the total of the three. (Shurtleff II, 302)

The Salem tax lists have survived for the year 1683 and then for every year from 1689 to 1771. These lists were subdivided into wards, but the boundaries and number of wards varied over time depending upon the shift in the town's population. In 1683 there were five wards, by 1692 there were seven, and by 1715 there were eight. It remained that number until 1752 when four wards split from Salem to become the separate community of Danvers.

Tax data was collected from these lists for the year 1683 and for every fifth year from 1690 to 1765. In particular, the data in the total tax column for each household head was entered into a database (Paradox 3.5), along with the ward in which he or she resided. A separate file was constructed for each year. In all over fourteen thousand entries were made in seventeen yearly files.

The taxes as they appeared in the lists were denominated in pounds (£), shillings, and pence. Before these values were entered, a Paradox applications program converted these values into pence. Thus £1 would be entered as 240d. This had the advantage of having all taxes converted to whole numbers and made sorting much easier. Once the data had been entered for any one year, it was sorted in descending order and divided into ten equal sections or deciles. The top decile was given the numeric value of one, and those who paid taxes in that decile were assumed to be among the wealthiest ten percent in Salem. Conversely, the bottom decile was given the numeric value of ten, and those who paid taxes in that decile were assumed to be among the poorest ten percent in the town.

Returning to the original documents, the tax lists for all seventeen years were searched to find both the wards and taxes paid by all shipmasters and their relations. In each case their total taxes were converted from pounds (£), shillings, and pence to pence, and the converted value allowed

one to determine for each individual the appropriate decile rating for that year. It is these decile ratings that are being referred to whenever a decile value is mentioned in the thesis.

Appendix B: Salem Constables, 1689-1695.

The taxes in each of Salem's wards were collected by an appointed body of men called constables. Their names and the wards for which they were responsible are listed below for the years 1689-95. W ward covered the waterfront area of Salem. Many merchants dwelled in M ward, while large numbers of artisans and craftsmen lived in A and C wards. F ward included the area called the northfields located between the town and Salem Village. Finally V1 and V2 referred to the area around and including Salem Village.

1689		1690	
William Becket	W	William Andrews	W
John Pickering	M	Benjamin Orne	M
William Curtice	A	Nathaniel Silsby	A
Roger Darby	C	William Osborne	C
John Trask	F	Isaac Swazy	F
Thomas Putman	V1	Edward Bishop	V1
1691		1692	
John Bulloph	W	Richard Prince	W
William Smith	M	Joseph Neal	M
Samuel Woodwell	A	Peter Osgood	A
William Pinson	C	Thomas Ruck	C
George Lockier	F	Samuel Stone	F
Joseph Herrick	V1	Jonathan Putman	V1
		John Putman	V2

1693

John Robinson	W
William Stacey	M
Jeremiah Neal	A
Joshua Buffam	C
Samuel Gaskin	F
Joseph Putman	V1
Joseph Gold	V2

1694

William Murray	W
Daniel Bacon	M
Jacob Manning	A
Robert Gray	C
John Foster	F
John Tarball	V1
James Holton	V2

1695

Timothy Lasking	W
John Woodwell	M
Philip Hill	A
Caleb Buffam	C
David Southwick	F
James Putman	V1
Thomas Fuller	V2

Appendix C: Median Tax of Each Decile for Selected Tax Years.

Tax Year	Decile									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1683	96	48	36	36	24	24	24	24	24	12
1690	840	540	360	264	240	192	180	180	180	180
1695	180	102	72	64	54	48	42	37	27	24
1700	144	90	72	60	48	42	40	32	24	24
1705	1044	600	432	324	264	216	192	168	120	120
1710	936	552	396	300	240	204	180	144	120	96
1715	396	252	180	144	108	96	84	72	60	60
1720	269	177	136	109	96	86	82	75	68	34
1725	314	242	184	148	130	118	109	104	100	36
1730	142	101	81	63	54	49	45	41	39	25
1735	593	368	280	217	172	144	128	110	100	88
1740	507	301	229	170	133	109	93	85	78	73
1745	732	384	294	228	178	138	114	102	96	48
1750	1590	926	724	583	456	354	303	252	233	132
1755	547	312	232	172	128	110	100	92	76	20
1760	1188	736	528	404	337	297	264	231	191	60
1765	629	391	273	202	163	142	137	112	91	44

Sources: Essex Institute. Salem Tax Lists for 1683. In Essex County Quarterly Court Records, Vol 9; Salem Tax Lists 1689-1776: Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9;

Appendix D: Ratios of Median Decile Taxes for Selected Tax Years

Tax Year	Ratio								
	1/2	1/3	1/4	1/5	1/6	1/7	1/8	1/9	1/10
1683	2.0	2.7	2.7	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	8.0
1690	1.6	2.3	3.2	3.5	4.4	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7
1695	1.8	2.5	2.8	3.3	3.8	4.3	4.9	6.7	7.5
1700	1.6	2.0	2.4	3.0	3.4	3.6	4.5	6.0	6.0
1705	1.7	2.4	3.2	4.0	4.8	5.4	6.2	8.7	8.7
1710	1.7	2.4	3.1	3.9	4.6	5.2	6.5	7.8	9.8
1715	1.6	2.2	2.8	3.7	4.1	4.7	5.5	6.6	6.6
1720	1.5	2.0	2.5	2.8	3.1	3.3	3.6	4.0	7.9
1725	1.3	1.7	2.1	2.4	2.7	2.9	3.0	3.1	8.7
1730	1.4	1.8	2.3	2.6	2.9	3.2	3.5	3.6	5.7
1735	1.6	2.1	2.7	3.4	4.1	4.6	5.4	5.9	6.7
1740	1.7	2.2	3.0	3.8	4.7	5.5	6.0	6.5	6.9
1745	1.9	2.5	3.2	4.1	5.3	6.4	7.2	7.6	15.3
1750	1.7	2.2	2.7	3.5	4.5	5.2	6.3	6.8	12.0
1755	1.8	2.4	3.2	4.3	5.0	5.5	5.9	7.2	27.4
1760	1.6	2.3	2.9	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.1	6.2	19.8
1765	1.6	2.3	3.1	3.9	4.4	4.6	5.6	6.9	14.3

Sources: Essex Institute. Salem Tax Lists for 1683. In Essex County Quarterly Court Records, Vol 9; Salem Tax Lists 1689-1776: Ruth Crandall, comp., Tax and Valuation Lists of Massachusetts Towns before 1776, microfilm edition (Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), rolls 8, 9.

Appendix E: Value in fSterling of Probated Inventories of Salem Shipmasters.

Mariner	Gen.	First Voyage Date	Later Occupation	Code	Inventory (fSterl.)
Grafton, Joseph jr.	4	1706	merchant	WB	2075
Lindall, James	2	1702	merchant, gentleman farmer	WF, F	1881
Bowditch, William	3	1691	merchant	WF, F	1794
Parkman, Deliverance	1	1673	merchant	WF	1607
Orne, Timothy	3	1715	merchant	x	1564
Allen, Benjamin	1	1685	merchant, shipmaster	?	1335
Hathorne, Joseph	3	1715	merchant, gentleman farmer	WF, F	1139
Pickman, Benjamin jr.	2	1698	merchant, shipmaster	WB, F	795
Stone, Robert sr.	1	1660	merchant	?	767
Gardner, Ebenezer	3	1682	shipmaster, farmer	WF, F	712
Pickering, William	3	1694	merchant T publican	WF	636
English, Philip sr.	1	1674	merchant	WF	568
Beal, John [Beale]	2	1691	merchant, shipmaster	?	556
Tawley, John	1	1676	merchant	?	538
Browne, John sr.	1	1637	merchant	?	534

Lindsey, El(i)ezer	1	1694	merchant, shipmaster	?	460
Touzel, John [Towzel]	1	1718	merchant	WF	439
Ingersoll, Samuel	3	1684	merchant, shipmaster	F	417
Hunt, Lewis	1	1683	merchant, shipmaster	?	390
Browne, John jr.	2	1667	shipmaster	F	343
Beadle, Thomas sr.	1	1686	shipmaster, innkeeper	?	342
Hardy, Joseph jr.	3	1679	merchant, shipmaster	F	330
Gedney, Nathaniel	3	1698	shipmaster	WB	327
Stone, Benjamin	2	1691	shipmaster	F	258
Chadwell, Nicholas	1	1673	merchant, shipmaster	x	253
Cash, William	3	1716	merchant, shipmaster	x	250
Marston, Manasseh	2	1665	merchant, ironsmith	?	235
Gardner, Habakkuk	4	1697	merchant	F	226
Beadle, Thomas jr.	3	1714	shipmaster	WF	209
Turner, Habakkuk	1	1668	merchant, shipmaster	WF	208
Woodbury, Isaac	3	1667	T shoreman, farmer	?	206
Ingersoll, John jr.	3	1687	shipmaster, shoreman	F	203
Pickman, Benjamin sr.	2	1682	merchant, shipmaster	WF	176

Ellis, Thomas	2	1711	farmer	?	171
Pickman, Joshua	3	1707	shipmaster	WF, F	169
True, Henry	1	1644	farmer	?	156
Ward, Joshua	2	1678	shipmaster	F	149
Skerry, Ephraim	2	1674	merchant, shipmaster	?	142
Flinder, Richard	1	1663	fisherman	?	139
Collins, Adoniram	2	1702	innkeeper, shipmaster	x	138
Prance, Philip	1	1689	shipmaster	?	129
Starr, Robert	1	1649	fisherman	x	127
Woodbury, Andrew	2	1654	?	?	126
Foster, James	3	1714	shipmaster	x	113
Waters, Nathaniel	3	1714	shipmaster, farmer	x	110
Hilliard, Job	1	1653	shipmaster	?	103
Tyler, Joshua	1	1715	fisherman, mariner	x	96
Hilliard, Edward sr.	1	1653	ropemaker	?	89
Cook, John	3	1715	shipmaster	?	83
Ingersoll, Richard	3	1683	shipmaster	F	80
Moses, Eleazer	2	1705	shipmaster, fisherman	x	80

Henderson, Peter(1)	2	1715	shipmaster, fisherman	x	79
Henderson, Peter(2)	2	1691	fisherman, mariner	x	64
Cox, Thomas	2	1706	fisherman, farmer	?	61
Swazy, Joseph	3	1681	fisherman	?	58
English, Philip jr.	2	1717	innkeeper	F	52
Marston, Thomas	2	1697	shipmaster, cordwainer	?	52
Williard, Richard	2	1715	shipmaster	x	52
Glanfield, Robert	1	1665	shipmaster, shipwright	WF	51
English, William	2	1711	shipmaster	F	29
Conant, Joshua sr.	2	1654	shipmaster	x	29
Collins, John	2	1699	fisherman	x	12
English, Clement	3	1712	fisherman	x	7

Sources: George F. Dow, ed. *The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1636-81* 3 vols. Salem, 1920; *The Probate Records of Essex County, Massachusetts from 1681 to the present*, located in the Massachusetts Archives, Boston.

